

The reconstruction of Ukraine can only deliver results if the EU, national and local authorities work hand in hand



PUBLISHED MAY 17, 2022
BY [EUROPA](#)

Statement by the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas.

The European Committee of the Regions welcomes the European Union's pledge today to help Ukraine rebuild its cities, villages and infrastructure. As the voice of regions and municipalities within the EU and given our long-standing cooperation with our Ukrainian partners, our Committee is ready to firmly engage in the reconstruction process. We consider that the direct involvement of EU and Ukrainian local authorities must be the building block of the reconstruction. We stand ready to launch an Alliance to provide Ukraine's regional and local authorities with the practical support that they will need over the coming years to rebuild Ukraine in Europe.

The European Union has made clear that it will help Ukraine build back every building that Russia knocks down. This is an enormous task – and a task that goes beyond buildings. As stressed by Vitali Klitschko, Mayor of Kiev, President of the Association of Ukrainian Cities, and honorary member of our Committee, Ukraine's cities and regions, as well as local and regional authorities of the EU, must be at the centre of this process, which must help to rebuild from the bottom-up in the spirit of the decentralisation reform achieved over recent years in Ukraine.

President Zelenskyy's and President Michel's call on the CoR to establish partnerships between Ukrainian and EU cities and regions is a historic challenge to the one million local and regional politicians in our Union. It comes at a turning point in the history of our Union and our continent.

The reconstruction that will follow this war – and is beginning, even

before the conflict ends – will, we are sure, express the sense of community, shared history and common endeavour that Ukrainians have demonstrated so inspiringly in their resistance to this war of aggression. Our task – as leaders of the EU's cities and regions – will be to help Ukrainians and their leaders draw on the international experience that they believe will help their communities and country in the next stage of its proud history as a sovereign nation.

In helping Ukraine, EU cities and regions will be guided too by the principles of the New European Bauhaus, which encourages the discovery of beautiful, sustainable and inclusive solutions for our living spaces, and by the objectives of the European Green Deal, to reduce the environmental imprint of our lifestyles.

Region-to-region and city-to-city partnerships have a proud history in Europe, and the cultural ties forged by the city twinning movement helped to heal the wounds of the Second World War. The EU has brought new forms of cooperation, through its regional-development policy and examples such as the Global Covenant of Mayors.

The European Committee of the Regions, through the coordination of its Working Group on Ukraine chaired by the Mayor of Gdańsk, Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, will urge local and regional leaders to build on that legacy. New thinking, targeted expertise, and long-term commitment will be necessary. This will stretch the collective capacity of the EU's cities and regions, and it will only be viable with the support of the EU Member States, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and international donors.

"For every ruined city, there could be a twin city in Europe," the Mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boychenko, said at our last plenary session, in April. That must be our aim.

Press release distributed by Wire Association on behalf of Europa, on May 17, 2022. For more information subscribe and [follow](#) us.

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