

Chancellor Merkel and Commission President von der Leyen to discuss coronavirus recovery agenda with regions and cities.



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German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will discuss the European Union's response to the coronavirus pandemic at the European Committee of the Regions on 12-13 October. The EU's assembly for local and regional politicians will also hold debates with the president and the vice-president of the European Investment Bank, Werner Hoyer and Lilyana Pavlova. Debates will also take place with four commissioners – Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for the European Green Deal; Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reform; Paolo Gentiloni, Commissioner for Economy; and Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights.

The plenary will provide members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) with an opportunity to assess the potential contribution of the EU to local and regional recovery efforts and to discuss the EU's recovery package and long-term budget.

The debates will be informed by a wide-ranging survey by the CoR on the impact of the pandemic on the health, economies, and communities of the EU's regions and cities. The survey – the first Annual Regional and Local Barometer – draws on feedback gathered through CoR-managed mechanisms, on a survey of sub-national finances conducted jointly with the OECD, and on studies by EU agencies. It also includes the first opinion poll since the pandemic of public trust in local, regional, and national governments across the EU, as well as trust in the EU. The 26,000 people polled by Kantar were, in addition, asked if they felt cities and regions have enough influence on decisions taken at the EU level and – if not – in what areas of

life they would like local and regional authorities to have more influence.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas (EL/EPP), President of the European Committee of the Regions and Governor of Central Macedonia, said: "The first-ever Annual Regional and Local Barometer shows some of the areas where the EU should focus its support to regions, cities and villages. It highlights how the pandemic is widening regional socio-economic divides and putting tremendous strain on the finances of local and regional governments. Our specially commissioned opinion poll demonstrates that for our citizens the best way to bring the EU closer to its people and build trust in Europe's politicians is for all levels of government – local, regional, national and European – to cooperate better."

The Annual Regional and Local Barometer (#EURegionalBarometer) is timed to coincide with the European Week of Regions and Cities (#EURegionsWeek), which is co-organised by the CoR and by the European Commission. The 18th edition of the #EURegionsWeek will officially be opened by Commissioner Elisa Ferreira and President Tzitzikostas on 12 October. Commissioner Ferreira will also take part in a Citizen's Dialogue on 13 October.

This year, #EURegionsWeek is spread over three weeks and will primarily be held online. It remains the single largest event organised by the EU, with 800 partners, and over 9,000 registered participants. EU-funded projects that demonstrate particular excellence and new approaches towards regional development will be recognised at the RegioStars award ceremony on 14 October, with five winners selected from a shortlist of 25.

Over the course of the three days (12-14 October) of the CoR plenary session, CoR members will also debate and adopt recommendations on 26 separate items of EU legislation, each of them with the potential to contribute to the EU's recovery effort.

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