

**Brussels, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**To: Co-Chairs of the Executive Board of the CoFoE**

Ms. Ana Paula Zacarias, Secretary of State for EU Affairs of the Government of Portugal

Mr. Guy Verhofstadt, MEP, European Parliament

Ms. Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President European Commission for Democracy and Demography

*CC: Board Members*

Regions are not only key actors in the multi-level governance framework, they are also the level with the closest connections to its citizens. They are also responsible for implementation of much EU policy. During the Covid-19 crisis, the local and regional level has been at the forefront when it comes to taking action to ensure an EU-wide sustainable recovery.

The undersigning regions have collaborated to ensure the regional participation in EU Recovery Funds. As regional decision-makers from across the EU, we consider it to be crucial that these voices are heard in the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). This conference is an excellent opportunity to regain citizens' trust in the European Project and we believe that the joint vision of Europe's future can only be established with the active involvement of the regional level.

Multi-level governance was intended to be at the very core of the EU project, and subsidiarity was to be a fundamental principle in European policymaking. Yet, in practice, these values seem to be more and more forgotten. We see a worrying trend whereby EU legislation does not sufficiently take into account the role of regions, instead demanding centralised plans or implementations of policy at Member State level instead of allowing for regional differences. By doing so, decision-making is being moved further away from the citizens. We believe it is time for a renewed discussion about what a "Europe of Regions" really means!

The framework for the CoFoE should ensure that Regions have the opportunity to directly contribute to all the fora of the conference. Moreover, we suggest that the CoFoE includes a plenary session designated to discuss the role of regions and multi-level governance. During this session, Regions and the EU institutions might openly debate the challenges and problems with the current situation. This would be an opportunity to together find collaborative solutions and form synergies. Many regional platforms, initiatives and networks share this goal. Regions are necessary for the recovery and future of Europe.

Thank you for taking our suggestions into consideration. We would like to assure you that we are committed to doing our part in ensuring a successful CoFoE that will make Europe an even better place to live. We look forward to working on that together with you.

## SIGNATURES



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