



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Office of the President Ms Ursula von der Leyen

Economic Adviser

Brussels, 17 December 2020
Ares (2020) 6507596

Dear Mr De Vita,

Thank you for your letter addressed to President von der Leyen underlining the important role that urban areas and metropolitan authorities have in rendering Europe sustainable and resilient. I am replying on her behalf.

The EU budget and the recovery plan provide support to regions, cities and their citizens to tackle the challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the progress towards a green, digital and just transition. Cohesion policy, in particular, plays a central role in translating European priorities into concrete solutions to most pressing challenges on the ground, bringing Europe closer to its citizens.

Cohesion policy provides financial resources to local investments, but it requires the Member States' commitment to ensure their effective governance, based on partnership and the multi-level involvement of regional, local and urban authorities.

In this regard, we have sent a very clear message to national governments. Regions and cities should be involved in the preparation of national recovery plans and programmes from the very outset. The European Code of Conduct on Partnership provides a common set of standards for Member States to organise effective consultation, participation and dialogue with partners at all stages in the implementation of cohesion policy. National and regional authorities are asked to coordinate with urban and local levels. The transformation of our territories into greener and healthier places largely depends on the determination and capacity to prioritise and coordinate public investments at the metropolitan scale, while catering for local contexts.

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Mr Dimitri De Vita
Councillor
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As you are aware, Member States are required to dedicate a significant amount of EU resources under cohesion policy to sustainable urban development, supporting the green, digital and just transition of cities and urban areas. Furthermore, the cohesion policy framework provides multiple tools that can be flexibly used in various administrative and territorial contexts to support integrated territorial and local development strategies, to empower urban authorities and territorial bodies, or to build strong local partnerships with relevant stakeholders. The Commission will support this process through the European Urban Initiative funded by European Regional Development Fund.

Sustainable urban development also entails a partnership between urban and rural communities. As people often live in places different to those where jobs and services are located, rural and urban areas must act together. Therefore, cohesion policy pays specific attention to the development of functional urban areas, including metropolitan cooperation and urban-rural linkages, where cities and surrounding rural areas join forces and coordinate actions to build a more sustainable and resilient future.

President von der Leyen fully acknowledges the importance of multi-level governance and partnership for an effective delivery of the European Green Deal and the recovery plan, and the need to provide the means for territorial and local authorities to act. In this context, we would like to mention the substantial work delivered under the Urban Agenda for the EU that aims at better involving cities in the design and implementation of policies at both EU and national level.

Furthermore, the President welcomes the adoption of the Leipzig charter for sustainable urban development and of the Territorial Agenda 2030, as a result of intergovernmental cooperation concluded in the ministerial conference of 30 November and 1 December 2020. The Commission services played an active role in this endeavour to provide a renewed framework for tackling societal challenges in the national and European context.

We welcome your commitment to the implementation of the European Green Deal and the recovery plan, and we are looking forward to a fruitful cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]

Mary Veronica Tovšak Pleterski