



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S EPP GROUP MEETING

CRETE, 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

Dear President.

Dear Friends and Colleagues.

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to join you tonight in Hersonissos, in Crete.

Dear Manfred,

Welcome to Greece and especially to Crete.

Once again, I want to thank you for our very close and constructive cooperation,

both in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe,

and the strengthening of the relationship, between the political groups of the European People's Party, to the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions.

And let me underline the fact that it is very important, in these challenging times for Europe and our political family, that you are the leader of the European People's Party, to which the majority of our fellow citizens, put their faith, hopes and expectations for a better future.

Ladies and gentlemen.

There is no doubt, that we are facing huge challenges, and that we need to give concrete answers not in the distant future, but right now.

Because, it is a fact that today we are dealing with multiple, parallel threats:

The war on European soil that is constantly producing new crises.

The inflation, the rise of prices and the supply chain disruptions.

The threat of Europe entering into a recession.

The climate emergency.

And of course, we are facing an unprecedented energy crisis, which will test the patience and resilience of all our fellow citizens.

And finally, the biggest specter haunting Europe today, is the possibility that the standard of living of young Europeans will be worse compared to the previous generation, something that has not happened since the second world war.

These are the challenges that need answers from Europe, that, unfortunately, has shown very slow reflexes.

Europe needs to speed up and show political will and solidarity by taking joint, fair and bold decisions on:

Energy diversification.

Green and digital transition.

Security and transparency.

As well as the strengthening of its Institutions
especially the European Committee of the Regions and the
European Parliament,
that express the strongest democratic representation.

Europe must understand,
that without solidarity and a new shared vision,
is at risk of being cut off from its citizens,
far from their everyday problems,
far from their needs in their communities.

Without a common comprehensive strategy to address the multiple
challenges,
Europe cannot reassure or convince its citizens
to turn their back to the loud voices of populists and extremists.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Dear friends.

The taxation of the surplus profits of energy-producing companies, the decoupling of natural gas prices and electricity prices, and the cap on natural gas prices, are immediate, important measures, that Member States and the Commission must apply.

While at the same time, the 300 Regions and 90,000 Municipalities of Europe, are already implementing actions and projects, both for saving energy, and for the transition to environmentally friendly and more economical forms of energy.

For example in my Region, the Region of Central Macedonia:

We are financing SMEs to reduce energy costs.

We are installing photovoltaic systems and new charging stations for electric vehicles.

We are replacing the vehicle fleet of Municipalities and Public Institutions with electric cars.

We are renovating hospitals, schools, sports facilities and houses making them energy efficient.

We are replacing old lamps with new low-consumption led bulbs all across our road network.

Dear Friends,

To put it in simple words,
the true catalysts for energy and green transition and for tackling the climate crisis,
are the Regions and Municipalities of Europe,
which implement 90% of European actions to tackle climate change,
50% of public investment,
30% of public expenditure,
and finally, 70% of all actions of the European Union,
turning European resources into concrete projects that make people's lives better.

So I will never get tired of saying
that multi-level governance,
with all three levels,
the European Union, the Member States and the Regions and
Municipalities,
working together
is the future of Europe.

And this is also the fabric that strongly connects our political groups
in the European institutions.

Multilevel governance,
and strengthening the role of Regions and Cities,
can become one of the main pillars of the European People's Party's
vision
for a more modern, stronger, safer Europe.

Dear President,

Dear Manfred,

Dear friends,

Let me finish by saying that we live in times of tremendous challenges,

which require bold and visionary decisions.

Hence my call to all of you today,

is to work together in a methodical and structured manner,

as members of the same political family,

with our sight set not only on the next European elections, but on the next decade,

in order to provide the citizens with real solutions and meaningful answers, enhancing the feeling

that the European Union really matters to the people,

to their families, their lives and their future.

That Europe will be closer to its citizens.

Thank you!