



Hope for Europe!
25 proposals to revive the European project
16 December 2014 - Rome, Italy

We are women and men engaged in our territories. As mayors, local elected representatives, volunteers and actors of civil society, or representatives of the business sector, we wish to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the principles that unite us in Europe.

From the shores of the Black Sea to the Atlantic Coast, from the islands of the Mediterranean to the Arctic Circle, born in Europe or elsewhere, coming from big cities or small towns, we are citizens in our cities, citizens in Europe, united by the values of peace, justice, human rights, freedom and democracy. United in our diversity, we are citizens *of* our cities and citizens *of* Europe.

We believe in the European project arisen from the ashes of the past wars to answer the call of our mothers and fathers: "Never again". A project of hope and brave leadership for a strong and united Europe, bound to become federal.

When close to us, Ukraine faces the largest conflict on the continent since the Balkan wars, how could we forget that peace is never for granted and that conflict in the world remains a factor of instability and insecurity for all?

We do not forget the message of Edouard Hériot, one of the founders of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, who said "everything opposes states, everything unites municipalities." We are aware that the ever closer Union we have forged patiently is threatened: economic and social recession, inequality, scepticism, xenophobia, turning inward, populism, or corruption undermine the foundations of democracy. These phenomena inflate the disillusion of our fellow citizens towards institutions and, in particular, towards the European project.

In this context, however, Europe must remain a mighty bulwark against exclusion and intolerance. More than ever, we ought to draw inspiration from Jean Monnet when he said: "we are not uniting states, we are uniting peoples." We are convinced that our municipalities and regions are best placed to convey messages of peace. Each of us, at our level of responsibility, is committed to propose modalities for a dialogue that gathers all citizens on equal terms, whoever we are, wherever we live, and wherever we come from.

Having met in Rome, Italy on 15–16 December 2014, at the invitation of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and under the auspices of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

We call on our municipalities and regions to:

1. Encourage citizens' active and direct **participation**, in addition to voting which remains the cornerstone of the democratic structure in Europe;
2. **Mobilise** all actors in their territory – public administration, civil society, schools, academia, businesses – and promote a **governance based on partnership**;
3. Work together to feed the European project by **debating** among us, with our fellow citizens and with national and European institutions; in particular on **Europe Day**, on 9 May, which ought to become a day devoted to Europe and the debate it is giving rise to;
4. Give all **young** citizens the means to participate, express themselves and act freely; and in particular, implement ambitious policies to fight youth unemployment;
5. Offer equal opportunities for **women and men** to participate in local public life and be active citizens; and consider the needs of all in the provision of public services by including a gender perspective;
6. Ensure that **seniors** remain engaged citizens, and are fully integrated in local life, while enabling them to live independently and in dignity;

7. Promote **tolerance**, value differences and fight against all kinds of discrimination in our local communities;
8. Continue, strengthen and widen our exchanges and cooperation in Europe, its neighbourhood and in the world, in a spirit of openness, friendship and reciprocal solidarity.

We call on European institutions and national governments to:

9. Open a broad and participatory process of **debate** with all citizens on the future of Europe, with the support of municipalities and regions, their associations and civil society organisations, as well as better inform them and raise awareness on the realities of European integration;
10. Increase the budget of the **Europe for Citizens** programme to the symbolic level of 1 euro per citizen, in order to increase substantially the number of supported projects, and bring in more Europeans, from all horizons, to meetings, exchanges and gatherings, where Europe is experienced as a genuine citizen forum; and strengthen the support to twinned towns in Europe, and encourage all kinds of cooperation between local and regional authorities;
11. Give greater flexibility to the provisions of the **European Citizens' Initiative's**, in order for Europeans to call out to the European institutions in their policy-making process;
12. Properly include in the European policy-making process **local and regional governments**, which are the level of government closest to the citizens, and therefore natural bridges to span the gap between citizens and the institutions;
13. Extend European citizens' **voting rights** to all elections in the country they reside;
14. Respect **multilingualism** and ensure EU-related information is made available to citizens in all official EU languages;
15. Take into consideration the voice of **younger EU citizens**, who can also bring constructive criticism to the European project;
16. Contribute to reducing the **gender gap** in political and economic spheres of decision-making, starting with the European institutions themselves, through any positive action;
17. Consider **demographic change** as a challenge and not as a burden; and thus value the experience and knowledge of older generations, and the contributions that they have brought and continue to bring to society as a whole; in particular by ensuring the accessibility of goods and services' infrastructures ;
18. View **migration** as an opportunity rather than a problem for our continent's future economic development, and work with their partners within and beyond Europe to ensure migrants can develop their full potential;
19. Respect and promote the right to **free movement** *within* the European Union, and ensure all EU citizens are offered equal opportunities and decent jobs wherever they settle; and that they are guaranteed the same civil and social rights;
20. Give meaning to an **enlarged Europe** and meet the expectations of the peoples bound to join or partner with the European Union; while promoting local self-government and decentralisation in Europe as the most direct way to ensure genuine democracy and to avoid territorial conflicts.

All together we commit to:

21. Respect the **rights** and fundamental freedoms of all, as well as fulfil our **duties** towards the community locally, in Europe and worldwide;
22. Build **open and inclusive communities**, at all levels, where women and men, young and old respect everyone's history, share a common present and equally participate in the community's future;
23. Continue to move towards a **united and integrated Europe**, where the voice of citizens and their closest representatives, mayors and councillors, are fully heard and taken into account;
24. Initiate and participate in **local debates** on what is at stake in Europe, and **mobilise members of the European Parliament** so that they can explain their role and be held accountable in their mandate;
25. Cooperate with each other in a spirit of **partnership** for a better and sustainable future for all.

We invite all our fellow citizens, leaders in our municipalities and regions, decision-makers at national, European and global levels, representatives of civil society, to endorse our call. Together, let's honour the founding fathers of our Union; together, let's revive the European project!