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"EMERGING STRONGER FROM THE CRISIS: A EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL PACT"

1. As central governments and the European Union were preparing their recovery plans at a summit of Heads of State and Government, without any real consultation with sub-state actors except in a few commendable cases (e.g. Spain), the regions developed their own plans, further to wide consultation with key regional stakeholders: local authorities, socio-economic players, banks and representatives of civil society. This inclusive approach made it possible to mobilise different expertise and coordinate regional budgetary resources. It also enabled all regional stakeholders to rapidly make these measures their own, which is vital in the current atmosphere of public mistrust of the political elite.

The breadth and diversity of the real economy can actually be found in the regions. Growth and unemployment rates, the "stable" indicators of the economy's general health, are essential, but they conceal the unequal impact of the crisis across European territories, in terms of both its extent and nature. Faced with such imbalances, the regions' primary task is to define, as rapidly as possible, additional measures to the national and European recovery plans tailored to the different territories' specific socio-economic circumstances.

3. A great many European regions have launched their own regional recovery plans, in a more or less formal manner. These display some important features that should be highlighted:

- The measures they entail are mainly aimed at supporting the stakeholders of the real economy, in other words companies and households, in particular those that are most vulnerable. These efforts, which aim to provide a focused response to the impact of the crisis on the territories, are also a vital means of restoring public confidence. Following the exorbitant support given to the financial institutions responsible for the situation, the public now expects some significant measures to help them deal with the specific day-to-day problems they have to face;
- It is guaranteed that business subsidies provided in the regional plans will directly benefit the companies located on their territory, especially SMEs. The wide range of regional measures designed to guarantee bank loans to SMEs have thus enabled generally viable companies to avoid having to suffer from a lack of credit and thus to protect their business and jobs;
- To maximise their impact, these plans are designed to be developed in synergy with the whole range of national and European support measures. However, this task is made difficult, and sometimes impossible, because of the insufficient flexibility of the European plan and, even worse, the incompatibility between the European and certain national plans, and the lack of cooperative governance mechanisms between the different tiers of a government. Wider consultation of the regions during preparation of the national recovery plans would have made it possible to avoid many of these difficulties;
- The regional plans are attempting to combine, in a balanced manner, short-term measures aimed at managing the emergency with medium and long-term measures aimed at forging a new vision of the future. They aim to encourage public investment in spite of the expected decrease in regional resources, support the regional economy without lapsing into protectionism (which would undermine them in the long-term), and invest in innovation in order to develop promising high-growth industries and to adapt traditional industries, which is fully compatible with commitments to promote a more sustainable development model;

- The Regions act in the line of a renewed prospect of an intense economic solidarity between enterprises, research laboratories, training centres, professional organisations, particularly with “cluster” policies. In this time of crisis, this economic solidarity helps maintain a project-based dynamic in the areas of research and development, innovation, training, and international relations. These initiatives must be supported;
- Some regions have also chosen, whatever it costs, to pursue a decentralised cooperation policy with regions from other continents in order to avert the risk of introspection and to avoid exacerbating the impact of the global crisis on both international trade and the situation in the poorest countries.

4. The crisis offers us an opportunity to change, and it even perhaps forces to do so. The shift towards a model of development that is clean and respectful of the planet’s available resources, the creation of a genuine political and economic ethics and the rekindling of solidarity at all levels of public action are objectives that require profound changes in customs, policies and organisations. This will not happen unless people join political forces and pool existing potential.

5. It is thus urgent for those in charge at national and European level to realise that the systematic involvement of the regions in their discussions and in the development of European and national policies, which is still largely insufficient in most European countries, can only strengthen their effectiveness and legitimacy. The principle of subsidiarity does not go against a better European integration. On the contrary, it is in continuing to gamble on the political and economic construction of the EU, while having more Europe at all levels, that we will emerge stronger from the crisis.

6. To this end, as Presidents of European regions, **we call on national and European leaders to establish and implement a “European territorial Pact”** founded upon:

- a multi-level system of governance that gives effect to the subsidiarity principle;
- the application of the solidarity principle to all levels and all European policies, as proof of renewed political ethics;
- the rejection of protectionism both within the European Union and between it and its partners, in particular its neighbours, at all levels of public action;
- coordinated support for territorial development drawing on innovation, the integration of environmental issues and open partnership.

7. A Pact such as this would help Europe to emerge stronger from the crisis. For a unique and original situation, we need a unique and original response from the institutions: to prepare the ground for such a Pact, **we call on the European Commission to call a special meeting bringing together the European Commission, the member states and representatives of European regional authorities, in particular the Committee of the Regions**, with a view to discussing:

- the impact of the various recovery plans on the European territories and the quest for the best possible efficiency of the resources used;
- the inclusion of this initiative into the necessary debate on the development of Europe’s development model.

8. We call upon all European regional leaders to join in supporting these requests by signing this text

Signatories of the Manifesto

« EMERGING STRONGER FROM THE CRISIS: A EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL PACT »

Vicente Alberto ÁLVAREZ ARECES, Presidente del Principado de Asturias (España)

Francesc ANTICH I OLIVER, Presidente del Gobierno de las Islas Baleares (España)

Laurent BEAUVAIS, Président de la Région Basse-Normandie (France)

Katharine DEAN, Leader of the Aberdeen City Council (UK)

Abdelrahman EL BIZRI, Président de la Municipalité de Saïda (Liban)

Odd ERIKSEN, President of the County Government - Nordland fylkeskommune (Norway)

Alberto JARDIM, Presidente do Governo Autónomo da Madeira (Portugal)

Zlatko KOMADINA, County President - Primorsko Goranska County (Croatia)

Bjarne KRISTIANSEN, County Mayor - Bornholms Regionskommune (Denmark)

Jean-Yves LE DRIAN, Président de la Région Bretagne (France)

Maria Rita LORENZETTI, Presidente della Giunta Regionale dell'Umbria (Italia)

Claudio MARTINI, Presidente della Giunta Regionale della Toscana (Italia)

José MONTILLA AGUILERA, Presidente de la Generalitat de Catalunya (España)

Alain ROUSSET, Président de la Région Aquitaine (France)

Len SCOULLAR, Councillor - Island Spokeperson - Argyll and Bute Council (UK)

Humphrey TEMPERLEY, Councillor - Devon County Council (UK)

Ramón Luis VALCARCEL SISO, Presidente de la Comunidad Autónoma de la Región de Murcia (España)

Michel VAUZELLE, Président de la Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France)