



Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies of the European Union

A Strengthened Role at European Level of Regional Authorities and Associations representing European Regions and Territories

The Regional Authorities and Associations representing European Regions and Territories, gathered here in Varese from different European Nations,

Considering that Europe is facing one of the most complex periods in its history, that requires an increasing promotion of the common values of democracy, cultural diversity and socio-economical development, and that is characterized by the need to provide political stability, overcome persistent economic and social uncertainty and address the challenge of migration, and, more recently, to respond to the humanitarian crisis of refugees and displaced and the situation arising from Brexit;

Considering also that Local and Regional Authorities and Associations representing European Regions and Territories, thanks to their experience, have an in-depth knowledge of regional, inter-regional and agricultural issues, local planning and social inclusion adapted to their particular demographic trends, with which they directly interact and that they represent at European Union level;

Considering therefore that the above mentioned Local and Regional Authorities and Associations shall be more deeply involved in the implementation of European legislation and that under the subsidiarity principle their contribution to the democratic functioning of the European Union shall be more effectively taken into account;

Considering that the support to a democratic representativeness close to Territories needs a reinforcement of regional democracy, self-governance and devolution and polycentric development in Europe and beyond, and the respect of established local and regional competences by national and European Authorities in order to promote multilevel governance;

Considering that the multilevel governance approach is an important tool for designing and implementing EU policies;

Recognizing the principle of subsidiarity as a benchmark for relations between Institutions and civil society and for the exercise of political and administrative power with a view to a real and constructive multilevel governance;



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Having regard to the Lisbon Treaty, which strengthens the territorial dimension of the European Union by referring to the principle of self-government, by introducing the aim of territorial cohesion and by including the Regional and Local dimension in the respect of the subsidiarity principle;

Having regard to the steady commitment of the Committee of the Regions for the reinforcement of cooperation through common structural actions between the CoR and European Associations that represent Local and Regional Authorities;

Given the positive results of the meeting held today aimed at creating a network among the Associations of European Regionalism as an important element to give strength to the voice of the territories throughout Europe;

declare:

- (a) their intent to lay the foundations for a strengthened partnership and a shared dialogue, thus consolidating the role played by each regional and local identity through the creation of a network among the Associations of European regionalism, believed to be an important element to give strength to the voice of regional and local authorities at European level in a time in which Europe is facing outstanding challenges that undermine its vision as a Union;
- (b) the intention to identify and develop forms of cooperation able to express, increase and enhance the voice of European regionalism within the European Institutions, in particular in the pre-legislative phase of EU policy making process;
- (c) the aim of developing an increasing convergence of positions on common issues of regional and territorial interest, and in particular on those issues likely to have substantial effects on the Regions and Territories that they represent, with special regard to following topics, highlighted on the occasion of the exchange of views shared in Varese:
 - the need of an enhanced engagement of Regions and Regional Associations in the European debate on the Cohesion Policy implementation post-2020 in order to contribute to building a policy based on equality, solidarity, partnership and a place-based approach;
 - priority in the acknowledgement of the strong role of the local, territorial and regional level in the approach to the EU migration crisis management and future developments;
 - the need to strengthen the European project's cornerstones by following a common direction and with a stronger partnership in the pursuit of their objectives;



Furthermore they declare the common interest in a concrete collaboration to identify further matters with a considerable regional impact, in view of continuity in the shared cooperation set up with today's meeting, and, besides regional development policy and migrant crisis, with reference to following issues jointly identified:

- i. improving the efficiency of the reforms of the policy-making process (better regulation);
- ii. addressing the actual difficulties and challenges of the interregional, transnational and cross-border cooperation within European territories; considering also, in the framework of European actual challenges, the need to adequately respond to natural disasters;
- iii. addressing the digital transformation in the regions and its impact on regional democracy, focused on the civic commitment of EU citizens for the achievement of an actual participatory democracy, with special attention to the development and promotion of mechanisms that favour the involvement and participation of citizenry in the institutions and the democratic process, in the common purpose of a real participatory democracy.

The Regional Authorities and Associations representing European Regions and Territories

share:

the contents of the present Declaration with the aim of reaching the convergence of positions that will enable Regional Authorities and Associations to strengthen their importance in the representation of regional interests and priorities at the EU level, in order for them to become more active players at European level and proactive partners of the European Institutions.

In respect of each Association and Authority autonomy and free initiative towards European Institutions, the Regional Authorities and Associations representing European Regions and Territories agree to ensure the continuity of their work by organizing an annual meeting to share their respective work programs and to identify jointly the priority issues on which to focus during the year, and to this purpose they agree to establish a stable coordination among the General Secretariats.

In this context they stress the importance of an enhanced partnership based on trust and cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the European Commission, in order to foster an effective contribution *by the Europeans*, represented by the Regional Authorities and by the Associations of European Regionalism, to the democratic functioning of the European Union.