

**Committee of the Regions**

The EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives

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**"I need you to push member states on territorial pacts",
Commission President Barroso tells CoR plenary**

Addressing Committee of the Regions (CoR) members Wednesday afternoon in Brussels, Commission President José Manuel Barroso supported a greater role for regions and cities in achieving EU goals. "We cannot win the hearts and minds of citizens without the leadership of regional and local representatives that have to contribute to promote Europe. You are essential relays for the Union." The Commission President said he would push member states to involve regional and local authorities through "territorial pacts". CoR President Mercedes Bresso welcomed this announcement, adding that the Europe 2020 targets can only be reached if all levels of government work together right from the beginning.

Commission President **José Manuel Barroso** was presenting his priorities for 2011 to mayors, councillors and regional representatives from across Europe. He underlined that "from the beginning, my objective has been to deliver the Europe 2020 strategy with a wide range of partners, including the Committee of the Regions as well as regional and local authorities." Commenting on recent CoR proposals to involve regions and cities in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, President Barroso stressed: "We are very much in favour of your idea of territorial pacts. I will push member states to accept involvement of all parties in territorial pacts."

CoR President **Mercedes Bresso** concurred that the success of EU flagship initiatives, as well as most EU policies, largely depended on a greater role for regions and cities: "Local and regional authorities manage two thirds of all public investments, so their support is crucial in achieving the Europe 2020 targets. We are ready to work together with the Commission, the member states and the European Parliament to realise these goals. This must happen on an equal footing, and not with regions and cities being seen as mere implementing authorities."

The Committee of the Regions substantiated this message in its [first Europe 2020 monitoring report](#), published on 30 November. The report concludes that, while some countries seek the participation of regional and local authorities, "a lot remains to be done to ensure increased ownership of Europe 2020 through enhanced partnership in its implementation between all government levels". President Barroso assured CoR members that the Commission "will analyse the report very carefully".

Looking ahead, in a resolution on its priorities for 2011 adopted today, the Committee of the Region emphasises the leverage effect that the EU budget has on the European economic recovery strategy and the financing of structural investments. On the question of the EU's "own resources", it urges the Commission to press ahead with its consideration of whether to make use of revenue from a tax on financial transactions or financial activities, sales of greenhouse gas emission quotas, an air travel tax, a separate European value-added tax, or part of the revenue from an energy tax or company tax.

Responding to recent polemics on EU regional aid, President Barroso told CoR members: "Let us be clear, cohesion policy doesn't only benefit the regions, it benefits Europe as a whole. It is indispensable for the future of the European Union. The European Commission is proud of the cohesion policy. Without cohesion policy, there can be no Union. There can be no Union without solidarity." Mercedes Bresso agreed: "Cohesion policy is one of Europe's greatest achievements. It has helped to modernise transport links, it has helped millions of people to find new jobs, and it has helped our efforts to protect the environment. There is of course always room for further improvement and simplification. But already today cohesion policy is the best-controlled funding programme in the world."

The CoR on the internet: www.cor.europa.eu

The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives. The mission of its 344 members from all 27 EU Member States is to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are obliged to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the EU Court of Justice if its rights are infringed or it believes that an EU law violates the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.

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