

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

ToGether®
SINCE 1957

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - DECLARATION FOR EUROPE

We, the members of the Committee of the Regions, elected representatives of the regions, local authorities and cities of Europe, recognise the invaluable contribution made by the European Union to peace, democracy and prosperity over the last fifty years and are proud to have made our own contribution. Thanks to the European project:

- the people of Europe daily reap the benefits of a huge border-free area of political, economic and monetary stability, where they can travel, study, train, work and be consumers in freedom and security;
- the spread of democracy and the development of the European social model provide incomparable opportunities for individual and collective fulfilment in family, professional, and social life;
- European integration, based on the principles of cooperation, partnership and rule of law, enables people to live in safety, with due respect for the environment, and thus set an example for the rest of the world;
- the economic and social cohesion policy, a modern expression of European solidarity, has gradually helped to improve people's standard of living and access to quality education, health and transport services in all regions and local authorities;
- the people of Europe benefit from the respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and the recognition of local and regional identities.

Anxious to provide Europeans, and youth in particular, with an ambitious response to their expectations regarding European integration, we consider the following areas to be priorities:

- promoting European values, including respect for human beings, their freedoms, rights and dignity; the principles of solidarity and responsibility; the rule of law and equality before the law; cultural diversity; the consolidation of the European social model; and the development of local and regional autonomy and civil society. These values lay the foundations for a bond of trust between the Union, its different levels of governance and its citizens, and establish the key features of a common European identity;
- completing the single market under conditions conducive to sustainable development, equity and inclusion, whilst drawing more on the rich diversity of Europe's regions;

- democratically strengthening the political life of the Union through European elections based on a clear programme and budget and through strengthened relations with democratically elected assemblies at all levels;
- adapting the Community's remit, in areas where citizens clearly sense the added value of a European approach, in compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
- the cohesion of the European Union, to be able to meet the challenge of globalisation more successfully.

In our capacity as representatives of the level where grassroots democracy and local solidarity are put into practice, where initiatives are launched and where cultural identity is forged, we are convinced that devolution and multi-level governance are among the best routes towards European integration. We are ready to unite our efforts to ensure that Europe becomes a strong political entity that our citizens will be proud to belong to and that will give them confidence in the future and in their relations with the rest of the world.

To this end, we are determined to:

- continue to contribute to the development of an ever-closer union of the peoples of Europe, whilst respecting local and regional diversity, identity and autonomy;
- pursue direct dialogue with our fellow citizens regarding the achievements of the European Union and the challenges to come; and affirm the role of the Committee of the Regions in the EU decision-making process;
- make our contribution in the form of financial and human resources in order to support EU policies in areas that are crucial to our citizens and to future generations, such as environmental protection and global warming, and thus to develop common approaches that are effective, reliable and sustainable;
- promote and share the experience we have already acquired in new forms of citizen participation, enhancing regional cultural and economic potential, managing diversity and inter-regional cooperation in the Union, at its borders and with the rest of the world;
- support the heads of state and government in bringing the constitutional process and the necessary reform of the Treaties to a rapid conclusion, without losing the ground gained by and for local and regional authorities, especially with regard to monitoring of subsidiarity and territorial cohesion in the European Union.

Rome, 23 March 2007
