



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**RESOL-VII/031**

**157th plenary session, 9-10 and 11 October 2023**

## **URGENT DRAFT RESOLUTION**

**Adoption of the Resolution on the State of Regions and Cities in the European Union and proposals in view of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029**

**Submitted by the political groups EPP, PES, Renew Europe, EA and Greens**

**Deadline for tabling amendments: 10 October 2023, no later than 4 p.m. (Brussels time)**

**Amendments to the resolution must be submitted, preferably in English, French or German, through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal: <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu/>).**

The Helpdesk (+32 (0)2 546 96 97, email: [helpdesk@cor.europa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@cor.europa.eu)) is at your disposal to provide you with any assistance you may need. In addition, a user guide is available at <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu/>.

Urgent resolution submitted in accordance with Rule 45(3)(b) of the Rules of Procedure, to be discussed on the second day of the plenary session on 11 October 2023. It will be removed from the plenary session agenda if not approved by the Bureau on 9 October 2023.

**Number of signatures required: 6**

## **Draft resolution on the 2023 State of Regions and Cities in the European Union and proposals in view of the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

HAVING REGARD TO:

- its report *2023 EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities*, complemented by a survey among locally and regionally elected representatives, which provides political decision-makers at European, national, regional and local level with evidence and key recommendations on the most pressing challenges ahead of setting the next Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029<sup>1</sup>;
- the 2023 State of the Union address given by the president of the European Commission on 13 September 2023 and the letter of intent to the presidents of the European Parliament and of the Council;

WHEREAS:

- the impact of the war in Ukraine places a great strain on many households, small and medium enterprises and local and regional governments across the EU due to substantial additional pressure from energy and food prices and rising inflation, adding to the impact of climate change, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, trade disruptions and social inequalities.
- A.** Presents the **CoR recommendations from the 2023 EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities** for the future EU legislative term:

### ***Regions and cities managing crises***

#### *Solidarity with Ukraine*

1. Calls on the European Union to continue and strengthen support to Ukraine and urges it to use the potential, capacities and expertise of its regions and cities for the reconstruction, reforms, notably of decentralisation, and European integration of Ukraine. To that effect, the Ukraine Facility should apply the fundamentals of EU regional policy and provide the necessary funding for capacity-building and peer-to-peer projects among regional and local authorities;
2. Stresses that the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, which is coordinated by the CoR, is instrumental in strengthening local and regional capacities in Ukraine, boosting peer-to-peer cooperation, assisting local authorities in Ukraine in getting familiar with the EU *acquis* and advising on the implementation of the decentralisation process;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/State-of-Regions-and-Cities-2023.aspx>

3. Calls for increased direct support to local and regional authorities in the European Union in order to manage the integration of Ukrainian refugees into host European towns and regions and to provide services, mainly in terms of medical care, education and employment;

#### *Energy transition*

4. Stresses that the EU's energy transition will lead to energy autonomy by relying primarily on green energy produced and consumed locally. Local and regional authorities and their elected representatives are therefore key catalysts and accelerators for the success of the green transition on the ground and should be fully involved as partners in enabling local consultation and public awareness activities. Points out that the CoR is facilitating the local energy transition through its Green Deal Going Local Initiative and its cooperation with the EU Covenant of Mayors;
5. Calls for regions and cities to be provided with additional EU support and investments in the form of dedicated funding mechanisms, including direct funds, that support sustainable innovation; such support should build on the REPowerEU initiative, to improve energy efficiency, deploy renewables, develop smart grids and boost the circular economy, thus promoting local energy production and consumption, and enhancing EU energy autonomy;

#### *Climate action*

6. Calls upon the European Commission to support the emulation of local best practices identified in the CoR's Green Deal Going Local Handbook<sup>2</sup>, as the consequences of climate change will deepen existing inequalities among regions due to its asymmetric impact upon divergent populations, damage to critical infrastructure, and the disruption of tourism, industrial clusters and agriculture production; in this regard, points out that local and regional authorities are protagonists in the fight against climate change and primarily responsible for local actions to mitigate the adverse impacts of increasing global temperatures;
7. Insists that the climate transition should be fair and just, leaving no regions nor people behind. Calls upon the European Commission to step up its solidarity and cohesion mechanisms to allow its regions and cities to scale up investments for climate adaptation and resilience, and prevent the most vulnerable territories and vulnerable social groups being the hardest hit; to protect its regions from the harmful impacts of climate change the EU would need to invest about EUR 40 billion every year, if the global temperature stays within a 1.5°C increase;
8. Highlights that the CoR is partnering with the European Commission Joint Research Centre to promote the use of its Regional and Local Vulnerability Dashboard on disasters and climate change risks and expects this Dashboard to become a parameter for resilience strategies and be taken into account in the design of cohesion policy;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/Green-Deal-Handbook.aspx>

### *Food safety*

9. Calls on the Commission to publish the sustainable food systems framework law without further delay. Points, here, to the urgent need for Europe to further invest in sustainable local agriculture production and to shorten its supply chains; favouring local produce, procuring sustainably and moving towards sustainable food systems are essential elements in increasing food safety and resilience;
10. Highlights that the CoR has launched the EU Organic Award together with the European Commission to promote sustainable local production among EU regions;
11. Stands ready to contribute to the announced new initiative on water resilience and calls for a strategic approach to help regions to fight drought and manage water scarcity, by building on existing regional experiences for reduced consumption, increased reuse and tackling wastewater;

### ***Regions and cities as actors for sustainable development and cohesion***

#### *The European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals*

12. Urges the European Commission and the co-legislators to finalise the implementation of the European Green Deal by adopting by the end of the current mandate the milestone legislative proposals on pesticides, nature restoration, seeds, animal welfare and the sustainable food systems framework law;
13. Points to the central role of regions and cities in the successful implementation of European Green Deal policies and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
14. Calls upon the EU to provide a consistent and consolidated framework for sustainable growth, aligning the climate, social and sustainability agendas, and to fill financial, expertise and procedural gaps by providing direct funding and concrete guidance, as well as by encouraging green and participatory budgeting and giving more prominence to good coordination, flexibility, simplification, transparency and better communication;
15. Highlights that the CoR's Green Deal Going Local Initiative can serve as a role model for the better engagement of regions and cities in those endeavours and calls on the other institutions to build further synergies with the CoR in this field;

#### *The green and digital transitions*

16. Recognises that the green and digital transitions pose existential challenges to many European regions and cities; underlines the indispensable involvement of regions and cities in the governance of recent EU laws such as the Critical Raw Materials Act and the Net-Zero Industry Act; calls upon the EU to invite the CoR to be a member of their governing and monitoring bodies;
17. Highlights the value of existing and emerging regional alliances supporting regions undergoing transformative change, such as the Automotive Regions Alliance created by the CoR, and the

European Semiconductor Regions Alliance; points out that the Automotive Regions Alliance has been identified by the European co-legislators in the relevant legislation as the key partner for the European Commission for a just transition strategy for those regions with a strong automotive and supply industry sector;

18. Calls upon the EU to step up efforts to increase the digital resilience of public administrations, including at sub-national level, for example by running awareness-raising campaigns on cyber threats, addressed to local and regional representatives. This is of high importance, as EU local and regional authorities have become primary targets for cyber attacks, leading to temporary shutdowns of crucial public infrastructure and dire consequences for their citizens; regrets that many regions and cities lack sufficient knowledge, financial resources and organisational capacities to build digital resilience;

#### *The future of cohesion policy*

19. Recognises that cohesion policy, as long-term investment, plays a crucial role in effectively closing the development gap between regions, contributes to a better performing single market, and helps address the geography of discontent;
20. Calls on the EU to further develop a strong place-based cohesion policy with a mission approach that can support all EU places and people. It must apply the principle of "do no harm to cohesion" across all EU policies and initiatives by conducting comprehensive territorial impact assessments;
21. Regrets that the new STEP regulation and the MFF revision proposals reinforce the EU centrally managed instruments without foreseeing a budgetary reinforcement of cohesion policy; Underlines that the Cohesion Alliance, set up by the CoR together with the main European territorial associations, will serve as a debate and exchange platform, engaging the EU institutions with cities and regions;

#### *The rural agenda*

22. Warns that by 2033, it is estimated that 30 million people will have left Europe's rural areas as compared to the year 1993, and highlights that young people and families leave rural areas because of the lack of employment and public services, such as schools, hospitals, public transport and digital connectivity;
23. Calls on the EU to invest more in rural areas as they are major contributors to its green transition in fields like renewable energy production, sustainable food and nature preservation and restoration;
24. Underlines the need for the next generation of cohesion policy programmes and the Recovery and Resilience plans to boost investments and reforms to reduce the talent development traps in EU regions, diversify economic prospects for youth and ensure the economic and social well-being of rural communities;

## *Regions and cities shaping the future of Europe*

### *European democracy*

25. Emphasises that the 1.2 million local and regional representatives hold a unique position in terms of promoting and defending European democracy, because they represent the political level most trusted by their fellow citizens; at the same time, those representatives are the most exposed to growing discontent and are witnessing increased rates of hate-speech and physical and cyber violence against them, and in particular against female politicians and those belonging to minorities; against this background, it reiterates the promotion of the heritage of Mayor Paweł Adamowicz in defence of local democracy and confirms our commitment to sharing his legacy through the dedicated Paweł Adamowicz Award;
26. Reiterates that over 70% of EU legislation is implemented by local and regional authorities and that therefore they are well placed to provide concrete feedback on European policies, and it is imperative that they should be more and better involved in EU policy- and decision-making;
27. Calls upon the EU to systematically include local and regional representatives and the CoR in the dialogue mechanism between citizens and the EU institutions following the Conference on the Future of Europe, and to promote European values and citizens' participation at regional and local level by supporting concrete projects, taking as an example the good practices listed in the database "Promoting EU values through education and culture"<sup>3</sup>;
28. Highlights that the CoR's Young Elected Politicians programme and its Network of Local and Regional Councillors can reinforce the link between the EU institutions and local communities, encourage youth participation, debunk disinformation and provide useful insights for policy-makers at EU level;

### *The enlargement of the Union*

29. Highlights that EU regions and cities can offer added-value support to the EU enlargement process by providing political and practical support to EU candidate and potential candidate countries' local and regional authorities, for example by championing peer-to-peer cooperation formats;
30. Points out that previous rounds of enlargement have shown that decentralisation and the involvement of local and regional authorities in preparing for EU membership is key to success;
31. Advocates for stronger cross-border cooperation with neighbouring local and regional authorities; and stresses that the CoR can play a special role in assisting local and regional authorities in EU candidate and potential candidate countries to prepare for EU accession and fight the increasingly present enlargement fatigue;

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<https://cor.europa.eu/en/regions/Pages/EIR-map.aspx?view=stories&type=sedec>

**B. Puts forward the following recommendations in view of shaping the next EU policy cycle and the next EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029:**

32. Stresses that during the course of this legislature local and regional authorities kept the democratic fabric of our Union strong, and managed the EU response to major crises such as COVID-19, climate change and the impact of the war in Ukraine on the ground, while leading the sustainable and cohesive path towards the green and digital transitions;
33. Welcomes the fact that the Commission is set to come forward with a number of policy reviews, including on EU enlargement (to be presented under the Belgian presidency); calls on the Commission to involve early on the CoR and local and regional authorities in the preparation of such policy reviews;
34. Asks the European Commission to prepare the next Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 by involving all levels of government to ensure the bottom-up mobilisation of all available ideas and resources our Union can provide to address the key challenges ahead;
35. Insists also that the European Union should step up its proactive stance towards major global trends and shifts, by further strengthening the cooperation among local, regional, national and European authorities with regard to strategic foresight and preparedness endeavours; this will help to shape the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-29 and keep it resilient in the face of rapidly changing scenarios;
36. Highlights the need to further invest in a path to sustainable development by confirming the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals as key compasses to define the priorities for the next five years;
37. Emphasises that economic, social and territorial cohesion is more than ever a prerequisite for the future of Europe; and recognises the added value of cohesion as a fundamental value and a cross-cutting objective of the EU, and calls for cohesion to be placed at the core of the new Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, preventing climate change from leading to more disparities among regions, and curbing disengagement and discontent in the long term;
38. Underlines that sustainable growth and economic prosperity in the EU single market depend on the competitiveness of the European industrial base, its ability to lead technological change and the resilience of its value chains; in this context, calls upon the EU to ensure that key industrial clusters and sensitive sectors, such as food, health, automotive, chemicals, textiles, energy, and digital, can operate in a conducive regulatory framework that enables them to continue their business in the EU and compete on international markets;
39. Calls for a future Global Europe agenda to be built in a stronger partnership with local and regional authorities, who are becoming undisputable global actors in many sectors; in this regard, strongly calls for enhanced participation of subnational governments not only in multilateral policy fora such as those at UN level, but also in the context of the EU's strategic partnerships, through increased support to cooperation platforms with cities and regions from other continents;

40. Underlines the increased need for systemic preparedness towards more frequent humanitarian crises linked to climate or other natural disasters in the EU and worldwide; highlights the key role regions and cities have in making Europe a champion of solidarity, also at global level, and calls upon the EU to strengthen strategic partnerships and provide a framework that improves the EU's emergency preparedness and responsiveness at all levels of government;
41. Warns that our Union will need budgetary resources proportionate to the level of global and domestic ambitions declared in the future Strategic Agenda 2024-29 – also to prepare the Union for the next decade; stresses the need to guarantee sufficient levels of investment to allow every region to embrace the green, digital, industrial, societal and demographic transitions; advocates reinforcement of the EU budgetary mechanisms necessary to face unforeseen crises and emergencies in a coordinated and solidarity-based way; calls on the EU to carry out a thorough assessment of the estimated long-term impact of the Russian war in Ukraine on the EU budget;
42. Notes that European citizens have clearly called for evolution in the European governance system and considers that the results of the Conference on the Future of Europe require an ambitious reform of the functioning of the EU to face the challenges ahead;
43. In this regard, the CoR supports the European Parliament's request for a Convention by activating the procedure for the revision of the Treaties (Article 48 TEU) and points out that a future Convention should fully involve the CoR and its members;
44. Considers that, in the meantime, optimisation of the current Treaty provisions should actively ensure greater transparency and accountability in the EU decision-making process, including increased emphasis on subsidiarity, multilevel governance and the role of the CoR; considers in that respect indispensable a revision of the interinstitutional agreement on better law-making during the next policy cycle;
45. Reiterates that the Conference on the Future of Europe called for the CoR to be given an enhanced role in the institutional architecture where matters with a territorial impact are concerned. The revision of its Cooperation Agreements with the European Commission and the European Parliament offers the possibility to make progress in this respect, including in terms of the systematic involvement of the CoR in key initiatives with a territorial dimension throughout their policy cycle, from the pre-legislative and legislative phase, through to the implementation and review;
46. Welcomes the pioneering work on gender equality carried out by the European Commission during this mandate, and reiterates the CoR's engagement in all the relevant files. The CoR is committed to promoting gender equality in its membership and work, to support empowering women in local and regional elections, and to tackling discrimination, violence and obstacles that women still face in all aspects of life; reiterates that cities and regions can design and put in place comprehensive frameworks, policies and gender-sensitive measures to combat gender-based violence;
47. Instructs its president to transmit the "2023 EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities" and the present resolution to the presidents of the European Parliament, the European Commission



and the European Council, as well as to the heads of state and/or government of the 27 EU Member States, and encourages regional and local elected representatives in Europe to disseminate the report to citizens and local and regional media.

Brussels, 11 October 2023.

The President  
of the  
European Committee of the Regions

Vasco Alves Cordeiro

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