



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Bringing Europe closer to people

**The political priorities of the European
Committee of the Regions 2020-2025**

Bringing Europe closer to people

The political priorities of the European
Committee of the Regions
2020 - 2025



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Local and regional authorities, represented in the EU by the European Committee of the Regions, have always been the backbone of European democracy. The recent COVID-19 pandemic showed local and regional leaders as the driving force of local communities, responding during the emergency and leading the EU's recovery. Bringing Europe closer to people through its villages, cities and regions will therefore be the primary mission of our Committee achieved through three main priorities.

All decisions must be taken as close as possible to citizens, in line with the subsidiarity principle.

This entails showcasing and strengthening the role of local and regional authorities in the EU.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is an opportunity to improve the way the EU works, sharing and upscaling successful practices of civil participation, which our members have developed in their constituencies, and reforming the EU decision-making process.

We will also continue to ensure new EU legislation reduces administrative burden and implementation costs for our regions.

All European decisions should be taken in light of our commitment to tackle the major societal transformations facing our villages, cities and regions.

These include global pandemics, the green and digital transitions, demographic challenges and migratory flows.

Coming out stronger together from such transitions will determine our capability to claim ownership of our future and build resilience in local communities.

All our priorities will be mirrored in modern and dynamic communication campaigns, which will send a strong message about the real added value of the EU, its regions, towns and villages.

We will promote cohesion as a fundamental value in all of the EU's policies and programmes.

Fostering cohesion in Europe needs an ambitious long-term EU budget that offers sufficient structural and cohesion funding and agricultural investment for all regions and cities.

But cohesion is more than just money: it is a value that leads sustainable economic growth, creates long-term employment opportunities for all and delivers place-based policies that meets citizens' needs.

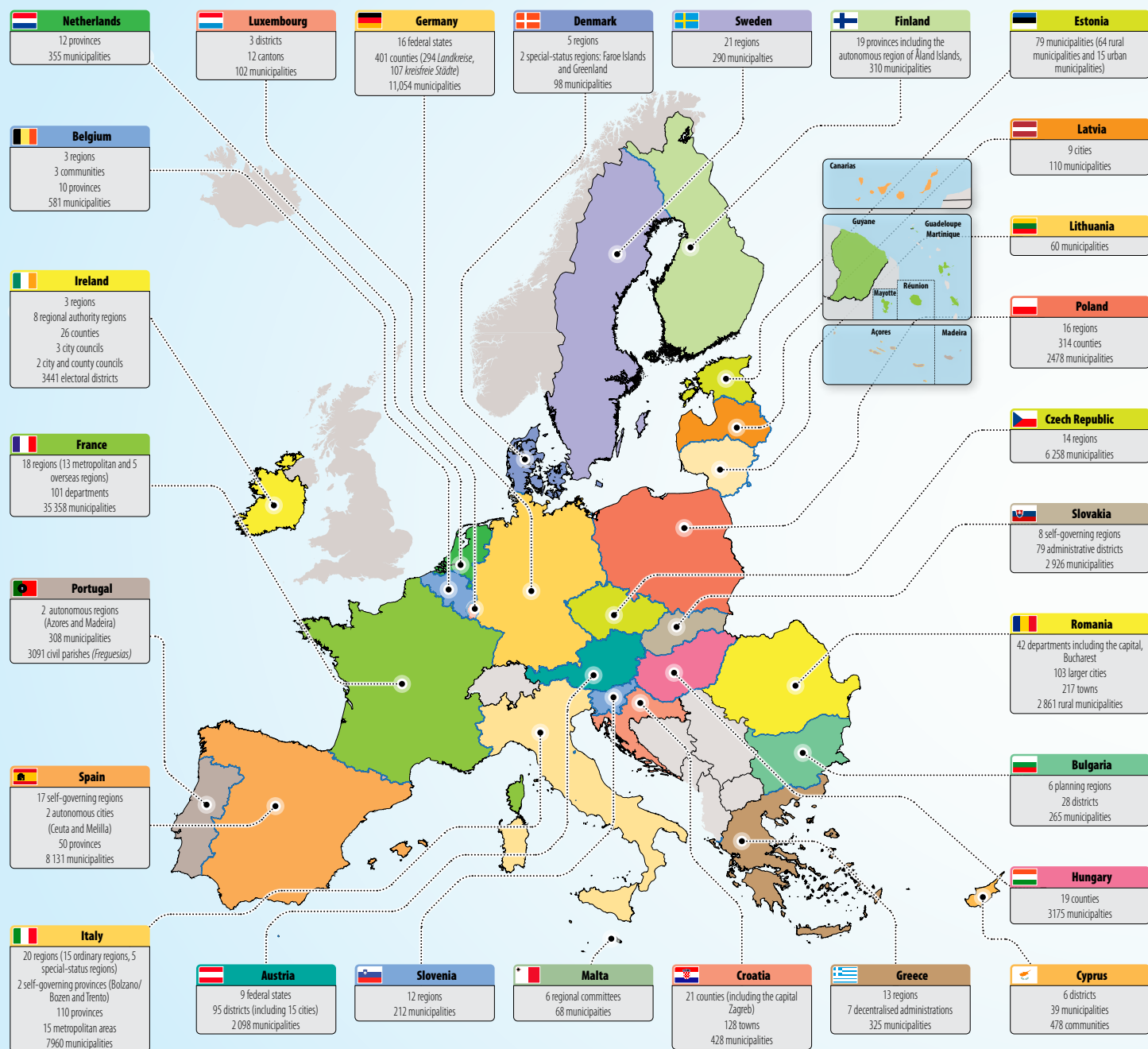


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Foreword



Apostolos Tzitzikostas

President of the European Committee of the Regions



The economic, migration and COVID-19 crises have illustrated that only by pooling resources and working together, Europe can best serve the interests of its citizens. Each time Europe has been confronted with new challenges, it has relied on its local and regional governments to respond and find solutions for our communities.

Today is no different. The unprecedented nature of the crisis requires Europe to show unity and solidarity by supporting the efforts of its 1 million local and regional authorities. The contribution by local and regional leaders is and will be key to stop the pandemic, continue to deliver public services, protect jobs, support SMEs and prepare the ground for the recovery. Saving lives and our economies is synonymous with supporting all local communities.

Building a cohesive, resilient and sustainable Europe that is closer to people will be our main priority over the next five years.



To achieve this, we will focus upon strengthening and protecting democracy. European democracy needs to be modernised making it more responsive to citizens' needs. The Conference on the Future of Europe is an opportunity to bring about change by giving local and regional governments a stronger role in the EU. We will continue to champion Europe and its fundamental values locally – including freedom of speech, equality, human rights and freedom of movement – which are vital for the future of democracy.

Secondly, we need to refocus the EU's efforts to support all cities and regions respond to the major transformations they face today. These include ensuring the EU assists their response and recovery to the pandemic. Europe must also not take sight off the climate emergency, demographic change, migration, and digitalisation. All these challenges need a coherent, integrated and local European approach that supports every citizen. How Europe responds to these transformations and emerges from the pandemic will determine the future of the European Union.

Thirdly, cohesion as a fundamental value must be strengthened and be the compass of Europe's future. In such uncertain times, social, economic and territorial cohesion between regions, cities and people is necessary not only to secure the long-term future of the European economy, but as a demonstration of the European Union's strength. The EU must provide sufficient regional and agricultural funding, but it must go further. Cohesion must be at the heart of its priorities, policies and programmes to bind Europe's communities.



The urgency for Europe to come together, react and invest in all regions and cities is paramount to secure our citizens' future. Now, more than ever, the European Union must use all its resources, modernise its democratic and institutional architecture and show that it is at the service of every local community and every citizen.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas
President of the European Committee of the Regions
Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece

Vasco Alves Cordeiro

First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions



 @VascoCordeiro3

After a long and difficult recovery from the financial crisis, the fight against COVID-19 and its overarching effects is a new wake-up call to remind EU leaders of the need for a stronger and fairer Europe, a more robust EU and a different way of working to ensure better results. Only solidarity between all levels and joint action can allow us to overcome the challenges Member States and regions cannot face alone. For the sake of the European project itself, it is essential to bear in mind that people are not only expecting from the EU that it acts on their behalf. I am convinced that, when dealing with such a tremendous challenge, people also expect from the EU that it leads us into action, bringing efficient, quick and visible answers to the numerous issues arising from this pandemic.

There is no Union without cohesion. The development disparities between regions and between Member States are still considerable and will be further exposed as we deal with the effects of the pandemic. The EU needs to



support regional development in order to be able to fight social, economic and territorial inequalities and disparities, as well as to provide the support that its citizens need and demand. This is why we, as local and regional politicians, advocate for a robust and decentralized European budget, with additional resources dedicated to the new and emerging priorities in the sectors of health, climate and migration. We also plead for revised fiscal rules in order to support a strong public investment and efficient public services at local and regional level. Cohesion policy is the ideal framework to achieve the social and economic recovery that Europe needs to reassume its leading position in the world. This will allow us to build a more progressive and sustainable Europe that cares for its citizens and its environment.

Regardless of their geographical location, size or wealth, every region and city on the continent or in the most remote places should be part of the European project; because every citizen matters. These cities and regions represent the democratic foundation on which EU leaders must rebuild Europe together with more than one million local and regional politicians who are elected by EU citizens. They are at the

forefront of every crisis to support our citizens and should therefore be fully involved in the EU's daily work.



For the next five years, the CoR will lead the way and reaffirm the priorities of the cities and regions for the future of our Union. We will be working with our fellow European institutions as well as with our European, national and local partners. **Our mission is to bring the EU closer to where citizens live: in their cities and regions.**

Vasco Alves Cordeiro
*First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions
President of the Regional Government of the Azores, Portugal*

Priorities

Bringing Europe closer to people:
Democracy and the future of the EU

Cohesion, our fundamental value:
Place-based EU policies

Managing fundamental societal transformations:
Building resilient regional and local communities

Bringing Europe closer to people:

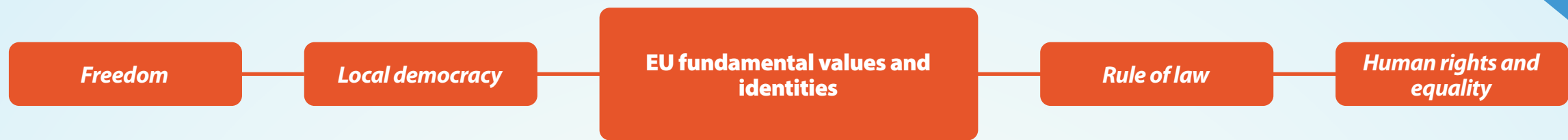
Democracy and the future of the EU

PRIORITY **1**

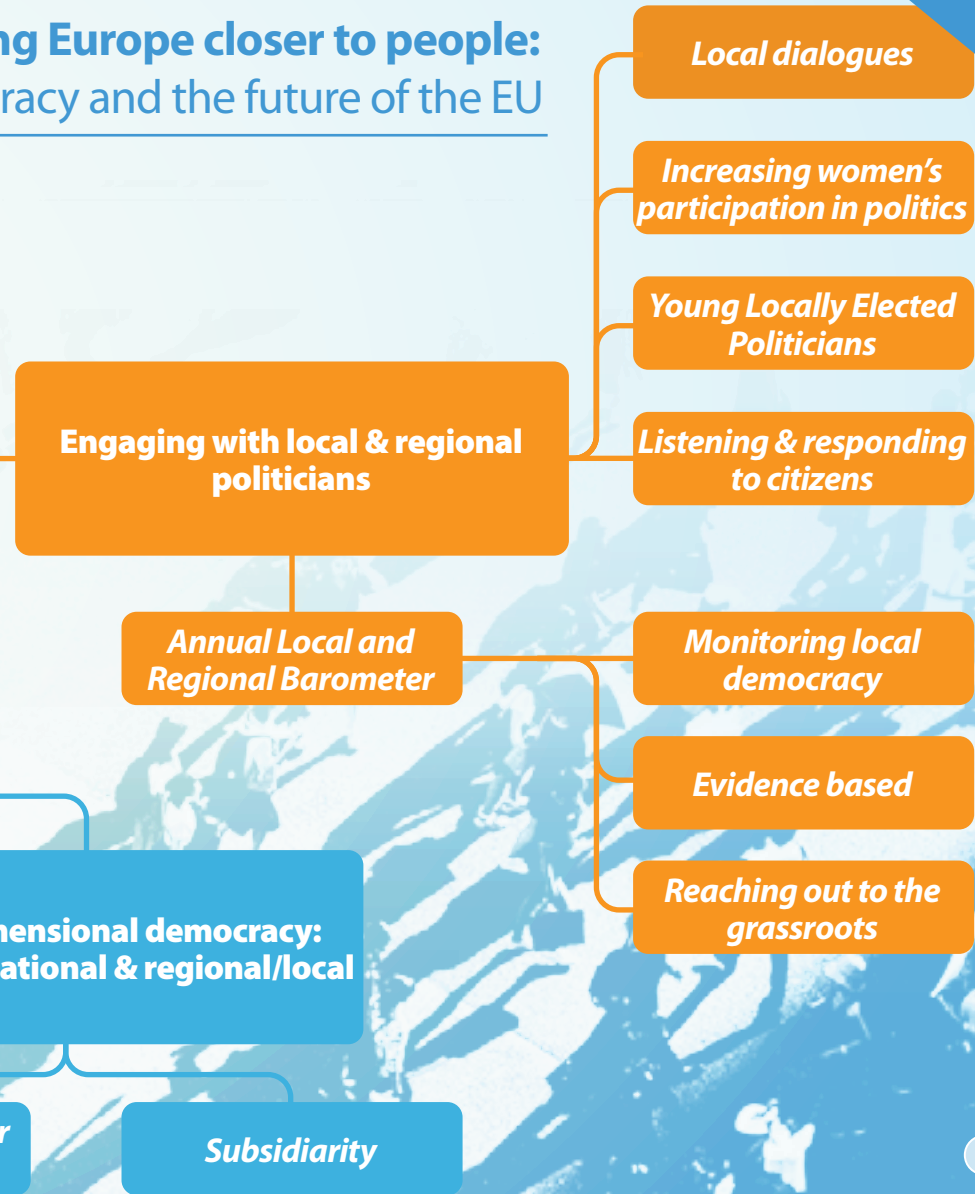
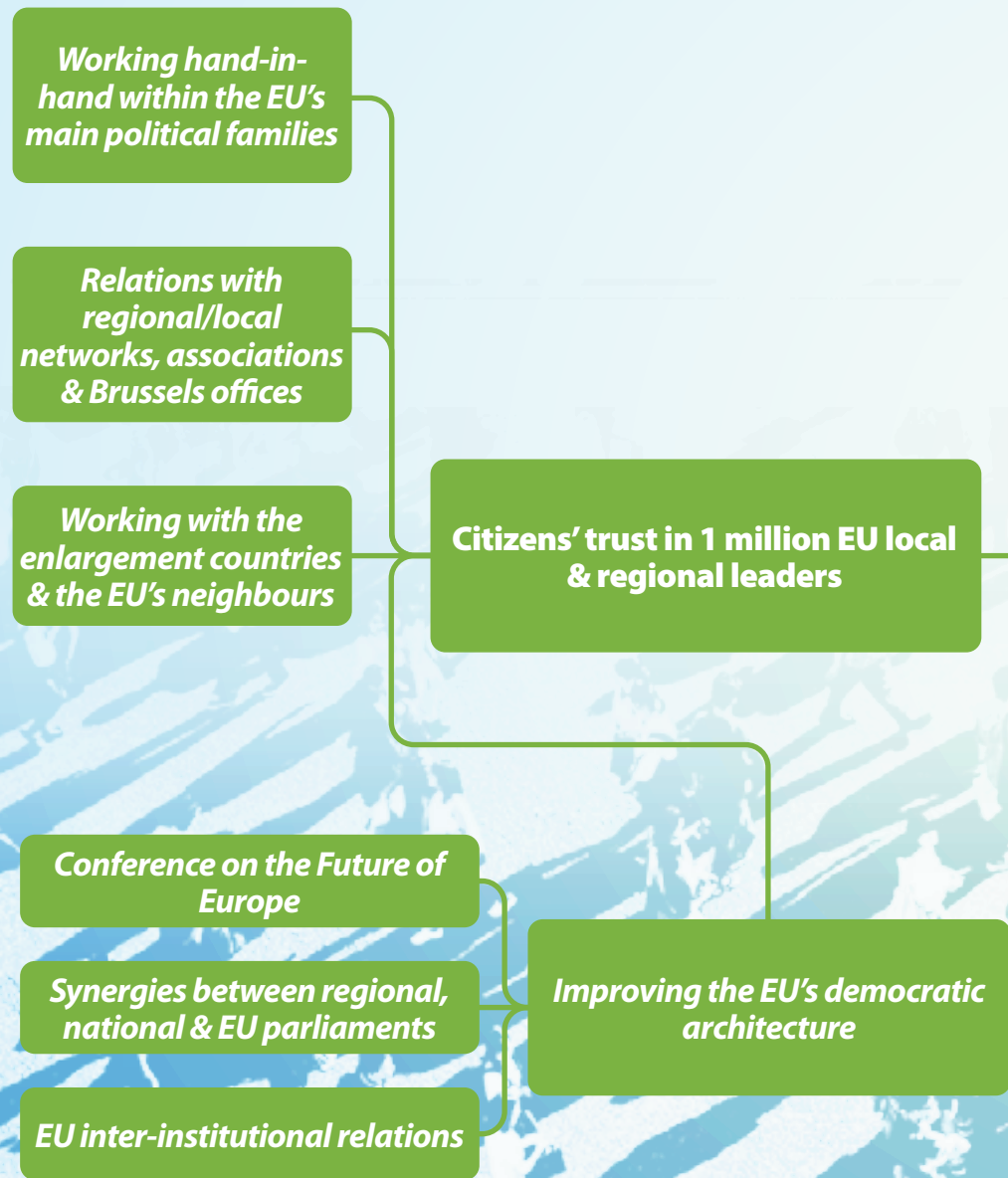
Rethinking how democracy works today

Our main priority is to bring Europe closer to its people and to reinforce European democracy at all levels of government. It aims to improve the way the EU works, ensuring its policies and programmes meet the real needs of citizens. We need to modernise the European Union so it more efficiently answers people's needs.





Bringing Europe closer to people:
Democracy and the future of the EU



Managing fundamental societal transformations:

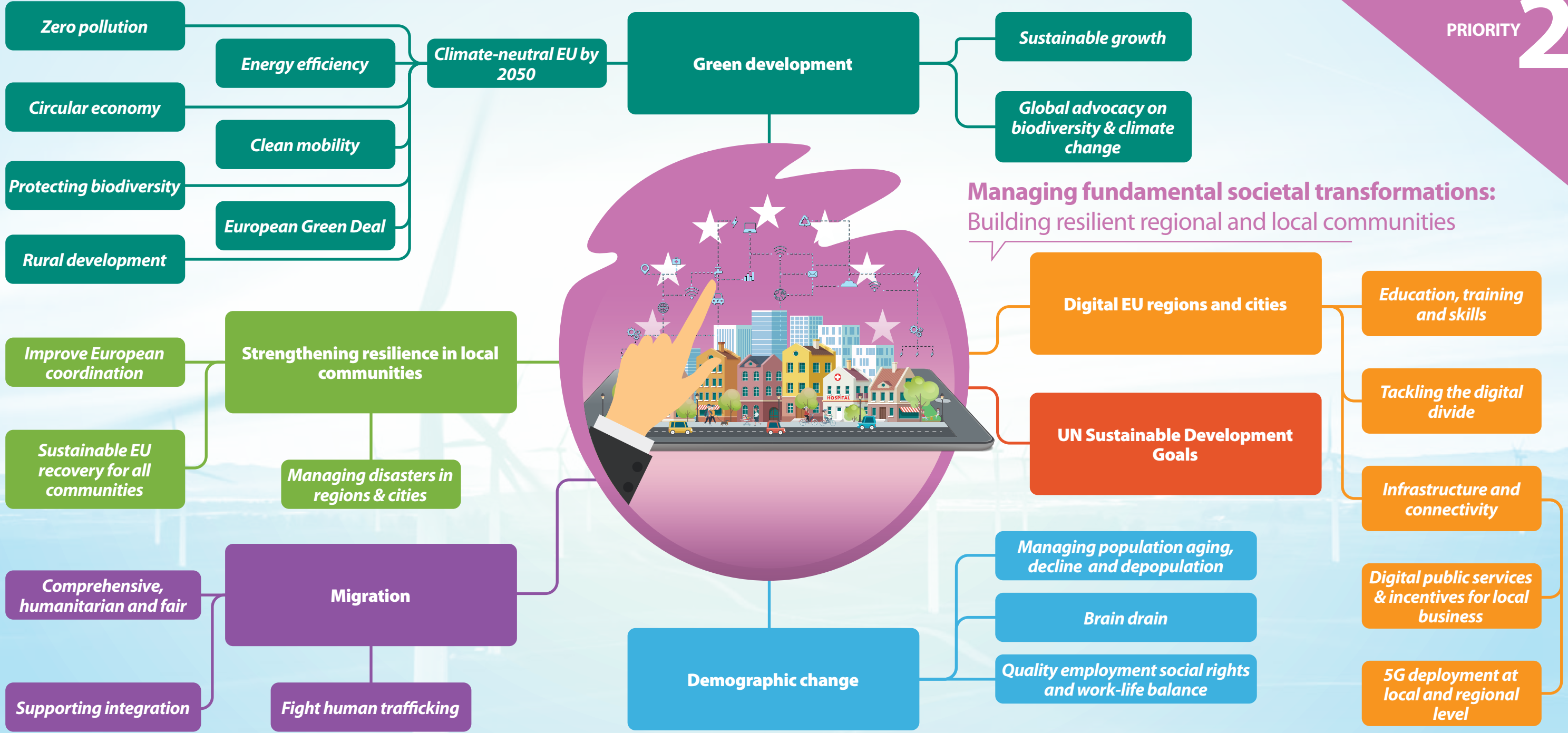
Building resilient regional and local communities



Responding to the major transformations our regions, cities, towns and villages face today

Global pandemics, climate, digital and demographic transitions, as well as the flow of migration, are having a profound impact on every European region, city, town and village. Led by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, we will identify solutions to ensure the EU sufficiently supports local and regional authorities in responding to future emergencies and addressing the societal transformations taking place in their communities.





Cohesion, our fundamental value:

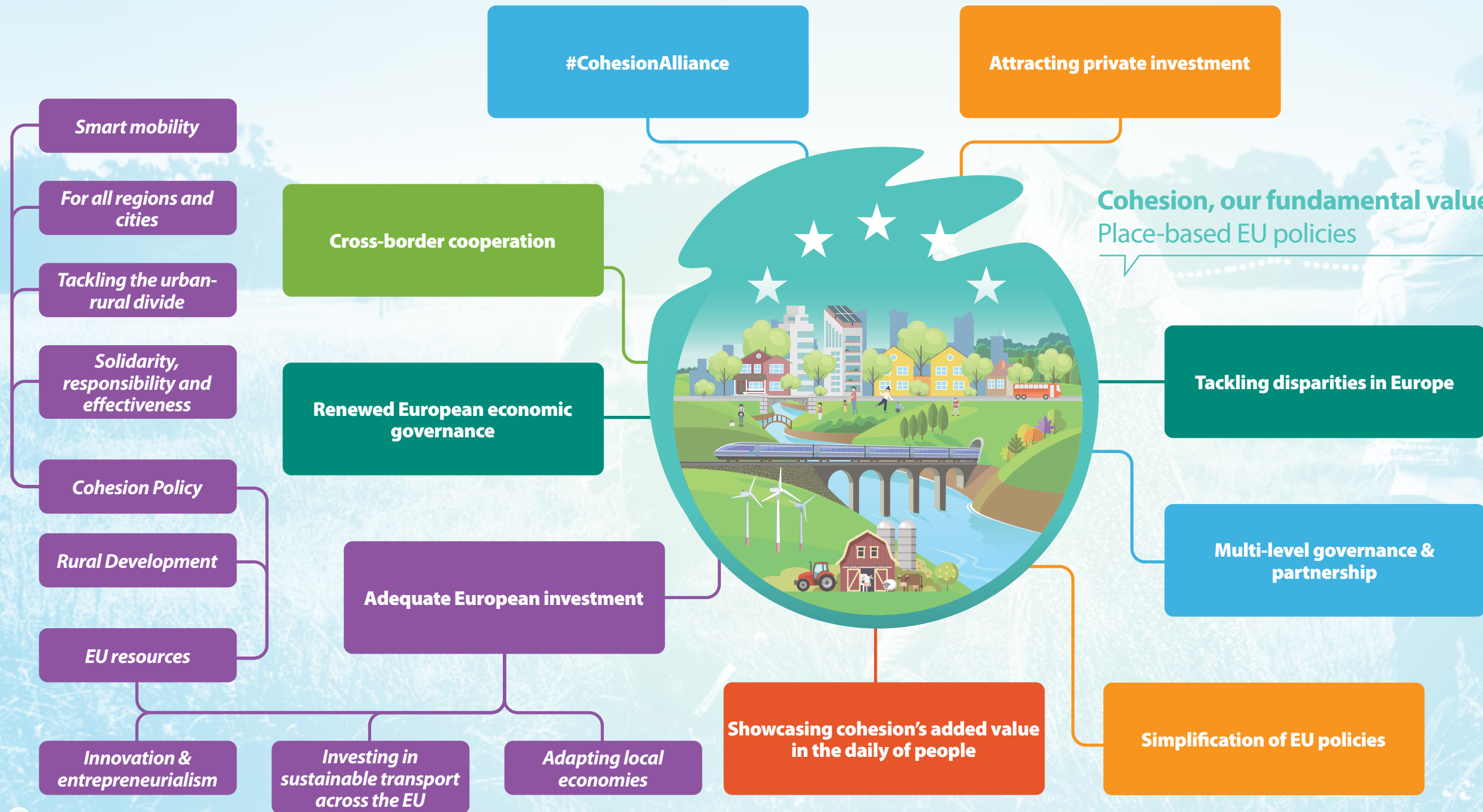
Place-based EU policies

PRIORITY **3**

Putting the EU at the service of its people and their places of living

Our third priority will be to ensure that economic, social and territorial cohesion is fostered and respected in all EU policies that affect people and their places of living (what we call place-based policies). It will showcase the added value of cohesion not only as a policy, but as a fundamental value that must underpin all EU policies. Cohesion is not money, it is our fundamental value.





The European Committee of the Regions





What is the European Committee of the Regions?

We are an institutional body of the European Union. Our Members are elected Presidents of Regions, regional Councillors, Mayors and Local Councillors, democratically accountable to the citizens.

The President
Apostolos Tzitzikostas

Building a cohesive, resilient and sustainable Europe that is closer to people will be our main priority over the next five years.

The First Vice-President
Vasco Alves Cordeiro

Our mission is to bring the EU closer to where citizens live: in their cities and regions.

6 political groups



MEMBERSHIP



 **329**
members

 **27**
members states

REPRESENTING



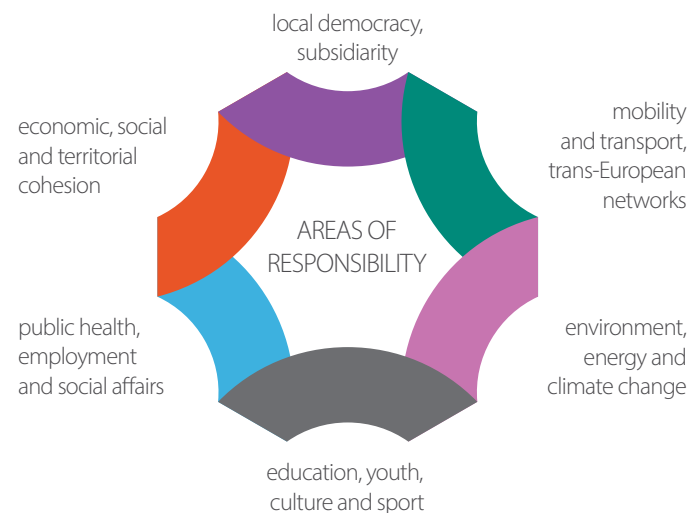
 **+/- 1 Million**
local and regional politicians

 **+/- 300**
regions

 **+/- 90,000**
local authorities

 **+/- 447 M**
EU citizens

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY



IMPACT



COMMISSIONS

6 Commissions (groups of Members) prepare draft opinions and resolutions to be submitted to the Plenary Assembly.

Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)



Economic Policy (ECON)



Natural Resources (NAT)



Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)

Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)

Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)

PLATFORM AND NETWORKS

Eastern partnership



Euro-Mediterranean Assembly

EU2020 Monitoring Platform



Multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs

Subsidiarity Monitoring Network



Covenant of Mayors

Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation for Development



European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

Network of Regional Hubs



Cities and Regions for Integration

3 MAIN PRINCIPLES



Proximity to people



Multilevel governance



Subsidiarity

6 PLENARIES



CoR Members gather in Plenary in Brussels to vote and adopt opinions.

Olgierd Geblewicz

President of the EPP Group

 @EPP_CoR
eppcor.eu



The next 5 years are going to be a very dynamic period for Europe's regions and for European democracy. The EPP in the CoR will support the Presidency in its work to deliver tangible results on the priorities which we set today and the new challenges the CoR and its members might face over time.

Our vision for the next 5 years is to make citizens the cornerstone of European democracy. For that we would need to develop lasting mechanisms to consult people locally while also strengthening subsidiarity in the EU, so that we can transform their input into decision-making powers. In the first two years of the mandate we should use the momentum of the Conference on the Future of Europe in order to promote



the long-term priorities coming from our cities and regions. Local citizens' dialogues with structured feedback and stronger interaction with regional parliaments and local authorities will help us to shape European policies based on facts checked against the realities on the ground.

Our contribution to legislative work will focus on the main challenges which EU's regions face today – achieving climate neutrality, making the best of the digital transition, coping with global pandemics, building resilience in the face of declining demography. But in order to ensure that we promote a EU that improves people's lives, supports our local economies and creates new employment opportunities in times of change, we need flexibility in our political agendas and flexibility in EU's cohesion policy. The challenges of the Corona virus with a huge impact at national, European



and international economies showed also how important functioning and efficient local communities are in assuring daily life needs, primary care and reliable local infrastructure. We can achieve that by intensifying consultations and common actions with other like-minded pro-European political groups and with the other EU institutions.

As elected regional and local politicians we are also responsible for transmitting a realistic image of EU policies at home and beyond our constituencies. Bringing EU's success to the attention of regional and local media and promoting solidarity and mutual support between EU regions is key for the success of our work.

Olgierd Geblewicz
President of the European People's Party (EPP)
President of the Westpomeranian Region,
Poland

Christophe Rouillon

President of the PES Group



Many of the 120.000 cities and regions across the European Union are led by progressive, socialist and social-democratic mayors and presidents. Think of capital cities like Berlin, Brussels, or Budapest. Think of the numerous regions in Germany, Spain, or France and further away like the Azores in Portugal. Think of small municipalities, peri-urban or rural, like mine. Our role as the Group of the Party of European Socialists is to give them a voice and to work together with them to create a more sustainable, just and inclusive European Union that leaves no people and no places behind.

We are facing challenging times. The Coronavirus crisis has only exacerbated already existing pressing issues like the climate and ecological emergency, growing social inequalities, the transformation of work and digitalization, lack of opportunities for the many, and a widespread feeling



that citizens are disempowered. Cities and regions have a very important role to play to face these challenges. With our motto "Think global, act local", our group, strong of its nearly 200 elected representatives, stands for a political agenda inspired by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We aim at having the European Committee of the Regions formulate solid proposals in this mandate, in particular on sustainability, cohesion policy, housing, energy transition, workers' protection, digital transformation and digital rights, in order to help local and regional authorities and the EU on their path towards sustainable development. This also entails being bold about SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.



The crisis we are now facing can be transformed into an opportunity if we have the courage to build a new future for our communities. For this, a "Green Deal", fully involving local and regional authorities, will be key. Their skills and resources are indeed essential to deliver a just transition.

We will also defend the idea of a more political role for the European Committee of the Regions. More than ever, the Committee must be the voice of the territories within the EU institutions and contribute to the shaping of the EU's future, in particular through the Conference on the Future of Europe and citizens' dialogues. But no matter the context or the crisis we face, our constant line of conduct will be to stand for a deeper European integration based on subsidiarity, solidarity and an unconditional adherence to Europe's fundamental values and freedoms.

Christophe Rouillon
President of the Party of European Socialists (PES)
Mayor of Coulaines, France

François Decoster

President of the Renew Europe Group

 @RenewEuropeCoR
reneweurope-cor.eu

renew^{CoR}
europe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has pointed the finger at loopholes in the functioning of our societies and our Union. At the same time, it presents us with an opportunity.

We need to ensure that each step we take leads us to a stronger and more united society. In order to achieve this, we will focus on creating the right framework for a recovery that is green, smart and inclusive.

A recovery that keeps climate-neutrality on track, implementing the Green Deal in a just and financially supportive manner. A green transition, towards a decarbonised economy, that will create new business and employment opportunities. A transition that should lay down the conditions for a new type of market economy, based on carbon free energy, equal opportunities, fair competition that prevents and tackles monopolies of any kind (public or private,



quasi or de facto), with appropriate regulation to protect the most vulnerable. A transition that facilitates a place-based industrial policy, assists strategic industries, includes re-skilling of workers whose jobs are disappearing, creates sustainable local jobs, especially for our Youth and boosts SMEs. A transition that will ensure balanced biodiversity and the protection and proper management of our environments, our urban and rural areas, as well as our forests. A transition allowing us to experience all of our European tourist destinations sustainably.

A recovery that will evaluate demographic change and ensure that future decisions are tailor-made to local needs and specificities; that considers the production of necessary health and sanitary equipment as strategic and that public health becomes a real and effective partnership between local, regional, national and European leaders.

A recovery that benefits from the big progress made in the digitalization of the public and private sectors and takes it further, by ensuring that high-quality broadband comes to each household and to the smallest enterprises and that each citizen, no matter which age or gender is taught the right skills to use them for better access to public and private services. A recovery based on the rule of law, strengthening local democracy, both in terms of citizen participation, via digital tools, and in terms of the quality of local democracy, free from corruption, inclusive in its decision-making, with free local media and active civil society, and in which citizens make full use of the opportunities afforded them by EU membership.

François Decoster
*President of the Renew Europe Group
Mayor of Saint Omer
Member of the Hauts de France regional parliament, France*

Władysław Ortyl

President of the ECR Group



Here in the ECR Group we are committed to a more prosperous, secure and decentralised Europe led by local communities in partnership with national governments. A government rules best when it listens to the citizens and spends taxpayers' money responsibly, which is why we emphasise the principles of realism, subsidiarity and democracy.

In the difficult times like the ones we go through at the moment, we need to put pragmatism first. The ECR Group represents a conservative movement which believes that through European cooperation in key areas we can find real solutions to tackle real issues. It is through common sense policies and respecting the wishes of our citizens that we can find solutions which help to create jobs and make Europe a safer place to live.



The Member States and regions can find the best-fit model for them to tackle anything from fiscal policies to creating jobs that allow young people to remain in their home area and start a family. With regard to other issues that do require cooperation at the EU level, we see a clear need for a strong Europe in areas such as territorial cohesion, scientific research, agriculture and the single market.

We offer a bold, alternative vision of a reformed EU as a community of nations and regions cooperating together in areas where we have common interests that can best be developed through effective work. At the heart of every decision made by our politicians is the consideration of whether or not it is adding value for hard-working taxpayers across the Union.

Władysław Ortyl
President of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)
President of the Podkarpackie Region
Poland

One of the most enduring challenges facing the EU today is economic recovery after the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. Our Group has advocated real actions in the spirit of solidarity: financial assistance to struggling regions, more flexibility in the use of EU funds, and lifting import duties on medical equipment. We have also underlined that all new policies need to take into account local and regional realities and make sure any EU measures do not infringe the sovereignty of either the nation state or indeed local government.



Fundamentally, European countries and regions are different in a plethora of ways: language, nationality, economic development, natural resources, level of local education, geography and income. This is why we believe that only an EU that respects that diversity and trusts its countries and regions can build a stronger future, one that improves people's lives.

Kieran McCarthy

President of the EA Group



 @EA_CoR
web.cor.europa.eu/ea

There are many social and economic challenges of our time. Regions and cities across the EU remain at the frontline of responding to such challenges – acting upon them, finding resolutions, whilst all the time moving forward in an ambitious and sustainable way. The recent Coronavirus pandemic has also shown once again how important local and regional authorities are to the lives of EU citizens.

Across Europe Presidents of Regions, mayors and regional and local councillors have so much knowledge and experiences that can be shared – such knowledge and experiences strive to feed into present and EU future policy areas. For 25 years the CoR has assisted in realising the vision of the EU, whilst all the time asking the difficult questions, seeking resolution through partnership, and championing the ethos of the EU.



The CoR is a core part of Team EU. Through co-operation with the other European Institutions, the CoR has built a common interface with the people who live in the four corners of the EU. Nevertheless, the CoR needs to continue to evolve its mechanisms to ensure that the voice and powers of local, regional and national authorities are duly taken into account in European legislation.

The European Alliance believes that the European Union needs to have a strong vision, which connects policies, and which will benefit our cities, our towns, our rural and peripheral areas across the EU. Knowledge sharing, financial investment and the creation of flexible regulation is crucial to creating innovative and cross-cutting approaches to supporting a fair economically and environmentally sustainable EU economy.




Finally, we should not forget who we are, yes we are members of a European Union, which brings huge benefits to all of us, but we all have our different cultures, traditions and languages. The need to work for and on behalf of EU citizens, whilst respecting our diverse regions, is significant as we move forward engaging with the challenges of our time.

Kieran McCarthy
*President of the European Alliance Group (EA)
Member of the Cork City Council,
Ireland*

Bernd Voß Satu Haapanen

Co-Presidents of the Greens Group



 @Greens_CoR
web.cor.europa.eu/greens



Active citizens and their democratic involvement is fundamental for both the European Union and the regions, cities and municipalities in view of shaping the common future.

Only a European Green Deal, in which all policy areas are consistently integrated - agriculture as well as industry, transport, housing, education and social inclusion - will become a sustainable growth strategy for Europe. The more time we lose on the way to 100% renewable energy, the higher the economic costs will be. The just transition has to happen now - this is the only way we can secure our well-being, have decent jobs and retain mobility. Therefore, we need binding targets in the EU for the upcoming years in order to achieve the climate and energy objectives.



Regions, cities and municipalities need sustainable investment opportunities, as EU policies are largely implemented on regional and local level. The EU has to provide for the appropriate financial support, and EU funding must significantly contribute to achieving the Paris climate targets while likewise strengthening social justice. **The European Committee of the Regions can play a key role in putting the Green Deal into practice.**

The Greens wants to see Europe ensuring equal opportunities to all its citizens. We want to offer our children quality education no matter where they grow and guarantee them a future with hope and chances. We want to ensure the biodiversity in our forests and seas; we want the climate change to be stopped.



We strive for inclusive communities where people can trust their voices to be heard and their civil rights to be respected. We strive for creating jobs that take into account not only people's needs but also the environment's vulnerability.

We see humanity as a universal human right, which is non-negotiable and forms the value basis for all our actions. Therefore, we urge for just and human treatment for those in vulnerable situations, such as refugees and asylum seekers. The European Union must find means to help developing countries in developing democracy, fighting climate change and fulfilling their obligation on human rights.

Satu Haapanen
*Co-President of the Greens Group
City Councillor, City of Oulu, Finland*

Bernd VOß
*Co-President of the Greens Group
Member of Schleswig-Holstein State
Parliament, Germany*





**European Committee
of the Regions**

The home of all villages, towns, cities and regions of the European Union.

Get in touch!

Created in 1994, after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 447 million Europeans. Its main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

June 2020

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