

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 mayor 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.

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