



European Committee
of the Regions

SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS

DEBATE ON THE

MAYOR PAWEL ADAMOWICZ AWARD

PLENARY SESSION OF THE COR, 8 FEBRUARY 2023

Dear colleagues,

I'm glad to once again pay tribute
to the late Mayor Paweł Adamowicz.

Michalowo, in Eastern Poland,
at the border between the EU and Belarus,
is a town of solidarity,
where a courageous and truly European community lives.

A community which defends the values and principles
Mayor Adamowicz fought for.

A community which knows no fear.

A community of courage and vision,
ready to act when it comes to saving lives,

to protect those in need,

to challenge the authorities when it needs to defend
fundamental rights.

Its courage has saved lives
and has set an example for the European solidarity to follow.
I am glad the European Commission
is here today,
joining us in rewarding
the building blocks
of democracy in Europe.

Belarus' use of human beings at the borders of Europe
is unacceptable,
as it is
equally unbearable
a similar abuse by other regimes in the Mediterranean.

European citizens stand against this blatant violation
and put solidarity and values first.

Whilst we have always been,
and will always be,
open for a constructive and peaceful conversation
with all our neighbouring countries,
as it has been for Belarus in the past,
we need to clearly set
red lines that cannot be crossed.

Respect for human beings is one of those,
and we thank you
for the inspiration you give to us today.

Lastly, I want to also thank the Jury for granting
a Special Mention
to Ukraine's Mayor Oleksandr Babich.

Him and many Ukrainian mayors
have been kidnapped by the Russian invaders
over the last year
for what they really represent:
democracy and proximity to the people,
values which are not shared
by both Russian and Belarus regimes.

On the contrary,
we do believe that
protection and promotion of freedom,
solidarity and non-discrimination,
start locally.

The Adamowicz Award is a continuous reminder of that,
and it shows us that
even the smallest stakeholder
is a fundamental building block
to set a Europe of values,

and can contribute to Europe,
as a whole,
to win.

Thank you.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY