

REGIONAL AND LOCAL DIMENSION OF THE EPP

in the draft

ELECTORAL MANIFESTO

2024



EPP-CoR Activities

EPP CONGRESS 2024

JOINT DEBATE OF THE EPP-EP GROUP AND EPP-COR GROUP

6 March | 11:00 - 12:30 |

Pavilion B

DEBATE FOCUSING ON THE VOICE OF VILLAGES, CITIES AND REGIONS

6 March | 14:25 – 15:05 |

Romexpo Main Building

- Delivering results at the grassroots level
- Winning elections

LOCAL DIALOGUE ON EU ENLARGEMENT

7 March | 8:00 - 9:00 |

Pavilion B3 ROM Expo

Madgearu meeting room

EPP EXPO EUROPE STARTS IN YOUR VILLAGE, CITY AND REGION

6-7 March

The purpose of this Handbook

The 2024 draft EPP electoral manifesto ‘**Our Europe, a safe and good home for the people**’ has been widely consulted among EPP affiliated parties and organisations. Thanks to the efforts of the EPP President, Manfred Weber, and following the consultation launched by EPP-CoR Group President Olgierd Geblewicz, the text reflects the input and ideas of EPP-CoR members.

The conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe suggested that EU-related topics should be discussed with citizens not only during the electoral campaign for the EU elections but also ahead of national, regional and local elections.

The purpose of this document is to provide EPP-CoR members with some background and narratives when answering the question: How does EPP reflect the priorities of our regions, cities and villages in its future vision for Europe?

We encourage you to use this handbook:

- In **your campaigns** to showcase that the EPP is a “people’s party” providing real solutions and to inform citizens on how EPP-driven policies will promote the interests of our regions, cities and villages in the future. Alongside the European elections in 2024 many national, regional and local elections will also take place (see Annex for details).
- In **your meetings with EU politicians** to better defend the cause of regions and cities building a bottom-up Europe, linking your proposals to concrete references in the EPP Manifesto.
- In **your legislative work** at the CoR, to develop new policy proposals starting with our shared understanding for the future of Europe.

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Key words: environment, energy and climate transition; regional and local resilience; transport; cohesion policy; rural areas; outermost regions; regional and local budgets; health; demographic change; brain-drain; European public procurement; rural-urban synergies, local economy and local jobs, SMEs; democracy; better regulation; territorial impact assessments; subsidiarity; European values, education and culture;

EPP *draft* MANIFESTO 2024 TO BE ADOPTED IN BUCHAREST ON 7 MARCH 2024



Not only is the EPP the most represented political force within the European Commission and European Council, but it is also largely represented on the ground, at local and regional level, more than any other party in Europe'. (lines 586-588)

1) Climate, Energy, Environment and Mobility - policies defined by the needs of regions and cities in Europe

1.1. EPP-CoR narrative on EU environmental legislation and funding.

European cities and regions should be fully involved in drafting the environment, energy and climate strategies and the planning of the EU funding on climate-neutrality projects (e.g. National Energy and Climate Plans, the REPowerEU chapters in the RRF Plans). This is fundamental to ensure that European decisions are supported by citizens, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity. Special attention should be paid to coal and carbon-intensive regions, ensuring their transition is managed in a just way, without leaving any region or citizen behind. In addition, part of the funding for the EU's Green Deal measures should be managed directly by the regional and local authorities themselves to better match the regional needs and characteristics and ensure implementation ownership on the ground. Those objectives are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



To keep our policies ambitious but also realistic we intent to give higher consideration of the needs of cities and regions when preparing environment, energy and climate strategies and their funding. At the same time, we will promote a circular economy in order to utilise raw materials responsibly, we will establish a CO2 circular economy throughout Europe and promote sustainable companies, especially SMEs. (lines 563-567);

1.2. EPP-CoR narrative on energy transition:

The EPP should insist on the energy transition tailored to local needs, constraints and opportunities. Only by working bottom-up can the EU shift from energy crisis to energy independence and provide long-term vision for the EU territories. The EPP should promote support for local businesses and households to produce and consume energy locally, to reduce carbon footprint and energy dependencies. The EPP will support the decarbonisation of buildings via renovation, retrofitting and sustainable construction; Those objectives are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



We also need to better align our energy transition with local conditions. For example, in the area of energy-efficient home renovations, we will better align investments to help households cope with rising prices and renovation requirements in the next years. (lines 469-471)

1.3. EPP-CoR Narrative on climate resilience:

The EPP will promote strategic foresight and work on regional and local scoreboards of social and territorial vulnerabilities to anticipate and mitigate the effects of a changing climate, and make cities and regions more resilient to natural disasters, while promoting a sustainable use of natural resources. Those objectives are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



We want to strengthen Europe's resilience to droughts, which jeopardise our farmers' jobs and our food security, with a European Resilience Scoreboard to better prevent natural disasters and make regions, cities and villages more resilient in agriculture and food production, and with a European plan for water use, reuse and storage. (lines 666-669)

1.4. EPP-CoR narrative on trans-European transport:

The EPP will respond to the needs of the cities and regions of today for better and more sustainable transport with an improved connection between the local road and rail network and the European transport corridors; those objectives are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



At the same time, we will concentrate our efforts on streamlining the completion and development of the new Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) infrastructures, which are crucial for structuring our European territory and enhancing the efficiency of the European Single Market. (lines 507-509).

2) Cohesion and the EU budget

2.1. EPP-CoR Narrative on cohesion as a fundamental value:

Cohesion is a fundamental value for Europeans and their regions - a policy which keeps the EU together. Promoting cohesion is a way to foster a sense of solidarity and mutual support among member states, which is essential for maintaining peace, stability and security in Europe. Cohesion Policy is the main EU investment tool to ensure that our regions meet the challenges such as digitalisation, climate and energy transition, demographic change and brain drain. That is why it is necessary to ensure that this funding reaches every city, region or village, making sure that none are left behind. Those ideas are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



Our Europe boosts living standards in every region.
(line 576)

Europe will only be united if cities and rural areas act as one and their interests are taken into account equally. Through structural and cohesion policies, for example, we will focus on closing the gap between rural and urban areas. There should be no first and second-class citizens. We want to close economic, social and territorial disparities. (lines 585-590)

We will promote a European plan for rural areas and to strengthen the EU strategy for Outermost Regions. (line 599)

We want to ensure that innovation capacities, access to connectivity, online tools and technologies that support education, research and business, are available to all citizens, including in rural and remote areas, taking into special consideration the challenges faced by outermost regions. (lines 604-607)

2.2. EPP-CoR Narrative on EU Budget:

Throughout the multiple crisis Europe is facing, regions and cities are tasked with matters of common interest - from housing of Ukrainian refugees and energy savings to efficient administration and services to businesses and citizens. At the same time, the EU's budget – the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is designed in a very top-down approach. The regional and local level should be involved from the outset when shaping the priorities of the budget of the EU as they are key in terms of consensus and are the best suited to make place-based policies flourish. Those demands are reflected in the text of the **EPP Manifesto**:



Regional and local budgets play a prominent part in supporting the national contributions to the EU budget and in co-financing EU projects implemented in regions and cities. Therefore, we have to elevate the needs of our regions and local communities when discussing the EU budget. Cohesion policy has a highly positive impact on the Single Market. It should remain strongly supported in the EU budget, but with simplified rules and with the direct involvement of regional and local authorities in the design and implementation of programmes. (lines 592-596).

2.3. EPP-CoR narrative on demographic trends:

Negative demographic changes are among the most pressing challenges in many European regions. They need to be addressed by relevant policies, working together with regional and local governments to find solutions on all fronts. We value the freedom of movement in the EU, but no one should be forced to leave their place of origin due to economic reasons. We need to turn brain-drain into brain-gain by providing opportunities for people in all European regions. This narrative is reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



The impact of demographic change requires collaborative efforts across different levels of government. (lines 844-849)

We want to invest in age-friendly, innovative and truly intergenerational cities and regions. (line 867)

Labour migration has a significant territorial impact and brings both opportunities and challenges to ageing and demographically declining societies.
(lines 213-2014)

We want to turn brain drain into brain gain. We will create opportunities for young people to allow families to remain together. Sometimes Europeans have no other option than to leave their country and their loved ones behind to find good opportunities. In Europe, no family should be forced to be divided: we must put a stop to brain drain by providing good opportunities in every region through our cohesion, economic and innovation policy. We want to set up a “Brain Gain” action plan for the whole of Europe that offers young people the chance to return to their home country from abroad and within Europe. Europe is our home and Europe cares about our homes. (lines 577-584)

3) Local economy, local jobs and reducing red tape

3.1. EPP-CoR narrative on public procurement

In the context of reducing administrative burden and achieving economies of scale, the EU should facilitate joint green public procurement for projects run by public authorities in different regions and cities while encouraging European providers and producers. This idea is reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



To facilitate a more efficient use of EU money for projects run by public authorities, the European

Commission will promote joint European public procurement for common large-scale purchase of services or goods, when relevant, and with full respect of subsidiarity. (lines 382-384).

3.2. EPP-CoR narrative on rural areas

The EU should work on a comprehensive agenda for rural areas, mainstreaming rural issues into all EU policies, introducing a rural proofing approach, which takes into account the specific needs of European territories and the differences among them. This approach is reflected in the **EU Manifesto**:



Rural development should continue to serve as a stimulus for agriculture and the population in rural areas and ensure vital rural areas, including via better rural-urban synergies in terms of interconnected public services and boosting of local economy and local jobs. (lines 699-701)

3.3. EPP-CoR narrative on entrepreneurship

We believe small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of local economies. The EPP should champion policies that promote entrepreneurship, access to credit for SME, and simplified regulatory frameworks to encourage the growth of these vital businesses. These ideas are reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



We must always consider the real concerns of our citizens and businesses, not to overwhelm. Legislation needs to be user-friendly, easy to understand and

implementable... We will reduce old bureaucracy by introducing a “1 in, 2 out” principle with an overall objective of reducing the regulatory burden by a third, through a specific action plan. To this end, there will be a dedicated European Commissioner solely responsible for SME issues and cutting red tape. (lines 374-381)

We welcome the appointment of the special SME Envoy and support the Envoy’s work to monitor and accompany this process. (line 392).

4)EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE: Bottom-up and values-based EPP that defends democracy, respects subsidiarity and promotes cultural diversity

4.1. EPP-CoR narrative on European democracy and a bottom-up Europe

Regional and local leaders play a central role for the entire EPP family – both in terms of trust and securing best possible election results. This will be reflected in the work of the party to increase people’s sense of belonging and responsibility for the European project. With the concrete support of its regional and local leaders, the EPP will empower the unique 3-level democracy model of the EU (regional and local, national and European). We can start doing this by strengthening the principles of active subsidiarity and partnership with regions and cities. This idea is reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



Not only is the EPP the most represented political force within the European Commission and European

Council, but it is also largely represented on the ground, at local and regional level, more than any other party in Europe. (lines 586-588)

4.2. EPP-CoR narrative on subsidiarity and better EU legislation

Europe can deliver more efficient and understandable European policies by giving a stronger role to regional and local politicians when questions concerning their territories are decided at EU level. This could be achieved by using the subsidiarity tools of the CoR consisting of experts and local policy stakeholders. The use of the Territorial Impact Assessments method to analyse the potential asymmetric territorial impact of EU policies and laws, should be an essential part of EU's Better Regulation. This instrument has found an approval in the **EPP Manifesto**:



We want to improve the subsidiarity check also by assessing the territorial impact of all new EU legislation. (line 597).

4.3. EPP-CoR narrative on promoting EU values through education and culture

Regions and cities are the living symbol of Europe's richness and variety of cultures, languages and traditions. The EPP should advocate to further mainstream heritage into EU policies, emphasising the importance of upholding and preserving local and regional uniqueness and variety as part of the common European identity. The EPP will promote European values in a bottom-up way, developing educational and cultural projects in EPP-led cities and regions, which will strengthen active European citizenship, inspire a sense of belonging to the European project and involve young people with the European democratic model. This thinking is largely reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



Europe is more than an economic project rooted in cultural richness and diverse traditions, but this does not hold us into the past. On the contrary: our values show us the way into the future and we commit to promoting democratic values via education and culture. (lines 724-727).

Our Europe preserve our democracy, our traditions, cultural richness, and diversity. (line 763).

We are proud of our European way of life. We want to preserve our regional and national identities as well as our common European one. (lines 764-765)

We want to preserve our cultural heritage, which our community, civilization and European integration processes are based on, the different characteristics as well as what unites us, in a Digital Museum of European Culture that digitally connects the most important museums. We will assess the possibility of creating a European Cultural Heritage Fund. We commit promoting our rich cultural heritage, which will also contribute to boost tourism in the European Union, a sector that was heavily hit by the COVID pandemic. (lines 767-772)

4.4. Health

In 19 of the 27 Member States, local and regional authorities (LRAs) bear significant responsibility for planning, organising, and delivering healthcare services to citizens. The EPP stands for greater involvement of LRAs in the governance of health systems and more meaningful engagement of cities and regions in decision-making processes at EU and national level, including in cross-border health cooperation. The EPP should prioritise the fight against health inequalities as a major goal and an effective means of

promoting health security and modernising health systems. Those objectives are reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:

Reducing health inequalities should be the core mission of the EU. For this purpose, it is crucial to eliminate the pay gap to stop the drain of health professionals from some European regions, especially in rural areas... We want to create a true European Health Union to be prepared and equipped to deal with cross-border threats, improve the resilience of our health systems and their interoperability. (lines 882-886)

4.5. European way of life

Regions, cities and villages form the bedrock of the European way of life, embodying the common desire for harmony and solidarity among its people. This idea is reflected in the **EPP Manifesto**:



We believe in a Europe of solidarity that works together, includes everyone, offers the best conditions to everyone for starting a family and at the same time ensures that older people can enjoy longevity with dignity. Our Europe does not take care of everything itself, but leaves no one behind. Our families are our roots, our home, our anchors. They are the pillar of our European way of life. In times of crisis, young Europeans, parents and grandparents have supported each other. Family ties are the backbone of our community, and we want to preserve them... We will protect family values and respect subsidiarity. Family law must remain in the hands of the Member States, because family life must be supported at a level that is closer to the citizen. (lines 821-837)

ANNEX

EU ELECTIONS

6th - 9th June 2024

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Member State	Date	National Elections
Austria	September/October	Parliamentary
Belgium	9 th June	Parliamentary
Croatia	by 22 nd September	Parliamentary
Czech Republic	tba	Senate (one third)
Lithuania	12 th May	Presidential
	13 th October	Parliamentary
Portugal	10 th March	Parliamentary
Romania	October	Presidential
	by December	Parliamentary
Slovakia	23 rd March	Presidential

REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Member State	Date	Regional Elections
Austria	October	Vorarlberg
	November	Styria
Belgium	9 th June	General
Czech Republic	tba	General (except Prague)
Germany	1 st September	Saxony, Thuringia
	22 nd September	Brandenburg
Italy	25 th February	Sardinia
	10 th March	Abruzzo
	8 th -9 th June	Basilicata, Piedmont
	Between November and December	Umbria
Spain	21 st April	Basque Country

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Member State	Date	Local Elections
Austria	10 th March	Salzburg (city + region)
	14 th April	Innsbruck
Belgium	13 th October	General
Germany	26 th May	Thuringia
	9 th June	Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt
Hungary	9 th June	General
Ireland	May/June 2024	General
Italy	25 th February	Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol - Bressanone, Borgo Chiese, Fiavé, Lona-Lases
	tba	Friuli Venezia Giulia - 114 municipalities
	tba	Sardinia - 27 municipalities (Cagliari, Sassari, Alghero amongst them)
	tba	Sicilia - 36 municipalities
	tba	Aosta Valley - Jovençon
	8 th -9 th June	In non-autonomous Regions
Malta	8 June	General
Poland	7 th June	General
Romania	September	General

