



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS

COR PLENARY SESSION

DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

DATE :12/10/22

Dear Commissioner,

Dear Dubravka,

Your leadership during the Conference on the Future of Europe had a positive impact on the final result, as reflected in the 49 proposals and 328 measures.

COFE has been an exercise of diplomacy and negotiation, given the wide spectrum of views expressed in all nine topics. Our delegates successfully presented the views of the local and regional level in the working groups, which led to many of our priorities mentioned in the final report.

This was the result of being active in the plenary and working group meetings, of our contribution with dozens of ideas in the multilingual digital platform and - amongst other initiatives - of the organisation of many local dialogues.

Your positive spirit and cooperation with our delegation and with the CoR in general throughout the whole process led to an increased visibility of the work at the local and regional levels. For this, I would like to sincerely thank you.

I would also like to express the CoR commitment to continue this successful cooperation with you in the implementation phase of the Conference's proposals, notably when it comes to European democracy. Enhanced cooperation between the EU institutions is needed in order to have a concrete follow up to the proposals and to meet the citizen's expectations and inform them on what we do, also in light of the 2024 European Elections.

The spirit of the proposals clearly implies a deepening of the European integration, leading to a significant change in the way European citizens can participate in the European democratic functioning, as well as in institutional reforms.

This was evident in the State of the Union speech, where the President of the European Commission announced that participatory democracy is here to stay and notably that, building on the success of COFE, European Citizens Panels will become a regular feature of EU democratic life.

The more such panels are connected to the places where citizens live their lives, the more they can be effective. Therefore, I think that cooperation with the CoR should take place when citizen panels in the preparation of key EU legislative dossiers are organized.

This should be accompanied by other initiatives aiming to bring the EU closer to the citizens and to develop the synergies between the CoR network of EU councillors and the EC BELC project.

For the latter two initiatives, I reiterate our commitment to work together, in order to ensure that these initiatives are as seamless as possible and are implemented as a coordinated 'EU' exercise.

Concluding, I would like to stress our common objective, which should be not to miss this unique opportunity and duty we have towards our citizens, of working together for a better democratic future.

Thank you for your attention.