

CoR SEDEC Bulletin No. 10: COVID-19 impact and response measures



The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected our world and our way of living, with the loss of thousands of lives and unprecedented consequences for every aspect of our daily existence. The Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) at the European Committee of the Regions produces regular bulletins on the policy fields within its remit, reflecting recent research, articles and discussions on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in Europe and on the different actions and response measures being planned and implemented at EU, national, regional and local level. □

You can read [the tenth edition of the SEDEC Bulletin](#).

Messages and contributions to: sedec@cor.europa.eu .□□□□



After the Porto Social Summit, regions and cities urge for the recognition of their role in building a Social Europe



□ First Vice-President Vasco Cordeiro and SEDEC Commission chair Anne Karjalainen represented the European Committee of the Regions at the EU Social Summit in Porto on 7-8 May. They welcomed the commitment of the EU Heads of State and Government to strengthen the pledge to work towards a Social Europe, to reinforce social cohesion and to reach the new EU headline targets on jobs, skills and poverty reduction. However, they regretted that the final [Summit Declaration](#) lacks reference to the role of regional and local governments.

First Vice-President Vasco Alves Cordeiro, Member of the Regional Parliament of Azores, said: “The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights can only succeed if all levels of governance, from European to local, are involved. It is very positive that the need to reinforce territorial and social cohesion, with the involvement of the European, national, regional and local levels of government, has been included in the Social Summit stakeholders’ declaration. However, it is disappointing that the European Council did not recognise our role in the final Summit Declaration. Building

a social Europe can only happen with and thanks to local and regional authorities and this worrying trend needs to change, also in view of the Conference on the Future of Europe.”

SEDEC Commission Chair Anne Karjalainen (FI/PES), Member of Kerava City Council and rapporteur of the [opinion](#) requested by the Portuguese EU Council Presidency on the local and regional dimension of the European Pillar of Social Rights, said: “We welcome that the EU leaders have agreed on common goals with the aim of putting people’s well-being and equality at the heart of policy and making social issues an enduring priority in the European Union. However, success will depend on the commitment of all levels of government, from European to local, to building a strong and resilient social Europe, which will guarantee that the green and digital transitions are fair and which will facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 crisis both economically and socially.”

More information:

Mr Cordeiro and Ms Karjalainen participated in the [high-level conference](#) of the Summit organised on Friday with EU leaders and a wide range of stakeholders. At the end of the conference, a [joint declaration](#) was signed.

Portugal’s Prime Minister António Costa [addressed the CoR plenary session](#) last week, underlining the role of cities and regions as key partners for the success of Europe’s fair, green and digital recovery.

EU leaders met in Porto on 8 May to agree on specific quantitative targets and timelines to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, which was proclaimed in 2017 in Gothenburg. As specified in the [Action Plan](#) presented by the European Commission in March, the new headline targets imply that by 2030 at least 78% of EU population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment, at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year and the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million.

Contact:

Lauri Ouvinen

Tel. +32 473536887

lauri.ouvinen@cor.europa.eu

[SDGs as a Framework for Covid-19](#)

Recovery in Cities and Regions – A CoR/OECD survey



The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) invite representatives of local and regional authorities across Europe to participate in a survey on the Sustainable Development Goals. The consultation is open until Friday 11 June 2021.

In 2019, the UN launched the [Decade of Action](#) for Sustainable Development to accelerate efforts, scale up projects and mobilize contributions across all levels of governments and society for the realization of the SDGs. Regional and local authorities remain essential partners in the process of localization and effective implementation of the SDGs.

Today, the engagement and commitment of local and regional governments to the SDGs is more relevant than ever in a European Union harshly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The recovery is an opportunity to build back better, following the roadmap traced by the SDGs, to design and implement long-term recovery strategies.

In this scenario, the survey is expected to gather evidence on the progress achieved by local and regional authorities in the two years following the [first survey](#) launched by the CoR and the OECD and to highlight the additional difficulties they are facing after the outbreak of the pandemic.

The insights captured by the survey will be used to identify the challenges faced by local and regional authorities in the effort to localize the Agenda 2030 during the pandemic and devise solutions to support them in this endeavour. Moreover, the survey is essential to make your voice heard at the EU level and give your opinion on the place that the SDGs should occupy among EU priorities and within the upcoming plans for recovery.

- The survey is available in all EU languages; to select your preferred language, click on the drop down menu on the right of the screen
- The survey is open until Friday 11 June 2021 midnight
- All responses will be kept confidential

Conference on the Europe's future can

only succeed by going beyond Brussels and capitals and involving local communities



□□ A local dialogue in Strasbourg marked today the territorial dimension of the Conference and highlighted that regional and local authorities are key to bring it beyond Brussels and capitals. Participants endorsed an open letter addressed to all local leaders inviting them to organise local dialogues and join a network of Regional and Local EU Councillors launched by the CoR.

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□ **President of the European Committee of the Regions Apostolos Tzitzikostas** , said: “ We need to relaunch the European project by enhancing its democratic functioning. I see our ‘House of European Democracy’ as having solid foundations – the regional and local authorities – strong walls – the member states – and a protective roof – the EU. The Conference offers a unique opportunity to strengthen it, but can only work if it goes beyond Brussels and the capitals. Local and Regional authorities are the best allies the Union could have to make the Conference a success. Now more than ever, we must seize this opportunity to restart and bring together Europe closer to its people .“

Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica , said: “Through the European Committee of the Regions, we see how local and regional authorities are strengthening our democracy. The Conference’s success will be measured on the tangible results that we will deliver collectively. Regions, mayors and cities are closest to citizens, and hence you are key to making the Conference on the Future of Europe a success.”

MEP and Co-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Conference on the Future of Europe Guy Verhofstadt , said:

“We want to create real momentum from the bottom up. The Conference will be much more than a listening exercise, but a way to truly include citizens in mapping out our shared European future. The foundations have been laid: digital and deliberative democratic experiments that have never been tried on an EU-wide scale. We, representative institutions, will then guarantee that their concerns and proposals will then get a political answer. It’s new and exciting, and it starts today!”

Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs Ana Paula Zacarias said: “ As Alexis de Tocqueville once said: “Local assemblies (...) constitute the strength of free nations.” This shows the relevance of bringing regional and local authorities to the core of the Conference on the Future of Europe. They are the ones closer to the citizens and can help us in reaching out to those

that normally do not participate and express their opinions”.

CoR First -Vice President Vasco Cordeiro said :*“The message of today’s representatives of cities and regions is clear: we accept the challenge to help our Union to do better for our citizens. Europe is an ambitious project. Accountability and trust are key to achieve this ambition. During and after the Conference on the future of the Europe, we have to say what we do with what people tell us. This Conference is not about EU institutions. It is about us, the people of Europe!”*

The European Committee of the Regions commits to engage in the Conference on the Future of Europe in many ways:

- The CoR is represented in the Executive Board of the Conference. In this body, it is working to include elected representatives from regional and local parliaments and councils, next to representatives from the European Parliament and the national Parliaments, in the Conference Plenary.
- The CoR is organising a series of local dialogues in the different Members States to reach as many citizens as possible right where they live.
- The CoR will organise a series of debates in its plenary sessions on the functioning of European democracy throughout the duration of the Conference.
- The CoR partners with the [High Level Group on European Democracy](#) , an independent advisory body of seven wise men and women whose mission is to support the CoR’s political and institutional role by providing strategic political analysis, focusing on the challenges for local and regional authorities
- The CoR will launch on 12 May a [cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation](#) to make cities’ and regions’ voices heard throughout the Conference on the Future of Europe with **Innovative participatory processes** and online tools will be used to host citizens’ panels and provide input as well as recommendations for the final report of the Conference expected on local dialogues in Spring 2022.

Useful links:

[President Tzitzikostas’ speech](#)

[Open letter “Let’s engage with the Conference on the Future of Europa and beyond!”](#)

[Recording of the 9 May local dialogue](#)

[CoR citizens survey to contribute to the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)

New CoR Mobile App with news and updates from the voice of regions and cities only body representing Europe’s one million local politicians. Available now for [iPhone](#) and [Android](#) .

Contact:

Michele Cercone
CoR President's Spokesperson
Tel +32 498 98 23 49
Email: michele.cercone@cor.europa.eu

On 9 May regional and local leaders will discuss with citizens how to bring the Conference on the Future of Europe to regions, cities and villages across the EU



The local dialogue in Strasbourg is organised by the European Committee of the Regions with the French Ministry for territorial cohesion, the City of Strasbourg, the French associations Régions de France, the Assembly of Départements de France and the association of French Mayors.□□□□

The local event will be attended, among others, by Commissioner Šuica, MEP Verhofstadt and Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, Ana Zacarias.

On the occasion of the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe on 9 May in Strasbourg, the European Committee of the Regions is organising, together with the French government and the main French territorial associations, a local dialogue which will give the floor to local and regional elected representatives from all over Europe and to European citizens. The debate will take place immediately before the official launch of the Conference with the aim of marking its territorial dimension and guaranteeing that it reaches out to people in regions, cities and villages across Europe. Participants will discuss how to best involve local elected politicians and local communities in the Conference and how to ensure a stronger role for local and regional authorities in the Europe of tomorrow.

The event is organised jointly with the French Ministry for territorial cohesion and relations with local and regional authorities, the City and Eurometropole of Strasbourg, the French associations Régions de France, Assembly of Départements de France and the association of French Mayors. The local event will be attended, among others, by Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography, Guy Verhofstadt, Co-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and Ana Paula Zacarias, Portuguese Secretary of State for

European Affairs. Representatives from prominent EU associations and movements will also join the debate.

The event's detailed programme is available [online](#) and below.

Practical information:

- Date and time: Sunday 9 May, 11:00-13:00
- Place: Strasbourg City Hall, Grand Salon and online (Zoom platform)
- Web-streaming platforms: [CoR website](#) [CoR Facebook page](#) [CoR YouTube channel](#)
- Interpretation in FR, EN, DE, IT, ES, PL
- Link to the event: <https://euconf-eu.zoom.us/j/96601118862?pwd=dHFhYWt5L3N3d3Zl1dheCtYaE1oZz09>

Meeting ID: 966 0111 8862

Passcode: 711754- Event listed on the Conference [multilingual online platform](#).

Full programme:

The Conference on the Future of Europe: an opportunity to build together the "European House of Democracy" on the foundations of its regions, cities and villages

Moderator: Rebecca Donauer, journalist, ARTE

Introduction (11:00-11:15):

European Anthem

Introduction by Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of Strasbourg and 1st Vice-President of the Eurometropolis of Strasbourg and André Viola, President of the French delegation to the European Committee of the Regions, Member of the Aude Departmental Council

Panel 1: Engaging in local dialogue with citizens for a more resilient Europe (11h15-12h00)

Pre-recorded videos of citizens from civil society, academic, economic or cultural spheres answering: *What is the CoFE? What is citizens' place in the EU? The future of Europe in three words?*

Debate among speakers:

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission, Commissioner for Democracy and Demography

Guy Verhofstadt, Co-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Conference on the Future of Europe

Ana Paula Zacarias, Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs

The contribution of the future French Presidency:

Joël Giraud, Secretary of State in charge of rurality in the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Government

Renaud Muselier, President of the French Regions, President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region

Frédéric Bierry, President of the European Collectivity of Alsace

François Baroin, President of the Association of Mayors of France, Mayor of Troyes Contribution of a European association:

The contribution of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR):

Stefano Bonaccini, President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), President of the Emilia Romagna region

Panel 2: Strengthening democratic legitimacy: a Conference for and with citizens – the contribution of the

European Committee of the Regions (12h00-12h50)

Pre-recorded videos of citizens from civil society, academic, economic or cultural spheres stating how they see the future of Europe.

Debate among speakers:

The contribution of Youth associations:

Eva Maydell, President of the International European Movement, MEP

Silja Markkula, President of the European Youth Forum

The contribution of CoR members:

Olgierd Geblewicz, President of the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions, President of the Western Pomerania Region

Christophe Rouillon, President of the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Coullaines François Decoster, President of the Renew Europe Group in the European Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Saint-Omer

Władysław Ortyl, President of the ECR Group in the European Committee of the Regions, President of the Podkarpackie Region

Kieran McCarthy, President of the EA Group in the European Committee of the Regions, Member of Cork City Council Ms Satu Haapanen, Co-Chair of the Greens Group in the European Committee of the Regions, Member of Oulu City Council

Closing remarks by Vasco Alves Cordeiro, First Vice-President of the CoR and Member of the Regional Parliament of the Azores

Contact:

Marie-Pierre Jouglain

mariepierre.jouglain@cor.europa.eu

Mobile: +32 473 52 41 15