

CoR and EU Commission launch partnership to help local authorities integrate migrants and implement the New Pact on Migration and Asylum



□□ *President Tzitzikostas and Commissioner Johansson announced the agreement at CoR Plenary*

The European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions are joining forces to develop a new partnership to increase support to the work on integration that is performed by EU cities and regions. The partnership was announced by the President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Apostolos Tzitzikostas, and the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, at today's CoR plenary session.

The new partnership on integration will support cities and regions in the EU through three main strands of work:

- Building an open and regular dialogue between EU institutions and local and regional authorities on integration;
- Building capacity and promoting exchange of experiences for local and regional authorities;
- Improving evidence and data on integration at the local level.

The partnership will build on the well-established cooperation between the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions under the [Cities and Regions for Integration](#) initiative, which was launched by the European Committee of the Regions in 2019 to offer a political platform for European mayors and regional leaders to share information and showcase positive examples of integration of migrants and refugees.

[Apostolos Tzitzikostas](#) (EL/EPP), President of the European Committee of the Regions and Governor of Central Macedonia, said: " *Migration is not a challenge just for a few Member States: it is a matter for the whole of the European Union . The EU must support regions, cities and islands – such as Lesbos, Lampedusa and the Canary Islands – that are in the frontline to provide support, integration and other services to newly arrived migrants. While local authorities have put in place many successful and innovative practices for integration, they still face challenges in accessing funding, data and knowledge, in particular in small towns and rural areas. The partnership will support their efforts and show concretely that the EU is by their side in addressing the many challenges they are faced with*".

[Commissioner Johansson](#) commented: said: " *Integration happens in every village, city and region where migrants live, work, study and take part in activities such as sports. Local and regional authorities deliver essential*

services in healthcare, housing and education. They organise sport and cultural activities where newcomers meet people and make friends. I look forward to working more closely with the Committee of the Regions to support cities and regions in their integration efforts. "

[Mark Speich](#) (DE/EPP), North Rhine-Westphalia's Secretary of State for Federal, European and International Affairs and chairman of the CoR's [Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs](#) (CIVEX), said: " *Local and regional authorities are central to social inclusion and to solidarity, so I am very glad that the European Commission recognises local and regional authorities as key players and that, instead of the EU working in parallel, the Commission wants to put municipalities and regions at the heart of its programmes. "*

The CoR will agree its recommendations on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum at its plenary session in March 2021. The CoR's rapporteur, [Antje Grotheer](#) (DE/PES), Vice-President of Bremen City Parliament, said: " *Addressing migration does not begin nor end with the reception of migrants and refugees. This is why the Action Plan for Inclusion and Integration is an integral part of a holistic approach to migration, putting local and regional authorities at the heart of actions to combat discrimination, boost integration and ensure equal access to public goods and services for migrants. Inclusive societies are not only fairer, but also more prosperous societies, and this begins at grassroots level ."*

BACKGROUND

The European Commission's proposal for a [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) is a "welcome and necessary" initiative that would – if approved – help building resilient communities as well as manage migration, the President of the European Committee of the Regions has said. He was speaking in a debate in which European Commissioner Ylva Johansson urged regions and cities to make use of increased EU funding available to support the integration of immigrants.

A central pillar of the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) , first presented in September 2020, is an [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the period 2021-2027](#) , drafted in November. The EU's next long-term budget foresees much greater EU funding for integration projects and programs in 2021-27.

The CoR in March 2019 established a [Cities and Regions for Integration](#) initiative – #regions4integration – aimed at bringing together cities and regions that are interested in sharing experience of integration policies and in finding out more about the possibilities of securing EU funding for their work on including migrants into local communities and local economies.

The [latest tranche of funding available from the EU](#) – totalling €37.2 million – was published in late November and will support projects that help migrant children and victims of trafficking, ease access to basic services, include migrants in the design and implementation of integration policies, and support the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Further information:

The photos of the 141st plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions are available in the [CoR Flickr gallery](#) .

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