

National recovery plans can make the Green Deal real but only if cities and regions are fully brought on board



The Green Deal Going Local working group of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) held its sixth meeting today with the green recovery as its top priority. Members discussed the importance of involving local and regional authorities in the implementation phase of the national recovery and resilience plans (NRRPs) which will support the European green transition in the next years. The meeting took place while the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen continues her tour through the EU capitals to hand over the endorsement of NRRPs to European leaders, and “make” the recovery “real”.

Opening the meeting, [Juan Espadas](#) (ES/PES), Mayor of Seville and Chair of the [Green Deal Going Local](#) Working Group and of the [CoR's ENVE commission](#), said: *“The post-pandemic recovery and the EU Green Deal must run in parallel. The Next Generation EU funds are the right response to build a greener and more sustainable Europe, but achieving this will require strengthening multi-level governance and fully involving local and regional authorities. Cities and regions have the knowledge and ideas for green recovery projects but also the overview of territorial disparities. They will guarantee a just transition that leaves no one behind.”*

[Michael Murphy](#) (IE/EPP), Chair of the [CoR's ECON commission](#) and member of Tipperary County Council, said: *“Indeed green local recovery is essential. Local and regional authorities have key remits in the field of green transition. This is one of the reasons why the ECON Commission has strongly advocated for the involvement of regions and cities in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. We have had a reasonably positive dialogue with the European Commission and a promising one in particular with the European Parliament on this matter. This has led to the obligation for Member states to report on the consultation of local and regional authorities to draft the NRRPs.”*

Members exchanged views on the [Resilience Recovery Facility](#) (RRF) with Florian Flackenecker, from the [European Commission's Recovery & Resilience Task Force](#), who recalled the importance of using the recovery resources not only to invest but also to carry out reforms able to build a medium to long-term resilience rather than a short-term recovery. Mr Flackenecker celebrated the fact that all the NRRPs already endorsed by the European Commission exceed the minimum 37% dedicated to support climate investments and reforms, and highlighted that local and regional authorities will be key in the implementation of the plans and in achieving their objectives.

Last week, the European Commission endorsed the first bunch of national

recovery and resilience plans with the CoR requesting the Council of the EU to quickly greenlight national plans so that the first resources can reach concrete projects on the ground by July, helping to boost the digital and green transitions and to strengthen cohesion.

[József Kóbor](#) (HU/EA), the representative of European Alliance in the Green Deal Going Local working group said: *“The active involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of national recovery plans will be critical for the success of the Green Deal. Cities and municipalities like my own, Pecs, are taking ambitious actions to improve energy efficiency of buildings and electrify public transport, to name just two. It is crucial that money is wisely spent on sustainable investments that match the needs of European territories and we call for monitoring systems to track the implementation of climate action and green recovery at local and regional level.”*

The representative of The Greens in the Green Deal Going Local working group, [Bernd Voss](#) (DE/The Greens), said: *“The biggest mistake would be to see the social dimension pinned against the green recovery. The two must be addressed jointly. Courts across Europe are becoming ever clearer: Climate protection is more than just a basic right, it is also a fundamental necessity if we want to shape Europe and rebuild in a socially and just way. It is a question of freedom for us and future generations. It is a matter of intergenerational equality and freedom.”*

[Tjisse Stelpstra](#) (NL/ECR), representing the ECR in the working group, stated: *“All levels of government are required to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and economic recovery from the COVID-pandemic. Local and regional authorities and their citizens need to be involved in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. Furthermore, when talking about the Green Deal, we should not forget about combining sustainability with economic growth.”*

[Arianna Maria Censi](#) (IT/PES), member of the Milan Municipal Council shared Milan’s experience in urban reforestation: *“Environmental sustainability affects not only our own lives, but those of future generations. In this context, the Metropolitan City of Milan, as part of the [ForestaMi project](#), will contribute to planting 3 million trees by 2030 in the Milan metropolitan area. This is not only an important intervention of sustainable forestation, CO2 abatement and development of green infrastructures, but also an attempt to return services of social value to the territory, whose ultimate goal is the well-being of citizens and local communities, contributing to physical and mental health.”*

The meeting included a presentation of the [Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies](#) (NEREUS) [Władysław Ortyl](#) (PL/ECR), President of the Podkarpackie Region and Vice-President of NEREUS, said: *“The visibility of regions as important players in economic life, in particular in space, is becoming more relevant and important. Local and regional authorities can play a key role in the coordination of space policies and NEREUS is a reflection of that. Our flagship project is Copernicus for Regions, which demonstrates how regions use space data for monitoring biodiversity and the impact of*

natural disasters.”

[Andres Jaadla](#) (EE/Renew Europe), CoR Rapporteur on the [CoR’s opinion on the EU Space Programme](#), said: *“The use of space technology deserves it’s fair share of consideration when we speak about fighting climate change! Regions are the key users and procurers of space-based applications, products and services and as such they are in the ideal position to implement the key goals of the climate transition, the EU Space strategy and EU space programme 2021 – 2027 making the Green Deal Going local!”*

Background:

The [‘Green Deal Going Local’](#) working group is a new initiative of the European Committee of the Regions that aims at placing cities and regions at the core of the European Green Deal and ensure that both the EU’s sustainable growth strategy and the COVID-19 recovery plan translate into direct funding for cities and regions and tangible projects for every territory,

The CoR’s ‘Green Deal Going Local’ working group is [composed of thirteen members](#).

Contacts:

David Crous / David.Crous@cor.europa.eu

Berta Lopez Domenech / Berta.LopezDomenech@cor.europa.eu

Matteo Miglietta / Matteo.Miglietta@cor.europa.eu

[The CoR signs the Declaration on Combatting Homelessness, stressing the need for action at local level](#)



□□□ The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) endorsed today the official launch of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness and signed the Lisbon Declaration, which sets the target of eradicating homelessness in Europe by 2030. The SEDEC Commission Chair Anne Karjalainen, who represented the CoR in the high-level conference and official signing, highlighted the importance of successful regional and local approaches to tackle the phenomenon which currently affects an estimated 700 000 people in Europe. □

The [Declaration on Combatting Homelessness](#) was signed today in Lisbon by high-level representatives of Member States and EU institutions, led by the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights **Nicolas Schmit** and Portugal’s Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security **Ana Mendes**

Godinho. It acknowledges that the primary responsibility for tackling homelessness lies with the Member States and their regional or local authorities.

By launching the [European Platform on Combatting Homelessness](#) with the Portuguese EU Council Presidency, the European Commission aims to support Member States, cities and service providers in sharing best practices and identifying efficient and innovative approaches. The Commission commits to provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of progress at national level and promote the use of EU funding to support inclusive policy measures aiming at combatting homelessness.

Anne Karjalainen (FI/PES), Chair of the CoR's Commission for Social Policy, Employment, Education, Research and Culture (SEDEC), said: "Homelessness and housing exclusion can be eliminated only when their underlying causes are concurrently dealt with. The implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights must be the guiding principle in this effort. Municipalities and cities play an important role in urban planning, providing social housing and addressing social exclusion, which is why eradicating homelessness requires primarily a place-based approach. Regional, and even more so, local authorities, are perhaps the only authorities that are aware of the extent of the phenomenon on the ground and of individual circumstances leading to it. In my country, Finland, and in my own municipality Kerava, homelessness has been steadily decreasing since 2013, and this decrease is in large part due to accurate mapping of this phenomenon."

Contact:

Lauri Ouvinen

Tel. +32 473536887

lauri.ouvinen@cor.europa.eu

[Speech of the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, at the inaugural session of the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe.](#)



"I would like to start by thanking the co-chairs for their exceptional work and their great support.

Dear colleagues, I am here on behalf of the 1 million regionally and locally elected politicians and the 300 regions and 90.000 municipalities of Europe.

Dear friends, it is thanks to the European Union today that we breathe a cleaner air, that we consume high quality products, that we have better equipped hospitals and digitalised schools and public services.

But if you ask today an average citizen of Europe if he or she feels and if he or she realises how the European Union is involved in his or her everyday life, do you think will you get the right answer? I am afraid not. Is it his or her fault? Of course not. It means that we have done something wrong.

And this is what we need to do during this conference: we need to listen, we need a credible dialogue and we need to focus on the real needs and the issues of the citizens. And above all we need to create a new vision that will unite us on climate, on mobility, on local economy and local jobs, on digitalisation, and of course on our European values, on education and culture.

We need to bring Europe closer to its citizens and we need to make everyone understand that Brussels and the EU are not far. Right on the contrary: Europe is everywhere.

So the European Committee of Regions is here to help this process and to bring added value on the ground in every region, city and village, through our political work with our Members, through our local dialogues with citizens and through the alliances we have built all across Europe with territorial and European associations and political families.

I am definitively positive that we can make this happen and that together we can make this conference a success!"

During the inaugural session of the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, 8 CoR members took the floor:

- Apostolos Tzitzikostas (EL/EPP), President of the European Committee of the Regions (Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece, President of the Association of Greek Regions)
- Vasco Alves Cordeiro, 1st Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions (Member of the Regional Parliament of Azores, Portugal)
- Olgierd Geblewicz (PL/EPP), President of the EPP Group (President of West Pomerania Region, Poland, President of the Polish Association of Regions)
- Kata Tüttő (HU/PES), Vice-President of the PES Group (Deputy major of Budapest, Hungary)
- François Decoster (FR/Renew Europe), President of Renew Europe Group (Mayor of Saint Omer, France)
- Roberto Ciambetti (IT/ECR), President of the Veneto Regional Parliament, Italy

– Kieran McCarthy (IE/EA), President of the EA Group (Member of Cork City Council, Ireland)

– Muhterem Aras (DE/Greens), President of the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg, Germany

3 more CoR members intervened as representatives nominated by national Parliaments: Matteo Bianchi (IT/ECR), Birgit Honé (DE/PES) and Karel Vanlouwe (BE/EA).

Also former CoR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz (BE/PES) spoke during the “Catch-the-eye” session.

President’s Spokesperson:

Michele Cercone

Tel. +32 (0)498 98 23 49

Michele.Cercone@cor.europa.eu

EUBAM Libya: Council extends mandate for a further two years



The Council today decided to extend the mandate of the European Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) for a further two years until **30 June 2023**.

In its renewed mandate, the mission is tasked with assisting the relevant Libyan authorities in the building of state security structures in Libya, in particular in the areas of **border management, law enforcement and criminal justice**, with a view to contributing to efforts to disrupt organised criminal networks involved notably in smuggling migrants, human trafficking and terrorism in Libya and the Central Mediterranean region. The mission also coordinates and implements projects with international partners in the fields of its engagement.

In the context of a recent strategic review of the mission the Council today also decided to extend the mission’s mandate to support **UN-led efforts for peace** in Libya as part of the **Berlin Process**, within the scope of the mission’s core areas of engagement.

EUBAM Libya was launched on 22 May 2013 and is headed by Ms Natalina Cea (Italy).

Forward look: 21 June – 4 July 2021



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