

Future of Europe: cities and regions want a reinvented European Union based on solidarity, multi-level governance and proximity with the local and regional level

London School of Economics presents key findings of large-scale survey of EU's local and regional authorities

Results of a pan-European study from the London School of Economics (LSE) collecting the views of local and regional authorities and regional parliaments on the future of Europe and the role they wish to play in a renewed Union were presented on 6 February at the meeting of the Committee of the Regions' Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs ([CIVEX](#)). A majority of respondents said that their favoured path for a reformed EU would be through strengthened "multi-level governance" and greater focus on areas relevant to citizens' daily lives rather than treaty changes or new EU ministerial positions. Having more clarity in the distribution of competences between the various levels of governments is, in their views, of greater importance than having more power. A clear majority of cities and regions also insist on cohesion being the number one EU policy priority and that such policy should be available to all EU regions.

As part of the CoR's " [Reflecting on Europe](#) " campaign, the CIVEX commission chaired by **Barbara Duden (DE/PSE)**, Member of Hamburg City Parliament, has commissioned a pan-European study from the LSE. The exercise consisted in a wide consultation of local and regional authorities' representatives, including CoR members, regional parliaments and associations of local and regional authorities at national and European level. Participants were asked about the main issues currently hampering progresses in the European project as well as identifying ways to address those challenges. The aim was to engage qualified stakeholders in the debate on Europe's future and understand what their perceived role in the EU framework is.

Barbara Duden underlined that " *The outcomes of LSE study show that local and regional authorities could play a unique articulatory role between citizens and EU institutions, being as well laboratories of innovation and democracy. The study feeds in the complex exercise that the CoR has been carrying out in order to bring its contribution to the debate on the future of Europe. Such exercise will result in the adoption of an opinion during the Committee's plenary in October 2018, alongside the second State of the Union's address from the view of cities and regions by the CoR President.* "

The survey was conducted with about 2000 stakeholders. The questionnaire

included 17 questions whilst the analysis focussed on three elements, namely governance, policy, representation and communication. Sarah Harrison, Associate professorial Research fellow at the LSE, presented the results of the study and analysis to CIVEX members on 6 February.

According to the main conclusions of the study, a majority of EU's cities and regions:

- consider that the debate on the future of Europe can be an opportunity to reintegrate citizens into the heart of European project, while re-vitalizing the European project;
- are in favour of reforming the current EU institutional set-up through strengthened multi-level governance rather than new treaties or new EU ministerial positions;
- believe that the strength of local and regional authorities lies in a unique proximity to citizens and the habit of involving a variety of actors in decision making to ensure optimal innovation and consensus;
- consider that cohesion should be the number one policy priority for the EU and that having cohesion available in all regions is of great important for EU future
- point out that that vulnerable categories of citizens should be better taken into account in EU decision-making;
- feel that solidarity should be a crucial focus for a reinvented EU.

The results and analysis of the study will feed into the CoR opinion on the future of Europe, to be adopted by the CoR plenary on 8-10 October 2018.

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