

**DECLARATION OF TURIN
ADOPTED BY THE 10TH CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS
OF REGIONS WITH LEGISLATIVE POWERS**

5-6 NOVEMBER 2009

At the invitation of the President of Regione Piemonte, the Presidents and their representatives of ... Åland Islands, Aragón, Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest/Région Bruxelles Capital, Burgenland, Catalunya, Euskadi, Extremadura, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Galicia, Kärnten, Lazio, Madeira, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Wallonie, Salzburg, Sicilia, Tirol, Trento, Veneto, Vlaanderen, Wales, and Wien ...

regions with legislative powers in the European Union, met in Turin on 5th and 6th November 2009 for their 10th Annual Conference.

More than two hundred million European citizens rely on regional governments to develop and deliver the environmental, economic and social benefits that the Union provides. The European Union is still a Europe of Member States, but it is important to accommodate and recognise the diversity of those Member States and their regions. If decisions taken on an institutional level have to bring the greatest benefit to the lives of the citizens, they need to be relevant to people, and that means taking them as close as possible to the citizens.

Regions with Legislative Powers have their own governments and parliaments and often have responsibilities comparable to those of Member States within their areas of competence. They participate in the shaping and decision-making of EU policy and are often responsible for transposing EU law into domestic law within their areas of competence.

Having witnessed the growing distance between the EU and its citizens, as the last elections to the European Parliament demonstrated, the Presidents are convinced that European regions must assume a leading role in communicating and informing citizens about the European Union. This is even more the case for regions with legislative power, which have competences and instruments facilitating an active role for civil society, to bring Europe closer to the citizen and to mobilize European citizens to participate actively in European construction. Therefore, they encourage the European Union to continue the process of decentralisation of information and communication in favour of European regions through cooperation and provision of tools and resources to bring the European Union closer to its citizens.

Regions with legislative powers look to respond to the opportunities and challenges of this period of economic crisis and to promote the development of a more inclusive society. They are convinced that citizens must become real stakeholders in the project of the European integration. Regions with Legislative Powers constitute the level of government closest to the citizens and whose active role increases transparency, allows for better governance and offers opportunities for democratic involvement in public policy-making. Reinforcement of their participation is of the utmost importance;

REGLEG recognises that regional entities are often better placed to deliver proximity and effective communication of European policy to citizens. REGLEG, as the network representing the interests of the Regions with Legislative Powers, will continue its works to defend a deeper involvement of these regions in the EU decision-making process.

REGLEG welcomes the ratification by all the EU member States of the Lisbon Treaty; a number of regions were actively involved within their Member State in giving assent to the Treaty or advising in its preparation. REGLEG recognizes that the Lisbon Treaty provides a new dynamic for regions with legislative powers.

In line with Article 4 § 2 of the Treaty of the EU as amended by the Lisbon Treaty, which for the first time in EU-history not only recognizes the national identity of the Member States, but also the political and constitutional structure, including the regional and local self government inherent in this national identity and the Protocol (No 26) on services of general interest, which underlines the essential role and the wide discretion of national, and explicitly of regional authorities in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest, REGLEG will contribute to the elaboration and further institutional recognition of regions in line with the new definitions and underlines the relevance of regions with legislative powers in this context.

Although the Lisbon Treaty constitutes a significant step forward, the Presidents are convinced that a number of long-standing demands of the Regions with legislative power still need better recognition, such as the right of direct access to the European Court of Justice in defence of their rights and prerogatives, the establishment of the Committee of the Regions as a fully-fledged institution of the Union, a provision for Member States to designate regions as “Partners of the Union”, enjoying specific rights at the European level, as these regions have exclusive competences and shared competences with Member States, and guarantees regarding a larger use of languages with co-official status from Regions with legislative power in EU institutions (without impacting on the EU budget).

The Presidents reaffirm that REGLEG, as the network representing the interests of the Regions with Legislative Powers, will continue its work to defend a deeper involvement of these regions in the EU decision-making process and in shaping EU law.

The Presidents ask the Committee of the Regions to set the hurdle low for the use of its future right of direct access to the Court of Justice.

The challenges for the European Union and for the Regions with legislative powers

The European Union – and the wider world - is facing a severe financial and economic crisis. Member States and regions are now implementing economic recovery plans that represent the most ambitious effort ever to align their economic policies. Regions with Legislative Power are at the forefront in tackling growing unemployment rates as they have important competences and expertise in the areas of employment, education and vocational training.

The Presidents stress the need for an inclusive approach to the development of common answers to the economic crisis and its negative social effects and for stronger coordination in order to avoid the distortions of the internal market and to increase its effectiveness

Through concerted action, we can succeed in increasing our chances of cutting short the recession and limiting the social costs for everyone, and, more generally, in tackling the negative side effects of globalisation and turn them into potential gains.

Cohesion policy, from a regional approach, contributes considerably to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. Convergence regions and regions falling under the objective “Regional Competitiveness and Employment“ have an important role in promoting innovation and competitiveness in the EU. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the Cohesion current objectives will be maintained under Cohesion policy post 2013.

REGLEG also expects that the adoption of the next multiannual financial framework can give a sustained impulse to Cohesion policy, stimulating the growth potential of the regions and contributing to strengthen regions’ competitiveness and attractiveness as well as their employment capacity by anticipating economic and social changes.

The success of the strategy for sustainable growth and jobs depends significantly on the active involvement of regional authorities to implement the Lisbon Strategy. It, therefore, goes without

saying that their knowledge and capacities should be recognised by the national and European level and that Regions with Legislative Power should have the opportunity as far upstream as possible to put forward their ideas with regard to the Lisbon strategy post 2010.

Regions with Legislative Powers look forward to a successful cooperation with the new European Commission and a shared commitment to develop and implement the right policies and actions: to promote growth and jobs, to ensure security, to tackle climate change, to play a full part in global governance — all these goals can only be secured through mobilising forces at different levels of government and society.

In some Member States Regions with legislative powers developed already mechanism in order to guaranty monitoring and assessment procedures regarding subsidiarity and proportionality. The mechanism is implemented at pilot character taking into account the early stage for the preparation of European Commission's proposals for regulations and directives as well as the foreseen new early warning system.

The Regions with Legislative Powers and the opportunities of a multilevel governance

The impact of globalisation makes our Regions key spatial and political elements in the European Union. This sphere of influence will need to be fully acknowledged as an essential element to the national and the European arenas of governance.

Multilevel governance necessarily affects both the organisational infrastructure and the substantive political agenda on all levels. Regional governments share with states and multilateral institutions the responsibility to enhance democratic practice in the enlarged 'constitutional' space of multilevel governance. REGLEG welcomes the publication of the White Paper by the Committee of the Regions, with which it has given a strong political signal to step up the involvement of local and regional authorities in the preparation and implementation of European policies. The White Paper reflects the place of local and regional authorities in Europe, their economic and financial responsibilities and political role in the Member States.

Most importantly, it highlights that citizens expect a more understandable and transparent form of governance, where the competences are adequately and clearly allocated to the different levels. REGLEG hopes that the adoption of the White Paper can usefully:

- a) recognise the specific roles and tasks of REGLEG Regions in relationship with European institutions;
- b) outline our Regions' role and importance as key contributors in the new framework of European governance;
- c) take forward the potential which it envisages for the Committee of the Regions in Europe's institutional architecture.

REGLEG endorses the Recommendation "Regions with legislative powers: towards multi-level governance" of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of 14 October 2009, Rec. 278 (2009), which reaffirms the long standing demand of REGLEG to reflect the domestic responsibilities of regions also on European and international level and is a most valuable contribution to the application of the shared principles of multi-level governance.

The future of REGLEG

The role of regional and local authorities must be considered an important issue in the debate on the future of the European Union, mainly because the Treaties and the way in which the Union is run need to reflect the process which is taking place within each Member State - a process of 'regionalisation', or rather of a growing recognition of the functions and autonomy of the various regional and local authorities.

As a result, these authorities have taken on a more important role in transposing Community legislation and in running Community programmes. The Presidents declare their intention to

continue to develop REGLEG as a network which consolidates existing achievements and takes full advantage of new opportunities for participating in the EU decision making and implementation process, and to better defend their specific interests.

As many partner regions of REGLEG participate in national delegations of member states in the Council, comitology and other expert working groups there is a broad field of close cooperation in order to focus on commonly identified priorities based on the working programmes of the EU presidencies and the annual legislative programme of the Commission.

As the European Union aims to bridge the gap between alleviating the crisis and preparing for recovery, REGLEG network, through mutual co-operation, will work towards sustainable growth and jobs and thus intends to create a new basis for the European integration process.

2010 will be a crucial year for the Lisbon Strategy and to some extent for the Cohesion Policy post 2013. The Spring European Council will decide upon the Strategy post 2010. Given the crucial key role regions with legislative power can play in both policies, REGLEG demands for more involvement for regions as far upstream as possible to put forward their ideas. They should be actively involved in all relevant aspects of the new strategy and policy (policy formulation, implementation and monitoring).

REGLEG will work with the European institutions to maximize and defend the regional interest at European level. REGLEG will contribute to the consultative work of the CoR in particular in the field of subsidiarity monitoring, and can help to communicate Europe and bring it closer to its citizens.

Considering the good cooperation with the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) REGLEG stresses its willingness to cooperate with CALRE in all areas of common interest, such as strengthening regional democracy in Europe, notably through the Interregional Group "regions with legislative power" within the Committee of the regions.

REGLEG might also serve as a forum to establish common positions in response to open consultations of the Commission on matters of common interest.

The participants of the 10th Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Powers (REGLEG) ask all regions in the network to support these conclusions and recommendations at the national and the EU level.

They ask the Presidency to transmit them also to the European Institutions and bodies.

Adopted in Torino on 6 November 2009