



## **RLEG initiative**

### **Political Declaration 21-01-22 to the COFoE**

The Conference on the Future of Europe (COFOE) is an excellent opportunity to relaunch the discussions to build a more democratic European Union where there truly is a place for each citizen. RLEG is a network of governments of regions and autonomies with legislative powers, many representing peoples or nations within their Member States. The RLEG governments of Alaand Island, Azores, Balearic Islands, Carinthia, Catalonia, Corsica, Euskadi- Basque Country, Flandes, Lower Austria, Madeira, Piedmonte, Salzburg, Tirol, Valencia Region, and Voralberg are strongly committed to the values and principles of the EU and they are ready to do their part in ensuring an effective multilevel governance in the Union and in further improving the application of the decentralized dimension of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The post-COVID context of the EU has made the need for transformative and foresight policies, adapted to respond to the needs of European citizens, critical. In the current circumstances regions with legislative powers are, more than ever, essential agents of political transformation, willing to anticipate, deliberate, make decisions, invest and commit themselves in order to achieve both territorial and common EU objectives.

#### **Value added of regions with legislative powers: legitimacy, effectiveness proximity and expertise**

The Governments of Regions with Legislative powers hold political, financial and technical expertise in designing and running public policies, often related to key areas of the EU agenda. Therefore, widening their involvement in the entire EU policy cycle would allow to access better regional data and to include more regional specific recommendations when elaborating and implementing EU

policies, strengthening their bottom-up approach and territorial dimension. It is also clear that many citizens in Regions with Legislative powers feel closely connected to their regional Parliaments and Governments. It is therefore crucial for the democratic legitimacy of the EU to fully involve these actors in the policy making process.

In this sense, RLEG Initiative could and should play a key role in tracking the direction of the EU legislative and policymaking processes and structures. The under-signatories are willing to contribute to the future of the Union and to work together with Member States and EU institutions, as reliable and constructive associated partners, in order to shape and implement, effective policies in the interests of the citizens.

It is fair to recognize that since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, improvements have been made in the EU's recognition of the regions in general, but very few with regard to the demands of regions with legislative powers. We are still a long way from effective multi-level governance. Nowadays a tension still exists between what sometimes is perceived as efficiency, in terms of streamlined and simplified processes, and deepening democracy, through an updated governance scheme fully respectful of the Constitutional powers of the EU regions with legislative powers. We remain convinced that there is no trade-off between these factors and that real efficiency can only be achieved if the decision-making process is democratic and legitimate.

Lately, we are witnessing increasingly centralized approaches that tend to adopt one-size-fits-all EU policies that could be detrimental to the diversity and complexity of the EU territories, not least on those regions with specific rights and legal obligations in EU policy matters. In that sense, the Conference of the Future of Europe offers the opportunity for the regions with legislative powers that are prepared to promote the EU's integration through shared responsibility to become active subjects of the process.

## **Proposals of the RLEG Initiative to the COFOE**

RLEG initiative calls the Conference of the Future of Europe for an effective multilevel governance in the EU, by enabling concrete, significant involvement of regions with legislative powers in the whole policy cycle and offering co-responsibility in the integration process, thus improving the impact of the EU legislation and policy “on the ground “. Through their legislative powers, the under-signatories hold a significant potential to strengthen the connection between the needs and request of EU citizens-and EU regulations, policies and related investments.

RLEG initiative manifests its interest and commitment in a structured dialogue with the EU institutions. This dialogue must be inspired by pragmatism and long-term vision, bearing in mind their empowerment to anticipate, deliberate, make decisions, invest and commit as agents of political transformation, in order to reinforce the European integration process.

To provide direction and orientation to this structural dialogue, the following proposals are submitted to the consideration of the COFOE:

- The establishment of an inter-institutional forum where regions with legislative powers, in their capacity as “Regions Partners of the EU” - inspired by the concept launched by former MEP Mr. Alain Lamassoure during the Convention- , could regularly share advise and expertise with the EU institution, in order to have a concrete influence on the decision making process, among others:
  - A) To facilitate a strategic tracking of the EU’s legislative and policymaking design and timeline. This could involve efforts to capture evidence, analysis and recommendations linked to the future direction for EU legislative and policymaking processes. Particular vigilance could be assigned to monitoring how “fit for purpose” the EU’s multilevel governance system is with respect to its capacity to facilitate the full

engagement of regions with legislative powers, as well as recommending change where the system has proven to be ineffective.

- B) To identify specific policy opportunities where RLEG, can demonstrate its expertise and capacity to engage with and optimize policy development. These could include: the new debate concerning the future of the European Semester, Territorial Impact Assessment, Foresight, and Better regulation.
- C) To explore, in line with the Resolution on the implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning enhanced cooperation approved by the European Parliament on the 13 February 2019, the possibility for regions with legislative powers to participate in enhanced cooperations that affect them.
- The under-signatories commit themselves to collaborate and to meet, regularly once a year and whenever circumstances require, at their highest political level to review capacity, scale and opportunities for strategic alignment with other regional partners in order to generate a clear, cohesive and consensual strategic impulse to the effective multilevel governance in the Institutional framework of the EU.

This RLEG Political Declaration is supported by:



Åland Islands



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Catalonia



Corsica



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