



4 March 2022

We, the European Union’s (EU) local and regional leaders, want a EU that responds more effectively to the needs and aspirations of citizens.

1. The foundations of democracy in the EU lie within its 240 regions, 90,000 municipalities and over 1,2 million locally and regionally elected politicians, representing 450 million people. Born locally about 2500 years ago in the “polis”, democracy can only survive in the EU if it is well rooted on the ground and practiced every day.

2. Democracy is accepted if it is legitimised via people’s trust and if it delivers results at the level closest to the citizens. That is why we see the need to promote a model of a **“House of European Democracy”** built on a three dimensional legitimacy: solid foundations represented by regional and local authorities, strong walls represented by the 27 member states and a protective roof provided by the EU.

Adopting a bottom-up approach to decision-making in the EU institutions will bring the EU closer to people’s hearts and minds and will restore trust in the EU as a democratic project based on strong electoral representation, that respects gender equality.

3. Elections are a fundamental tool for the functioning of representative democracy through the work of political parties. We must ensure that, beyond European elections held every 5 years, key topics of European relevance are discussed ahead of national, regional and local elections, considering that 70% of the EU legislation is implemented at local and regional level.

4. A more democratic EU needs to address the existing political and legal legitimacy gap and make its regions, provinces, cities, towns and villages an indivisible part of its decision-making mechanisms within

the current Treaty provisions or in case of a future Treaty change.

5. We therefore call for the European Committee of the Regions to be gradually upgraded beyond its current consultative function towards a binding role in a limited number of policy areas with a clear territorial dimension while avoiding additional complexity in the EU. Giving greater consideration to the expertise of local and regional authorities in the elaboration and implementation of EU law will lead to better regulation and greater democratic legitimacy in the EU.

This reinforcement of the principle of subsidiarity can be achieved by granting the European Committee of the Regions better access to negotiations between the EU institutions on legislative proposals (trilogues) and by giving regional parliaments, in duly defined circumstances, a formal role in proposing EU legislation.

6. We call for building on the experience of the Conference on the Future of Europe to develop a permanent and place-based dialogue with citizens as a participatory mechanism that would better link the EU with the realities at local, regional and national levels and ensure citizens receive feedback on their ideas and concerns, especially involving young people. The national and European territorial associations together with the European Committee of the Regions and its networks of Young Elected Politicians and regional and local EU councillors are ready to facilitate this process.

7. We call on the Conference on the Future of Europe to rearm ‘cohesion’ as a fundamental value and as a compass for all EU policies based on the respect for partnership and multilevel governance.

8. We demand the strengthening of resilience in the EU, with a clear involvement of local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of social, climate, environmental, energy and digital policies and for direct access to EU funding in areas that fall under their competences.

9. We support a European Health Union that gives the EU the competences needed to react swiftly to health crises while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

10. We demand the adoption of a forward-looking European rural agenda that improves urban-rural integration and leads to a sustainable revitalisation of rural communities.

11. We call on the EU to use the strong ties created over the years with local and regional authorities in the neighbourhood and enlargement countries and to build the rule of law and good governance from the bottom up.

12. To win back citizens’ trust we need to renew the functioning of democracy and European values through education and citizenship, in particular within young people and in cross-border regions while promoting the respect of equal opportunities.

Let’s work together to make democracy deliver results and bring Europe closer to its people.

