

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission

Brussels, 7 September 2026

Subject: Europe's local and regional governments at the heart of the Union

Dear President von der Leyen,

Ahead of your State of the European Union address on 16 September, we are writing as Europe's leading local and regional government networks to reaffirm our support for the European Commission's efforts to strengthen the Union's competitiveness, resilience and cohesion, while pursuing our shared ambition to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent.

Your address comes at an important moment for Europe and its citizens. Across the Union, people are worried about housing costs and availability, job security, energy bills, the reliability of public services, safety and the growing impacts of climate change as experienced by citizens on our territories over the summer. They expect public authorities at every level to respond.

This summer has once again demonstrated the indispensable role of local and regional governments. As wildfires and extreme heat affected communities across Europe, these governments stood at the forefront of the response. They coordinated evacuations, protected vulnerable residents, provided shelter and essential services, kept people informed and began the work of recovery. Throughout the year, they also reduce risks and prepare for future crises by adapting neighbourhoods, infrastructure and public services to a changing climate. Yet, much work remains to be done.

Cities and regions are not simply beneficiaries of European policies and funding, nor just implementers at the end of the decision-making chain. They are democratic levels of government, policymakers, investors, first responders and providers of essential public services. They implement close to 70% of EU legislation, a figure [the Commission itself sets out in the EU Agenda for Cities](#), and subnational governments account for around [68% of climate-significant](#) public investment across OECD countries and the EU. By connecting European objectives with local realities, they also help sustain public trust in democratic institutions and the European project.

In this context, we write with a concern that we would rather state plainly than leave implied: the envisaged restructuring of the Commission services, the next Multiannual Financial Framework and broader efforts to simplify EU policy implementation risk sidelining local and regional governments. Taken together, they risk removing both the institutional interlocutor and the financial route through which local and regional governments engage with the Union. Greater coherence can improve the effectiveness of EU action, but it should not result in more centralised decision-making, weaken locally driven transitions, or thin out the territorial dimension of European policy and investment.

We are conscious that your address will need to respond to all shared European concerns such as Europe's security, economy and enlargement. We highlight that each one of these are also great concerns to Europe's local and regional governments. They receive and integrate people who have fled war, sustain hundreds of partnerships with Ukrainian municipalities that will still matter more during reconstruction, operate much of the critical infrastructure on which our preparedness rests, and are where enlargement will eventually be felt by citizens in the candidate countries. Preparedness is built in places, or it is not built at all.

We therefore respectfully ask you to use your State of the European Union address to reaffirm the Commission's commitment to treating local and regional governments as trusted and indispensable partners, maintaining a strong Commission service that engages with them directly, and ensuring that the next EU budget provides the investment and capacity they need to deliver for people in every community.

Europe's cities and regions stand ready to shoulder their share of responsibility and work alongside the Commission. Together, we stand ready to build a more competitive, resilient, cohesive and climate-neutral Europe that delivers for people in every community and territory.

Yours sincerely,

Françoise Bonnet
Secretary General
ACR+

Thomas Brose
Director General
Climate Alliance

Fabrizio Rossi
Secretary General
**Council of European Municipalities
and Regions (CEMR)**

Claire Roumet
Director
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