![European Committee of the Regions logo]

**European Committee
of the Regions**

MARSEILLE
PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR
FRANCE

3 / 4
MARCH
2022

EUROPEAN
SUMMIT
OF
REGIONS
AND
CITIES

Address by

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

**President of the European
Committee of the Regions**

#eulocal

FRIDAY 4 MARCH 2022

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY
MAIN PLENARY SESSION OF THE SUMMIT

President Macron,

President Metsola,

Vice-President Suica,

President Muselier,

President Schweng,

1st Vice-President Cordeiro,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mayors of Kiev and Mariupol,

we heard your call for help and solidarity,

now listen to the voice of Europe's regions and cities:

You are one of us. We are your allies. We are your partners.

Ukraine's place is in Europe.

This is why, I have yesterday announced that

the Mayor of Kyiv,

receives honorary membership of

the European Committee of the Regions.

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

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

3000 thousand people in this summit,

and 1.2 million regional and local leaders across Europe,

stand with you, stand with Ukraine.

Food, first aid and medical supplies,

right now are gathered and will be sent to Ukraine.

Shelter is provided to the mothers and the children and the elders,

who were forced to leave Ukraine.

People in Europe's regions and cities

are protesting against the ruthless Russian invasion.

Yesterday, here in Marseille, in front of the City Hall,

people protested against the war.

Mayors, your fight is our fight,

the fight for freedom, democracy and justice.

And in the end our values are stronger.

And in the end our values will win.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Democracy

cannot be taken for granted,

when it has so many enemies around us.

Rule of law, human rights, equality, solidarity, our common values,

these truths may be self-evident, but they are never self-executed.

They require effort.

They call for unity and action.

Take a moment to consider the challenges we face:

To come to the side of our neighbours, shaken by the Russian assault.

To respond to the climate emergency.

To accelerate the digital transformation.

To battle against extremism, hatred and violence.

To fight inequality.

To promote territorial, economic and social cohesion

as a European fundamental value.

To build a modern European democracy that works and delivers.

Now let's face it:

No one, no matter how large or powerful,

can defeat such challenges alone.

So the question we ask today,

is not whether our Union is too big or too small,

but whether it works for the people?

Whether our democracy works for the people?

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Whether people in Germany, Poland, France or Greece,

feel attached to their European identity and citizenship.

Whether Brussels can do more – a lot more –

to move forward from citizenship "de jure" to citizenship "de facto".

To make citizens understand that Europe

is capable of providing answers.

Answers that guarantee the future of our democratic model,

and deliver results at the level closest to people,

exactly as President Metsola said,

right after her election as President of the European Parliament.

Now, this is how the European Committee of the Regions

sees our "House of European Democracy".

EU being the protective roof.

Member States – the strong walls.

Regional and Local Authorities - the solid foundations.

This is the way forward –

With a three-dimensional legitimacy.

This is how we will rebuild, recover and emerge stronger than before:

We therefore call

for our regions, cities and municipalities

to be gradually upgraded

- through the European Committee of the Regions -

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beyond its current consultative function

towards a binding role in a limited number of policy areas

with a clear territorial dimension

while avoiding additional complexity in the EU.

Giving greater consideration

to the expertise of local and regional authorities

in the elaboration and implementation of EU law

will lead to better regulation

and greater democratic legitimacy in the EU.

By forging Europe's future bottom – up.

By investing in subsidiarity, cohesion and resilience.

By taking decisions closer to the people.

By winning back their trust and their hearts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

we stand here today because of our parents and our grand-parents,

who had the courage and the vision

to build a Union of peace and prosperity.

A Union, whose real power comes from its diversity,

from the fact that we are different, but we are united.

And it is our common duty now,

to offer to our children

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more reasons to build Europe and live together,

instead of letting it fall apart.

So let's join forces

to reinforce Europe's foundations in every village, city, and region.

Let's join forces

to reinforce people's trust in Europe.

Let's join forces

to strengthen democracy in Europe.

This is the moment,

this is the call,

To bring Europe closer to people,

to stand together

with our democratic allies in Ukraine and everywhere in the World.

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.