

Brussels, 1 September 2025

**RE: Preventing Von der Leyen from disconnecting the Union from its citizens!**

Dear Renew Europe colleagues,

As President of the Renew Europe Group in the European Committee of the Regions, I am writing to you ahead of the State of the Union address on 10 September to **explain why the proposal by President Von der Leyen for the new MFF undermines the very principles on which our Union is built, putting its foundations and the Union's future directly at risk.**

The EU's Multiannual Financial Framework is not just a long-term budget—it is a political instrument that shapes how citizens perceive the Union. As you all know from the constituencies that directly elected you, **EU investments on the ground are one of the most visible ways that citizens experience Europe in their daily lives:** through investments in infrastructure, innovation, skills and services in their towns and regions. In our EU jargon, we call this Cohesion Policy.

Since the Maastricht Treaty, the investment plans of cohesion policy have always been developed together with the regional and local authorities that are responsible for identifying the local needs, and of carrying out the investments. The 7-year planning cycle of the EU budget provides subnational authorities with long-term stability for planning and implementation, protecting the funds from the pressures of electoral cycles, in a way that no national government can match.

However, despite multiple meetings in the past twelve months and private reassurances to the contrary, the European Commission has gone ahead with a proposal for the new MFF which **will have the dangerous result of disconnecting the Union from its citizens, by effectively renationalising EU funding and removing any obligations by national governments to involve subnational authorities in the design and implementation of investments. Indeed, funds risk being diverted to national priorities,** weakening the EU's ability to achieve its strategic goals and widening territorial divides.

By proposing to merge all shared management funds into **a single national plan per Member State**, eliminating regional programmes and removing enforceable partnership obligations, the European Commission is breaking the direct link with the local and regional authorities that deliver EU policies on the ground. This is not a technical simplification—it is a structural shift that **destroys subsidiarity and multilevel governance. If local and regional authorities are excluded from shaping and delivering EU investments, mayors and regional leaders will have little incentive to defend or implement EU policies. Citizens**

**will no longer see the EU's added value in their communities, eroding trust and fuelling discontent. This is not just about money; it is about the Union's democratic legitimacy and its capacity to deliver on the ground.** Let's not forget that there are 1.2 million democratically elected representatives at the subnational level in the EU-27, who are collectively responsible for 50% of all public investment that is carried out in the Union, and responsible for implementing 2/3 of the laws that are drafted and approved by you in the European Parliament. Disconnecting the Union from the subnational level of government is therefore a grave strategic mistake by the European Commission!

**In addition, it is an attack on the principles of our political family.** As per the ALDE Party resolution approved at its 2016 congress in Warsaw, two fundamental liberal principles are at the heart of Cohesion Policy: allowing citizens to decide how to govern and shape the local communities in which they live; and helping individuals accomplish their full potential by ensuring they have the necessary infrastructure and means at their reach. And in 2024, the EDP election manifesto described how Cohesion Policy reinforces our Union as "a powerful and fundamental tool for combating regional disparities", and committed to facilitating even further the role of subnational authorities in the management of EU funds.

**For Renew Europe, defending Cohesion Policy is therefore not just a technical matter—it is a political imperative.** It is true that Cohesion Policy needs reforming and improving as we have often proposed in the European Committee of the Regions, but it is undeniable that it has been one of the most successful EU policies, strengthening competitiveness, reducing disparities, and bringing citizens closer to their Union. Undermining this architecture risks weakening the Union at its core. As the most pro-European political family, we must ensure that Europe remains tangible in people's daily lives by empowering the cities and regions that deliver the Union's objectives on the ground.

#### **What we ask you to do:**

We urge you to **raise these issues during the plenary debate on the State of the Union 2025** and:

- Firmly reject any move that centralises the management and distribution of funding at national level at the expense of citizens and their communities.
- Support maintaining Cohesion Policy as a strategic investment tool, not a financial transfer mechanism.
- Call to restore the direct role of subnational authorities in EU funding governance.
- Propose an EU-wide territorial strategy to guide investments and promote balanced development across all regions.
- Support preserving the territorial dimension of the green and digital transition, ensuring that "just transition" remains a core principle.

**I also encourage you to contact mayors and regional leaders in your constituencies to find out what investment projects they might already have been thinking to implement post-2027 but which are now at risk of not happening.**

With your help, we can prevent the renationalisation of EU funds, safeguard the role of cities and regions in delivering Union priorities, and maintain Cohesion Policy as a strategic tool for competitiveness, fairness, and resilience. This is about defending the principles of subsidiarity and partnership that have underpinned the Union since the Maastricht Treaty — and about making sure that Europe continues to deliver visible results in every community. **The enormous challenges we face in this century require a strong bond between the Union and its citizens, but as we all know, that bond is fragile. With the new MFF as currently proposed, regional leaders, mayors, and ultimately citizens, will feel rejected by the Union and instead of becoming stronger, the bond will weaken dangerously.**

I hope we can count on your support to ensure that the European Parliament sends a clear message that the Commission's proposal for the future MFF is unacceptable and dangerous. It must be revised to keep Europe close to its citizens.

At Renew Europe CoR we remain at your disposal for any additional information you may wish to have.

Yours sincerely,



**François Decoster**

President, Renew Europe Group  
European Committee of the Regions  
Vice-President Hauts-de-France region  
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