Automotive regions team up for a just and sustainable transition

PUBLISHED JUN 29, 2022
BY EUROPA

20 European regions from seven Member States spearhead the Alliance

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has launched the Automotive Regions Alliance – a political network of regions engaged for the successful transition of the European automotive and supply industry. The Alliance aims to bring in the regional perspective into the ongoing debates on decarbonisation of EU transport while securing jobs, competitiveness and ensuring economic and social cohesion in every European territory impacted by the transition. The automotive industry reached a turnover of over 7% of the EU GDP and currently employs over 14 million Europeans, representing 6.1% of total EU employment. The launch event took place during the CoR's plenary session on 30 June and is the starting point for further actions of the Alliance, which is so far composed of 20 regions with a strong automotive and supply sector from seven Member States: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and The Netherlands. The Alliance is open to any new region to join the network.

In light of the EU's goal to achieve zero-emission mobility, 20 regions from seven EU countries have joined forces to form the Automotive Regions Alliance to advocate for a just, fair and successful transition in Europe's automotive and supply industries to climate neutral standards. Establishing a new supporting mechanism with a dedicated budget, delivering territorial impact assessments, funds for the reskilling and upskilling of the workforce and more flexible State aid guidelines are amongst the claims and objectives of the Automotive Regions Alliance. The CoR’s Interregional group for the Future of the Automotive Industry, launched in 2009, has been key in the successful launch of the Alliance.

At the launch ceremony during the CoR plenary session on June 30, participating regions stressed the need for the EU to develop equitable transition measures based on territorial impact assessments and to support a social dialogue at local, regional, national and

European level. The regions further endorsed a 10-points declaration, which lays out the main demands and goals of the Alliance.

Opening the launch event, CoR President Vasco Alves Cordeiro, member of the Azores Regional Parliament, said: "The climate emergency requires strong action. To lead a fair and just transition people must come first. The goals of the Green Deal must go hand in hand with the protection of people and jobs, keeping Sustainable Development Goals as a compass."

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, attended the launch event and stated: "The automotive sector in the EU accounts for over 14 million jobs. The move to zero-emission cars and vans offers opportunities for Europe’s industry, but equally clear challenges. One thing is clear: to make it a success this green transformation requires a strong accompaniment of reskilling and job to job transitions, strong dialogue between social partners, and adequate funding."

The European Union's goal of reducing emissions in the EU by at least 55% by 2030 includes the EU Commission's regulation to reduce CO2 emission standards for passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. A recent proposal by the EU Parliament to ban cars with combustion engines at EU level from 2035 onwards, adopted on 8 June 2022, will result even more in changes in the European automotive and supplier industry. The goal of the Automotive Regions Alliance therefore is to ensure that the transition in the automotive sector is fair and successful leaving no region behind while fully supporting the EU's climate goals.

The CoR's legislative work on the issue, with the opinion "Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO2 emission performance standards" of rapporteur Adrian Teban (RO/EPP), adopted in the CoR plenary session in January 2022, has not questioned the need to decarbonize road transport, but has called for this change not to happen without budgetary and political support measures at the European level that involves all actors in the automotive ecosystem. All key positions and demands of the CoR opinion have been included in the above mentioned proposal of the European Parliament. The Automotive Regions Alliance will aim to continue this work towards a just transition mechanism.

The territorial impacts that the proposed phasing out of the internal combustion engine in cars and vans will have on regions heavily dependent on car industry are also discussed in close cooperation with the CoR's interregional group on "The Future of the Automotive Industry" (CoRAI). The platform brings together more than 30 political leaders from automotive regions in order to increase expertise to promote cooperation between local and regional authorities. The CoRAI has been the key partner for setting up the Automotive Regions Alliance and elaborating the declaration. The list of members is available here.

To ensure a just transition towards climate neutrality for all European cities and regions, the European Committee of the Regions established the Green Deal Going Local Campaign. This initiative aims to put regions and cities at the centre of the European Green Deal to empower local and regional leaders to take action on climate change and increase the delivery of sustainable EU-funded projects in local communities across the European Union.

Regions that want to join can contact the Alliance through the webpage.

Press release distributed by Wire Association on behalf of Europa, on Jun 29, 2022. For more information subscribe and follow us.

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