



European Committee
of the Regions

2025 2030 NEW MANDATE

SPEECH OF THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Speech by Juanma Moreno on his election as First Vice President of the Committee of the Regions

Brussels, 20 February 2025

Dear President Kata Tüttö, dear President Vasco Cordeiro,

First of all, I want to thank President Vasco Cordeiro and his predecessor, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, for their work during the previous term.

Their dedication has been reflected in the momentum that the Committee of the Regions has gained in recent years. And, of course, thank you all for having given me your trust to co-chair this Chamber.

A special thanks to my group, the European People's Party, and its President, Sari Rautio.

I also appreciate the spirit of understanding between the two major groups, which made it possible to reach the agreement to chair the Committee of the Regions. The first two years under my colleague Kata Tüttö, proposed by the Party of European Socialists, and the following two years under myself, proposed by the EPP Group.

I personally commit to five years of consensus and dialogue, ensuring that all of you—regardless of your group affiliation—feel represented.

It is an honour for me to address you today as Co-President of the Committee of the Regions, a responsibility I accept with enthusiasm and a spirit of public service that has led me to serve as President of Andalusia, the most populous region of Spain and the southernmost region of Europe, which I have been representing in the Committee of the Regions since 2019.

There is much at stake in this term.

Circumstances are threatening multilateralism, the current world order, and Europe's stability.

The armed conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, the trade policies of the United States which cast serious doubts on the Union, and the rise of populism in Europe.

This is why we need a cohesive, stable Europe with clearly defined goals.

A Europe that walks the path of moderation and consensus, but also one that is firm.

An autonomous Europe with the resources to implement its policies and to tackle the major challenges identified by the Council and the Commission for this term.

A free and democratic Europe, a strong and secure Europe, a prosperous and competitive Europe.

The Committee of the Regions, as a key actor in the development of policies set by European institutions, must in this period address issues such as increasing competitiveness without giving up on sustainable growth and regional prosperity, cohesion policy and the new multiannual financial framework, the necessary EU enlargement, a global EU approach to migration and border management, water policy, the fight against climate change, and the review of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Regions and local entities hold significant competencies and are strategic partners in achieving the Union's objectives.

From an economic and competitiveness perspective, Europe has realized it must compete in a global economy increasingly dominated by China and the USA.

Let us not forget that the EU is the second largest economic power in the world.

The Mario Draghi report on the future of European competitiveness and the Enrico Letta report on the future of the single market highlight this challenge, and the only way to overcome it is by supporting innovation, encouraging entrepreneurship, and reducing administrative hurdles.

In short, we need to cut bureaucracy at the local, regional, national, and of course, European levels.

The Commission recently launched its first major initiative of this term with the Competitiveness Compass, which will guide the EU's work on competitiveness for the next five years.

This roadmap constantly seeks to guarantee the EU's climate neutrality and lays the foundation for Europe to be the place where future clean technologies and products are invented, manufactured, and marketed.

For the single market to function properly, we need an effective cohesion policy based on upward convergence.

Cohesion policy is entering a crucial phase regarding the configuration of future EU funds, which must be useful for the development of regional and local policies.

Let us defend the continued central role of regions in managing these funds.

I specifically refer to the debate within the Commission on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034).

We must be very alert to signals pointing toward a centralization of its management.

Members of the Committee of the Regions are called upon to defend the decision-making capacity of regional and local governments in cohesion policy.

Regarding climate change, sustainable adaptation and mitigation must be the pillars on which the Committee of the Regions intensifies its work.

In this regard, my goal is to amplify the voice of the Committee of the Regions within the EU Delegation to COP and for us to be full-fledged interlocutors in negotiations crucial to Europe.

The clean energy transition will be one of our priorities, starting with the smallest population centres.

We must also preserve agriculture, which is a major economic and social pillar in many European regions.

Only a strong primary sector guarantees food production for Europe's autonomy and food sovereignty.

The Common Agricultural Policy needs to be more decentralized and aligned with strategies for rural development and food security, protecting our farmers and ranchers.

Water management is also crucial for our regions and cities—investing in infrastructure and improving efficiency is key.

Water is not just a problem for Southern Europe—it also affects Central Europe and will increasingly impact the North due to climate change.

Without water, there is no life, no economic activity, no prosperity, no future.

Therefore, water policies must be taken very seriously by the Commission and the new European Commissioner, through both global and specific measures.

All of this must go hand in hand with protecting aquatic ecosystems and adapting to climate effects such as droughts and floods, which we have sadly seen in Spain and other parts of Europe.

On migration, we must move toward an immigration model that is orderly and regular. We must also continue the fight against human trafficking networks.

I speak from experience: Andalusia is Europe's southern border, and we face this phenomenon almost daily.

Let us remember that migrant integration always begins at the local level. It is cities and regions that are responsible for integrating these migrants, and therefore we need adequate funding.

I would also like to highlight the importance of defending democratic values in our regions and cities from the Committee of the Regions.

Demographic decline, depopulation, brain drain, labour shortages, integration of migrants and refugees. These issues must also be central to the EU's strategies and on the agenda of the Committee of the Regions.

We must oppose any attempts to destabilize democratic institutions.

We must ensure the integrity of elections at all levels—local or regional—and strengthen bottom-up political participation.

In short, we must strengthen our democracy, which is a key pillar of the European Union.

And we cannot talk about protecting our values without talking about peace.

The European Union was born out of the need to avoid war. Europe is synonymous with peace, generosity, and forward-looking vision.

Defending European democracy will not be possible without neighbours who are democratic and contribute to our security.

Our work in Joint Consultative Committees and Working Groups with enlargement countries and neighbouring states must be seen as a geostrategic investment that contributes to peace and prosperity in Europe.

This work begins with rebuilding our neighbour Ukraine and deepening our relations with all Enlargement countries in the Western Balkans.

I firmly believe that cooperation between countries is the greatest value we can offer.

I am also concerned about disinformation, the rising anti-European voices opposing our values and interests, and the powerful global machinery behind it.

The Committee of the Regions must work alongside the European Commission and Parliament to confront these narratives—by sharing Europe's real success stories.

Let us proudly show our European identity. We have an identity to be proud of.

We share a feeling of belonging to a territory that is incredibly important and unique on the planet.

Not only because we have thousands of years of history, but because we have built a space of freedom, prosperity, and social rights that is unique in the world. A unique model of which, I repeat, we must feel deeply proud.

Of course, with its lights and shadows—there are both—but a model that allows us to move forward on the great achievements made by generations in building the EU, and also to correct any mistakes along the way.

Europeans must know who they are, how they are represented, and understand the European institutions—starting with this one, the Committee of the Regions.

Let us bring our work closer to citizens using every available mechanism.

Let us show our neighbours that the Committee of the Regions is a great opportunity for regions and cities to be present in the EU decision-making process—or, in other words, for citizens to be present.

In this task, we must involve young people.

I would like to conclude my speech by speaking about them.

They are essential—absolutely essential—to connecting EU politics with local and regional structures.

Let us seek their help so that Europe can grow, stay united, and meet the challenges ahead.

The future is full of hope, and young people hold in their hands the power to build the Europe we want.

As I said at the beginning of my speech: let us work toward consensus, share experience, and exchange knowledge.

It is our responsibility—our commitment to our regions and cities.

I extend my hand to you all to work tirelessly together on this mission and to rise to the challenge. So that together, we can take the Committee of the Regions to the next level.

This is in our hands. It depends on all of us. Let's do it together.

Thank you all very much.

