

## **Local intermediate governments' manifesto for the deployment of the Next Generation EU funds**

The European Union has agreed on a historic “Recovery plan for Europe” that will lead the way out of the economic and social crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and lay the foundations for a modern and more sustainable Europe. The EU’s long-term budget, coupled with the NextGenerationEU instrument, offers a courageous response to the challenges ahead of us. We therefore consider that the ambition, generosity and speed of the Community’s response should go hand in hand with measures by member states to ensure its benefits extend to all their peoples and cities, in order to strengthen the link between the construction of Europe and a federal system in which local governments play a key role.

Firstly, because local governments, in the legitimate exercise of their powers, are directly involved in the priority areas defined by the European Commission, such as energy efficient buildings, sustainable public transport, green infrastructures, the availability of fibre optic internet and fast broadband in all parts of the country, and the digitalisation of services and manufacturing. These are fields in which local governments have worked for many years, with a shared vision of the future through the Urban Agenda for the EU and the ability to design comprehensive policies, vital aspects for ensuring the added value of the recovery package.

Local authorities have a key role to play in linking support for energy efficient buildings and homes with strategies for cutting-edge urban regeneration; in combining major investment in public transport with micro-mobility projects that affect people’s habits; and in ensuring that the digitalisation of industry is accompanied by measures to strengthen workers’ technological skills. Without local government involvement in turning the European Commission’s priorities and national plans for recovery into strategies based on comprehensive approaches that reflect the real situation in each region, the effectiveness of the European funds in bringing about the desired transformation could be substantially reduced.

The voices of local governments need to be heard, together with those of intermediate or second tier local authorities, who work to ensure that municipal action is balanced and has solid foundations, in line with a broader regional vision. This is vital in the case of strategies for smart urban or rural development with a multiplier effect on the funds.

Secondly, the ambitious nature of the plans for the recovery, transformation and resilience of EU member states may be jeopardised if we fail to ensure the legitimacy of the structural reforms entailed. Investment must be seen by the public as key to improving their standard of living, at a time when the crisis brought about by COVID-19 has affected

vulnerable sectors of society most severely, exacerbating a clearly urban social divide that has grown steadily since 2008, together with the emergence of rural areas where opportunities are often lacking, leading to an irreversible movement of people to cities. The extent of this double social and geographical divide varies in each member state of the EU and there are regional differences within each state. Local intermediate governments, with their extensive knowledge and broad view of local conditions, are in a strong position to tackle this continent-wide double divide and, for this reason, we believe we must not fail to meet this challenge of strengthening cohesion.

Local government bodies in Europe have the strategies, operational capacity and knowledge of their area, and the people needed to tackle this double challenge related to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the European Recovery Package, and the national plans proposed by European Union member states . For this reason, we, the undersigned, as representatives of local intermediate authorities in our respective countries, hereby request:

- 1.** That the European Union and its member states recognise local government bodies, especially those at intermediate level, as strategic allies in the use of funds and initiatives related to recovery, transformation and resilience and, in particular, the application of NGEU funds (and those made available within the framework of the new EU multiannual financial framework), so that no person, region, or local authority is left behind.
- 2.** That member states guarantee that a part of new funding for recovery, transformation and resilience will be made available to local authorities, making it possible to develop a new generation of integrated and innovative local policies and strategies in line with the premises of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to guarantee the rights, safety and opportunities of regions and their inhabitants now and in the future.
- 3.** And finally, that member states guarantee the establishment of effective, permanent mechanisms for dialogue with local governments and intermediate local authorities in their respective countries, ensuring that they have a role in planning, executing and monitoring their respective Recovery Plans, through the introduction of new mechanisms of shared governance.



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