

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



ALDE-COR POLITICAL PRIORITIES for 2015-2020

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ALDE PRIORITIES FOR THE MANDATE CITIZENSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS



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We believe

- ★ that European integration happens at several levels and that active involvement of Europe's cities and regions in shaping and implementing EU policies, as well as developing greater interaction amongst themselves and their citizens will strengthen the foundations of the Union.
- ★ that local and regional authorities of Europe have privileged relations with those citizens who are more inclined to interact with their municipal or regional elected representatives.
- ★ that the role of local and regional authorities in the EU needs to be enhanced to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the EU and combat growing euroscepticism.
- ★ that the economic crisis has unleashed forces wishing to undermine EU values and fundamental rights, which must be upheld.
- ★ that involvement of local and regional authorities in the enlargement process is of key added value because the *acquis communautaire* cannot be fully integrated without a true bottom-up approach.
- ★ Local and regional authorities being the first level of government to be confronted with the challenges of unmanaged immigration, we feel that now is the time to fully include them in the development and implementation of a coherent European migration policy based on the respect of human rights.
- ★ In the field of security and terrorism, the EU is facing huge challenges and we firmly believe that the key to combatting these phenomena is to uphold EU core values such as freedom and fundamental rights to create more inclusive societies where all people are given equal chances and where different ethnic minorities are living side by side and to redouble efforts to increase dialogue between different religious, ethnic, and social communities in Europe.
- ★ that the reduction of administrative burden and better regulation will unleash the entrepreneurial potential of European citizens.



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We will

- focus on assisting Ukraine in its decentralisation process, engaging with local authorities in the Eastern Partnership, Turkey and the Western Balkans to help strengthen local democracy, ensure a successful start to the Joint Consultative Committee with Serbia.
- place a greater emphasis on dialogue with the Southern Mediterranean and we will support the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean's sectorial policies.
- promote the extension of cohesion policy to the Southern neighbourhood and promote the adoption of a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean. .be very attentive to the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that will mark the agenda post-2015 in development.
- call for the extension of the Local Administration Facility which helps build local capacity in enlargement countries, to Eastern and Mediterranean countries.
- call on the European Commission to speed up its work on the comprehensive European Agenda on Migration taking into account the key role of local and regional authorities in its implementation and will follow the work of the European Migration Forum for the integration of third country nationals legally residing in the Member States.
- With regard to improving the quality of EU legislation, ALDE-CoR will support the monitoring of the EU Regulatory Fitness Programme (REFIT) to make sure it delivers on its objectives of simplifying the EU acquis, reducing red tape and regulatory costs, as well as pushing for a European standard definition of goldplating.
- continue to support the improvement of the European Citizens' Initiative and encourage developments in citizen participation in the EU.
- continue to push for the development of a full Erasmus for local politicians.
- put strong emphasis on the key role local and regional authorities play in preventing and reversing radicalisation. The local level is the level best fit for this important task. Local authorities are already starting to collaborate across borders exchanging information and ideas. The ALDE group will present a proposal for an own-initiative opinion on this important topic.



ALDE PRIORITIES FOR THE MANDATE TERRITORIAL COHESION



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We believe

- ★ that our objective should be to achieve comparable living standards in all regions of the EU. We commit ourselves to solidarity between regions, but place a strong emphasis on the responsibility and accountability of the receivers of funds.
- ★ that the European Union should create favourable conditions for private and public investments in all regions of Europe. All local and regional authorities should have, or be provided with, the necessary technical expertise to implement public and private investment projects. We believe that European policies need to be well coordinated, in particular in relation to their effects on urban areas.
- ★ that cooperation and interaction between Europe's regions and cities strengthen the foundations of the Union.
- ★ that the EU should have an ambitious budget that should allow it to fulfil all its responsibilities.
- ★ We are committed to the aim of a highly performant transport network for rail, road, air and sea transport across the entire EU, with good links between different transport modes.
- ★ We want to reduce the environmental impact of transport, including noise.



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We will

- continue to support European cohesion policy but want to ensure that recipients have real flexibility, but also responsibility for the spending of funds. We want to reform cohesion policy post-2020 so that it targets economic sectors that have the potential for strong economic growth. The use of financial instruments in cohesion policy should be increased and the awards of grants decreased.
- closely follow the implementation of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and propose adjustments in case it does not trigger additional and geographically balanced investments. We wish to promote good practices in the area of multi-level governance of public investment based on the OECD Principles on Effective Public Investment.
- push for a White Book on a European integrated urban agenda.
- actively support all ways of regional cooperation, such as macro-regional strategies and European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs).
- During the mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) and the negotiation of the following MFF, our priority is to ensure that more commitments are foreseen for sectors that can bring economic growth and for research. We will fight for own resources to be introduced for the Union. On the payment side, it is of high priority that all payment delays and backlogs are reduced. We call for all flexibility margins in the current MFF to be mobilised.
- The polluter-pays principle should be fully applied in a non-discriminatory manner to all modes of transport. Market-based mechanisms should be used to reduce the environmental impact of transport and our support for different modes of transport will be based on evidence.
- In order to increase the attractiveness of multi-modal journeys, multi-modal journey planners and ticketing services are important for us. We will plead for existing passenger rights schemes to cover also multi-modal journeys.



ALDE PRIORITIES ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



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We believe

- ★ in the advantages and opportunities of free trade, and free trade agreements.
- ★ that the state should set a broad regularity framework for businesses but not get involved in detailed prescriptive regulations; that the regulatory environment must be stable and predictable.
- ★ that SMEs, microenterprises and start-ups need to have improved access to finance and that the public sector needs to facilitate their creation and development.
- ★ a sustainable economic development throughout the EU will lead to more convergence rather than divisions.
- ★ the free movement of goods and services are cornerstones of the single market.
- ★ that the high levels of public debt are a serious risk for Europe's economic development and constitute an excessive burden for future generations.
- ★ in the need for democratic legitimacy and accountability of all policies, including economic governance.
- ★ that great opportunities exist for European industry and manufacturing, in particular in the development of a low-carbon and carbon-free economy.
- ★ the central role of public procurement is to obtain goods or services at the best quality for the lowest price.



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We will

- Campaign in favour of the conclusion of TTIP negotiations, focus on the advantages rather than the fears in public discussions, whilst taking seriously genuine concerns that arise from the local or regional level.
- Call for significant reductions in red tape and bureaucratic requirements for small businesses and seek to strengthen alternative dispute mechanisms for businesses.
- Contribute to creating favourable market conditions for SMEs as well as the European industry, that are based as much as possible on innovation support, market mechanisms, or financial instruments, rather than long-term subsidies.
- Welcome new proposals seeking to establish a common consolidated corporate tax base, which needs to be as simple as possible and also allow member states to set the tax rates freely, subject to a minimum threshold.
- Resist any temptation to increase public debts and to weaken the Stability and Growth pact beyond the possibilities for flexibility that it contains;
- Support efforts to include a regional dimension in the European semester process.
- Be open to innovative methods of public procurement, including public-private partnerships, as long as they contribute to obtaining the best quality for the lowest price.



ALDE PRIORITIES FOR THE MANDATE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE



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We believe

- ★ that our objective is to combat climate change with an environmentally integrated society.
- ★ We feel that setting binding targets could help to ensure that the European Union meets its ambitious climate and energy targets.
- ★ that going beyond the 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels to 30% reduction is realistic.
- ★ that tackling the climate and energy challenge contributes to the creation of jobs and will strengthen Europe's competitiveness.
- ★ that the EU ETS is a key tool for cutting industrial greenhouse gas emissions most cost-effectively and welcome the introduction of a single EU-wide cap on emission allowances in place of the existing system of national caps.
- ★ in the completion of the internal energy market and the role of local and regional authorities in finding structural and sustainable solutions.



We will

- support the creation of the Energy Union and will encourage citizens' participation in developing the internal energy market, both as consumers and producers.
- champion renewable energies, energy efficiency, decentralised energy production/distribution, and investment in local and regional smart grid projects.
- recognise the role that regional networks are playing in the fight against climate change, as well as the role of LRAs in the fight and mitigation of climate change.
- campaign for the merger of the Covenant of Mayors and the Mayors Adapt as both initiatives are implemented by local authorities.
- To achieve energy security, clean energy and unlock new potentials, we will campaign for the development of wave and tidal stream technologies.
- contribute within the CoR and beyond to urge for a binding global climate change agreement and for its successful implementation, including by local and regional authorities.



ALDE PRIORITIES FOR THE MANDATE NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND HERITAGE



We believe

- ★ that farmers are entrepreneurs whose business of working the land provides essential services to society: food production, renewable energy, and healthy ecosystems.
- ★ that, in the same way that Europe has experienced how energy supplies can be used as a political weapon, so too can food supplies. Therefore, Europe needs a vibrant farming industry to provide security from potentially unreliable food trading partners.
- ★ that the quality of food products in the EU must remain high and equally accessible to all.
- ★ that citizens must be able to have trust in the food supply chains in Europe and beyond.
- ★ that good water management is a question not just of public health, but also of security, as water scarcity is a growing problem, including in Europe, and the potential source of future conflicts in the world.
- ★ in the need to revive rural economies and help to achieve a balanced territorial development of rural communities.
- ★ in the huge potential of the “blue economy” creating synergies amongst communities and regions along Europe’s coasts, and across national borders.
- ★ We are committed to the reduction of administrative burden for farmers and other stakeholders including local and regional authorities who are key actors in the common agricultural and rural development policies.
- ★ that because of its heritage, diversity, and quality of life, Europe’s cities and regions have the potential to create jobs and economic growth by tapping into global tourism markets in a sustainable way.



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We will

- support organic production and encourage local and regional authorities to promote the spread of organic, and where possible locally produced, food in schools and hospitals through green public procurement at local and regional level.
- support the development of aquaculture which is of strategic relevance in achieving the Common Fisheries Policy goals on territorial cohesion, rural development and economic growth.
- monitor the phasing out of the milk quota system to ensure that it does not destroy the existence of small producers and jobs in rural areas and have a negative impact on territorial cohesion.
- look for ways to help counter the impact of existing or future embargoes on EU farmers.
- continue to work for the success of the Atlantic Strategy as a model for the development of the blue economy in other parts of Europe.
- work to keep the issue of effective water management on the political agenda to ensure that Europe is prepared for any eventuality and will support the inclusion of necessary water reuse initiatives in the planned revision of the circular economy package in order to reduce the pressures in water-scarce regions.
- promote innovation in the tourist industry helping Europe's cities and regions to create partnerships to attract tourism from other continents.



ALDE PRIORITIES

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, DIGITAL ECONOMY, EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



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We believe

- ★ in the free movement of persons and the freedom of establishment as fundamental principles of the European Union.
- ★ in the social market economy, that favours market solutions but without losing sight of social needs.
- ★ that combating unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is one of the most urgent challenges that Europe is facing this decade.
- ★ that the digitalisation of society is a chance rather than a problem for Europe and that the EU Digital Agenda can significantly contribute to creating growth and jobs, in particular also in more remote regions.
- ★ in the importance of research at all levels: large-scale European projects as well as small research and innovation clusters at local universities or companies.
- ★ in the strict application of the principle of subsidiarity in the area of education
- ★ that demographic challenges need to be systematically taken into account on policy-making, in particular the ageing society.
- ★ that Europe needs strong and high-quality universities and research institutes that must cooperate in a common “European area of knowledge” in order to be able to compete at the same level with universities in the US and in Asia.



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We will

- firmly oppose any attempt to reduce the fundamental freedoms, in particular the free movement of persons and the freedom of establishment, and actively promote (cross-border) labour mobility, but fight against clear abuses of this principle.
- support common European rules on data protection that ensure a high level of protection, in particular on the internet. We support the introduction of the right to be forgotten. A fine balance has to be found between new technological developments and data protection rules;
- encourage interoperable e-government and m-government solutions at all levels of government, including at the CoR itself, and call for concepts such as e-residency scheme to be developed across the EU.
- fight to have high-speed internet access for every European citizen recognised as universal right. There must be no urban-rural divide in digital opportunities.
- work towards the creation of employment, in particular for the youth, by stimulating economic growth and activity. Small and medium-sized enterprises, and not-for profit actors such as social businesses, will receive our support.
- make proposals to increase the funds available to research and innovation in the EU budget and observe whether member states and regions respect their obligation to devote 3% of GDP to R&D
- encourage new proposals to increase European funding for (top-level) research, to further increase the mobility of students and researchers, and to create favourable working conditions for young researchers in all Member States.

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