



Toulouse Declaration

For a Europe closer to territories and citizens

Political Declaration of the 10th CEPLI Political Conference

Toulouse, 14th November 2019

In recent years, Europe, our home, has faced major challenges corresponding to vital issues for current and future generations in our territories. While the world is changing at an ever increasing pace and in an irreversible fashion, intermediate local authorities remain a strong and trusted point of reference for citizens.

They play an increasingly important role through their ability to understand the needs of the population and to constantly act to meet them. Our concrete interventions represent a real added value to guarantee economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Nowadays, citizens and their territories are directly impacted by the various upheavals that are disrupting the sustainable development of our societies: climate and demographic change, inequality and poverty, systemic economic risks, governance deficits, rising extremism and the migration crisis.

In this context, the guidelines that must be adopted for the future of Europe and its territories, particularly in terms of territorial reforms, must safeguard the current competences of local intermediate authorities as they constitute a safety net for the population.

Our local and regional authorities play their part in the cohesion effort, and as such, they must be recognised as responsible and legitimate interlocutors in the dialogue with national and European authorities. They are an integral component of the European project.

THE COMMITMENTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF INTERMEDIATE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

We, the elected representatives of the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities - CEPLI, want to contribute to achieving a more democratic Europe, as the representatives of a level of government that is closest to the territory and its citizens. To this end, we declare that:

1. The added value of proximity

We claim the added value of proximity to our citizens.

As an intermediate level between Municipalities and Regions, the provinces have acquired a real expertise in supporting the smallest communities, which is essential to carrying out proximity policies with citizens and to ensuring a strong link between EU citizens and the European institutions.

Intermediate local authorities provide local services to several citizens, companies and municipalities. Given their proximity to their population, the provinces are able to identify the specific needs and challenges encountered locally and provide the most appropriate responses.

Their actions are fully aligned with the principle of subsidiarity. The CEPLI fully subscribes to the principles of active subsidiarity and multi-level governance defined by the European Committee of the Regions and recalls that the proximity of Local Intermediate Authorities to their territory allows them to intervene quickly and appropriately to meet the needs and expectations of European citizens.

2. Decentralised management of European funds.

We contribute to the success of the decentralised management of European funds.

One of the essential roles of the intermediate level of authorities is to work towards territorial cohesion and solidarity. The decentralised management of European funds provides for better local implementation and a more efficient allocation of resources.

Simultaneously, they make it possible to manage the diversity of urban and rural territories equitably, to effectively mobilise resources and skills in the service of the territorial economy, to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and accountability of elected officials at different levels of administration.

It would make sense to give more importance to mid-level authorities in the Member States. To be effective, the implementation of the European Union's financial instruments must be fairly distributed according to the competences exercised by each level of administration. It now appears that the scope of their actions is the most appropriate to ensure complementarity and equity between urban and rural territories.

3. Meeting the sustainable development goals depends on local authorities.

We are committed to the implementation of the sustainable development goals within the framework of the United Nations programme by 2030.

There is a need for a performance framework for Europe and its partners, both for Agenda 2030 and its sustainable development goals. Local authorities have a major role to play in achieving these goals which cannot be reached without local initiatives.

One third of public expenditure and more than half of public investments are carried out by

local authorities: municipal, intermediate and regional. Local authorities are particularly well positioned to promote cooperation between public organisms, the private sector and civil society.

4. **Citizen Participation**

We support citizen participation within the local and regional authorities of the European Union.

As intermediate authorities, we are in favour of "open government" initiatives that allow greater citizen participation in order to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency in public services.

These administrations have set up communication channels that citizens can use to communicate directly with them. Their electronic portals, social networks and citizens' assemblies, participatory budgets are permanent exchange initiatives between local political representatives and citizens that give them the opportunity to express their opinions and perspectives on the actions of Local Intermediate Authorities which have a concrete impact on their quality of life.

These transparency initiatives contribute to a necessary increase in citizens' trust in their elected representatives.

5. **The consideration of Local Intermediate Authorities in European decisions.**

We call for better consideration of Local Intermediate Authorities in European decision-making processes.

Effective regulation must result from the joint effort of all levels of governance. Since local and regional authorities implement 70% of EU legislation, they must be involved in the process of "better regulation in the EU".

We finally call on EU institutions to include us in the "Conference on democracy and the future of the European Union".