



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS**

**PLENARY SESSION**

**DEBATE ON THE 2022 EU ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF  
REGIONS AND CITIES**

**TUESDAY, 11/10/2022**

Dear Vasco, Dear Colleagues,

Our Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities

is rich, once more,

of findings and considerations.

Reacting to those, I wish to focus on 3 main issues.

Firstly, *on Ukraine's reconstruction:*

The European Commission President spoke extensively on the war

in her State of the Union Address.

I regret that the important role of local and regional governance was not reflected in her speech.

In Europe,

mayors and regional leaders were at the forefront sheltering refugees and sending humanitarian aid.

In Ukraine,

mayors made the difference in protecting their own citizens, and will be pivotal in the reconstruction of their cities and villages.

Moreover, in the reconstruction of Ukraine,

the State of the Union missed providing details on how to finance it.

We only heard of a pledge to help reconstruct Ukrainian schools with 100 million Euros support,

which is a great initiative,

but the role of European cities and regions was again omitted,  
despite the fact that they could make the difference  
by sharing their know-how on urban and spatial planning,  
and by helping the Mayors of Ukraine in implementing the reforms,  
and manage the funds  
that cities and regions of Ukraine  
will be receiving in order to secure  
the reconstruction, and the future accession to the EU.

*Secondly, on the implementation of the Conference on the Future of Europe's recommendations.*

The Conference on the Future of Europe has shown  
a seed of innovation in European democracy,  
and it is now time to follow up on its proposals.

I believe citizens' panels should become permanent,  
as well as participatory democracy  
shall accompany representative democracy in the EU's deliberations.

But, again,

if we want these tools to be successful and meaningful,  
and become a regular feature of EU democratic life,

regional and local authorities must be fully involved,

as they are ideally positioned

to serve as laboratories and sources of democratic innovation.

Our full involvement will help in bringing the EU closer to citizens,  
something the European Commission seems to forget.

Thirdly, *on cohesion*:

If we welcome the positive role played by Cohesion  
in making a difference by tackling - on the ground -  
the aftermath of the recent crisis,

we must also make it clear today

that Cohesion policy must not turn into a "passe-partout" fund

to be used to tackle all sorts of emergencies.

This is simply not possible,  
as many regions are still lagging behind  
and they still need these funds,  
to catch up in terms of digital infrastructure, for instance.

In addition, regional and local leaders  
also see the risk  
in increased territorial disparities  
as a consequence of their missed involvement  
in the drafting of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans,  
as the national objectives often do not respond  
to the real needs on the ground.

It is therefore much needed to revamp our Cohesion Alliance,  
as no one and no place can be left behind.

I therefore welcome our annual Report

and the Resolution which will be adopted tomorrow,  
which reflects the State of the regions and cities  
and complements the speech on the Union  
delivered by the President of the European Commission.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY