

EU regions and cities to Merkel: we are determined to work together to build a more resilient, democratic, sustainable and human Europe



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German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed impact of the COVID crisis and future of Europe with European Committee of the Regions' members during the October plenary session.

Addressing the key expectations of regions and cities to the German presidency, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, said: " 300 regions and 90 000 municipalities are the EU's democratic foundations and its safety net. As local and regional leaders, we are on the front line fighting the pandemic. We are working tirelessly to contain the virus, help the most vulnerable, protect our communities and safeguard local economies and jobs. We are considered by our citizens the most trusted and effective level of governance. If Europe wants to better connect with people in the territories and find concrete solutions to their needs, regional and local leaders must be given a greater say in the EU decision-making process".

"The pandemic has shown the limits of the current two-dimensional Europe, based only on Member States and Brussels", continued President Tzitzikostas. "We need a European House of Democracy with three dimensions where all levels of government – EU, national and regional/local – are working together, for the people and closer to the people. We believe in the German motto *Gemeinsam* - Together. Together we can build a more resilient, democratic, sustainable and human Europe."

Europe's cities and regions continue to be on the front line in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Local and regional authorities have had to react quickly to provide support to the most vulnerable citizens and to local businesses. The COVID-19 crisis has impacted every region, city and local community in Europe, but each of those differently, which is also shown by the findings of the Annual Regional and Local Barometer , presented by the CoR earlier this week. Under the motto " Together for Europe's recovery ", the German presidency will focus directly on overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic: fighting the spread of the virus, supporting the European economy to recover and reinforcing social cohesion in Europe. Proximity to citizens throughout the crisis has demonstrated the need for LRAs to be a central part of decision-making to secure a successful and equitable economic recovery.

In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the pandemic has also reinforced the urgency of placing local and regional authorities at its core, making the EU a more democratic and transparent Union closer and better able to respond to the needs of its citizens. A recent poll (find it here) by Kantar shows that a very large majority in every country thinks that local and regional government has too little influence at EU level and an absolute majority believes that giving more influence to local and regional authorities would have a positive impact on the EU's ability to solve problems.

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