



European Committee  
of the Regions

## **SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS**

### **FROM PLAYBOOK TO IMPLEMENTATION – PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INNOVATION**

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

**28 MARCH 2023**

Dear colleagues,

I would like to thank all participants for attending today's event and for having contributed to a very rich discussion.

We are united here today in our conviction that the green and digital transitions require bold actions and key decisions from all levels of government.

#### **Times of transformation demand a central role for innovation.**

According to the International Energy Agency:

-25% of the reduction in carbon emissions needed to put the Earth's climate on a sustainable path will come from mature technologies.

-41% will come from new technologies that are currently in the early adoption phase,

-the remaining 34% will come from technology at the demonstration stage, the prototype stage, or those not even conceived yet.

Against this background and over the next decade, the EU - together with its regions - will invest in order **to define our way of life for decades.**

The transition towards sustainability should be seen as our **best chance to transform** our economies and societies, making them more prosperous and fairer.

Smart specialisation strategies already address the challenges of the green and digital transitions, but, as we heard today, we need to reinforce and extend our strategies to new partnerships and actions if we want to meet our high level of ambition for the next 10 years.

We sincerely believe that the concept of **Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI)**, co-developed through our joint pilot action with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, has proven potential to strengthen the link between local and regional actions, national plans, and the long-term strategic transformation agendas.

The **pilot** which has been discussed today offers orientation to regions that want to use innovation to deliver the twin transitions. It is especially important that the PRI builds on the lessons of the best available science, and I am especially grateful for the contributions of the PRI Scientific Committee.

The PRI pilot is showing that **it is possible to work across policy silos** by introducing **mission-oriented innovation policies**, and this is also true at the regional and local levels.

The PRI will then **inspire** new ways of connecting regions, including across borders.

It will also **promote** innovation and will **create** new markets by using regulation and public procurement.

Thanks to the pilot, regions have started to **align their innovation policies** to the New European Innovation Agenda, while **mobilising stakeholders** and **cooperating** with the other levels of governance in order to co-create transformation pathways towards competitiveness and sustainability.

Very importantly, the PRI pilot has created a **space for mutual learning**. Dozens of regions, member states and cities are working together to co-create a practical methodology that policy makers can further use to promote sustainable development through innovation.

Last but not least, the pilot also stands out as a very positive example of collaboration between the Commission, the CoR and the regions: the CoR was instrumental in mobilising 74 territories, and for this reason **we want to propose to the Commission to further extend the PRI Pilot**.

This is a success story of the Joint Action Plan between the CoR and Commissioner Gabriel, which I had the honour to launch in May 2022.

We want to use the experience gained over the last year, to give the regions an opportunity to develop **interconnected "deep tech valleys"**, in accordance with the Communication of the New Innovation Agenda for Europe of July 2022. And let me thank Commissioner Gabriel for having introduced the concept of the "tech valleys" to all Greek regions meeting in Rhodes last October.

We would like to see a dedicated approach in **involving also smaller regions in the PRI**, so to help them to address the problems such as the brain drain, the automotive transition, or the coal transition. **Such approach to innovation would help cohesion.**

We would like to see **more synergies with the ERA Hubs** in order to offer regions ways to strengthen their Smart Specialisation Strategies through the new **Community of Practice**.

Here we are talking about a unique opportunity to fulfil the original promise of smart specialisation to become a **holistic strategy for territorial transformation**. To achieve this, we need to bring in the same strategy all the resources a given territory can use, and work in partnership with all stakeholders to open up new pathways for development.

**And this, in order to leave no one and no region behind.**