



POLITICAL DECLARATION

RLEG INITIATIVE

BILBAO, 22nd March 2023

RLEG Initiative is a network of governments of regions and autonomies with legislative powers, hereafter referred as Regions with legislative powers, hereafter RLEG regions, many representing peoples or nations within their Member States. The RLEG governments of **Åland Islands, Azores, Balearic Islands, Catalonia, Corsica, Basque Country, Flanders, Lower Austria, Madeira, Piedmont, Salzburg, Sardinia, Tyrol, Valencia Region and Vorarlberg** are strongly committed to the values and principles of the EU.

Whilst we recognize the need for common solutions to many of the challenges we face, these solutions must be designed in such a way that existing democratic structures of self-governance in the European Union are not weakened.

On many occasions, when powers are transferred to the European level, it is in policy areas where RLEG regions have specific powers.

The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), the unlawful invasion and brutal war in Ukraine and the geopolitical and energy crises, have prompted RLEG members to call for effective multilevel governance in the EU and significant involvement of the Governments of **Regions with legislative powers** in the EU policy cycle, considering their empowerment to anticipate, influence, substantiate, deliberate, make decisions, implement, invest and commit as agents of political transformation.

For this reason, and in consonance with the principle of subsidiarity, the role of RLEG regions in the EU's multi-level governance system must be further strengthened and policymaking at European level should be enhanced by a true regional perspective.

In the RLEG Initiative's view, there is real potential to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU by including the role of Regions with legislative powers in the process of designing and implementing European policies that respond to the needs of European citizens.

We are witnessing a growing and worrying tendency towards centralization in the EU. In some cases, as a result of the assumption that achieving efficiency requires simple and expeditious decision-making processes, this assumption, in complex realities such as the EU, where there are Member States with a high degree of decentralization and very different socioeconomic, territorial, historical and cultural realities, is clearly a mistake. It leads to one-size fits all solutions that are not fit for purpose, creating mistrust on the ground towards the EU policies.

In addition, this tendency disregards the article 4.2 of the TEU by eroding the legislative and implementing powers that some regions of the EU detained by virtue of their constitutional order in their Member State. It is time to reverse the recentralization trend; it is time to claim a more participatory, more democratic governance that delivers on the ground.

Only when citizens are truly involved, the EU can combine the necessary integration with a maintained democratic legitimacy. Therefore, the EU needs to acknowledge that regional authorities with legislative powers are the level of government that hold such a powers closest to the citizens.

The active involvement of RLEG regions in the EU policymaking process is essential for the sake of an equal treatment/ponderation of the weight of the political representation of the EU citizens.

In May 2022, the final report of the Conference of the Future of Europe was published. Its conclusion on subsidiarity and the role of Regions is encouraging: multilevel governance and the involvement of substate entities clearly important for citizens. Proposals 39 and 40 demand the participation of Regions in the EU legislative process.

RLEG Initiative reiterates the following appeals made in January 2022 to the CoFoE that remain unexplored:

A) Inspired by the concept launched by former MEP Mr. Alain Lamassoure during the Convention on the role of Regions with Legislative power, the under-signatory Governments call for the establishment of **an inter-institutional forum** where regions with legislative powers, could regularly share advise and expertise with the EU institutions, in order to have a concrete influence on the decision-making process, including:

- Facilitating a strategic tracking of EU's legislative and policymaking design and timeline. This could involve efforts to gather evidence, analyses and recommendations linked to the future direction for EU legislative and policymaking processes. Particular vigilance could be assigned to monitoring how "fit for purpose" the EU's multilevel governance system is with respect to its ability to facilitate the full engagement of regions with legislative powers, as well as recommending change where the system has proven to be ineffective.
- Identifying specific policy opportunities where RLEG can demonstrate its expertise and capacity to engage with and optimize policy development. These could include the new debate concerning the future of the European semester, economic governance, territorial impact assessments, strategic foresight, and better regulation.
- Exploring, in line with the resolution on the implementation of the Treaty (approved by the European Parliament on the 13th February 2019), provisions for enhanced cooperation and the possibility for regions with legislative powers to participate in those that affect them.

B) The undersigned regions pledge to carry on collaborating and organising once a year a high level political event to thoroughly discuss and coordinate with other regional partners. The aim will be to generate a programme of clear and consensual strategic action for effective multilevel governance in the institutional framework of the EU, without prejudice of the current presence in the Council of the EU of some Regions with legislative powers on behalf of their Member State, with a view to **formal recognition of the unique role of regions with legislative powers in the EU's policy cycle.**

This RLEG Political Declaration is supported by:



Åland Islands



Regional Government of the Azores



Balearic Islands



Basque Country



Catalonia



Corsica



Flanders



Lower Austria



Regional Government of Madeira



Piedmont



Salzburg



Land Tyrol



Valencia



Voralberg