



European Committee
of the Regions

EU annual regional and local barometer

State of the Union from the regional and local perspective

Address by Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European
Committee of the Regions



#EURegionalBarometer

check against delivery



Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

Dear Colleagues and friends,

The pandemic has affected every one of us. Every one of our citizens.

Millions of lives have been lost. Our economies and borders have been closed.

The innovative capacity of industry has been tested.

The incredibly brave workers in our healthcare, emergency and social services have been stretched.

During this time, Europe has stayed strong and united.

And, if there is one lesson from this crisis, it is that the essence of Europe – its strength, solidarity and the delivery of services for its citizens – happens in its regions, cities and villages.

This is why I am pleased to present today our 2021 Regional and Local Barometer, an evidence-based political initiative that takes the pulse of our regions, cities and villages.

Our objective is clear:

To demand the European Commission, as the EU's executive, to improve citizens' lives in the places where they live.

By doing so, it ensures that the subsidiarity principle – enshrined in the EU's treaties – guides us, ensuring that all levels of government – EU, national, regional and local – act together at the level closest to the citizens.



Dear Colleagues.

Every day, on the ground, we provide quality public services.

And we continue to do so, despite increasing costs and decreasing incomes.

Our Barometer tells us that in 2020, Europe's regional and local authorities

increased expenditure by more than 125 billion euros and saw their revenues fall by 55 billion euros.

This is what we call the "scissors effect".

And this translates into a gap of around 180 billion euros.

For instance, Dutch municipalities lost up to 350 million euros from parking fees alone.

Local authorities in Cyprus lost 25% of their revenues.

In Bulgaria the loss is over 15%, and in Italy almost 10%.

Cities such as Torre Vedras in Portugal, will no longer be able to provide meals to students.

The Czech city of Kladno may not continue to deliver medicines and food to the elderly.

The money, for these and many more services, comes from regional and local budgets, but also national and EU budgets.

So all three levels of government must work together for the recovery, by ensuring that every single euro of taxpayers' money is invested where it is most needed.

This shows why the role of regional and local authorities, in the planning and implementation of the resilience and recovery plans, is indispensable.

My point is clear: "COVID Poverty" is a reality for more and more people.

Our response must be effective.

Budgetary stability of regional and local authorities must be restored.

Fiscal autonomy must be broadened, so that we can invest in the specific needs of the people and not in a top-down manner.





Dear Colleagues.

Our Barometer also shows the major regional disparities in health.

Cities may provide more healthcare, but rural regions saw lower rates of deaths.

So, for now, and for future crises, we must re-assess health competencies across the EU.

Let me be clear:

Conceiving a Health Union only between Brussels and the 27 Capitals will never work, and we will never support it because regional and local authorities hold legal responsibilities on health in all the EU's 27 member states.

The same applies to the Green Deal.

The UN has said that we now have five times the number of weather-related disasters that we had in 1970, and they are seven times more costly.

We all saw the summer fires and floods that tragically hit so many communities.

As 75% of EU citizens live in urban areas, cities are the biggest producers of greenhouse gas emissions.



So, dear colleagues,

Since we deliver 70% of climate-change reduction measures and up to 90% of adaptation measures, please join me in our call to Executive Vice-President Timmermans as the EU's negotiator, to ensure that the regional and local dimension is included in the Glasgow COP26 conclusions.



Dear Colleagues,

The pandemic also exposed another dramatic divide: "Digital Cohesion".

Currently, only Germany, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands are actively curbing the urban-rural digital divide.

As the total coverage of EU households with high internet capacity is 44% in urban areas, and only 20% in rural areas.

Let's act now, and faster.

With at least 20% of the funds under the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility for digital transition, a strong regional and local dimension is crucial.

To respond to all these health, green and digital challenges we welcome the European Commission's Research Missions to break silos and work together on adapting to climate change, Smart Cities, oceans, soil health and food, cancer and other areas.

We are also ready to develop a "Regional Resilience Platform" that supports people to strengthen regional and local resilience against future natural disasters, climate change and health crises.



Dear Colleagues.

One, final, remark.

This about our European Democracy and the future of our Union.

Our Barometer shows that 65% of leaders from regions, cities and villages feel they do not have enough influence in the EU and 86% think that strengthening subnational government in EU decision making would improve EU democracy.

Both figures tell a true story.

The story of a democracy that delivers in partnership.

The story of a people who want a European Union that delivers results at the level closest to its citizens.

Otherwise more and more people will start questioning its very existence.



This is why the EU can no longer remain a top-down territorially blind project, as we unfortunately saw in the recent State of the Union by the European Commission.

Only through a bottom-up and a values-based approach, can Europe re-build citizens' trust.



Dear colleagues,

Despite its imperfections, the European Union is and will remain our house.

But its functioning must be improved.

Let's listen to our people and discuss with them how to transform our European House of Democracy into a European Home of Democracy.

With the EU being the protective roof, the Member States the strong walls, and the regions, cities and villages, the solid foundations.

Let's improve people's lives,

Let's bring Europe closer to its people.

Thank you!



European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Our members are elected presidents of regions, regional councillors, mayors and local councillors - democratically accountable to more than 446 million European citizens. The CoR's 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.

October 2021 – CdR_4517

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 101 | 1040 Bruxelles/Brussel | BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Tel. +32 22822211 | e-mail: PublicationsCdR@cor.europa.eu | www.cor.europa.eu

 @EU_CoR |  /european.committee.of.the.regions |  /european-committee-of-the-regions |  @EU_regions_cities

