



Between natural disasters and demographic decline: challenges for local communities

ECR Localism Summit 2022

10 November 2022
L'AQUILA | ITALY

With the participatory
and organisational support of





ECR

**EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES
& REFORMISTS GROUP**

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

REGIONE
ABRUZZO



CONSIGLIO REGIONALE

■ Foreword



Dear participants,

It is with great pleasure that I extend to you the sincerest of welcomes to the ECR Localism Summit. We wanted to hold this event in L'Aquila, the capital of the Abruzzo Region and a city which, following the devastating earthquake of 2009, has become a symbol of resilience and strength, qualities that shone through in the people of Abruzzo in the course of the architectural reconstruction and moral rebuilding of an entire community.

In establishing the themes of our summit, not surprisingly we decided to focus on the most urgent problems that local authorities are facing, which include natural disasters and demographic decline, at this difficult and complex time, which we have been living through in Europe for many months, filled with tragedy and uncertainty.

I am referring, of course, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the repeated threats that Putin is directing, almost daily, towards Europe and the Western way

of life, which are clearly “targets” of his dangerous strategy, aimed at a new global order. Europe must respond to this with a renewed consciousness of its role on the international stage.

In this regard, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the governments of the regions and countries bordering Ukraine, which have so remarkably stepped up in welcoming hundreds of thousands of refugees from the war zones, as well as in providing practical help in what is unfortunately a real mass exodus. This support is unprecedented in history, and has given a clear signal to Europe itself: a signal of the urgent need for greater cooperation between the EU Member States, for a common energy policy – making individual European countries less susceptible to Russian blackmail in relation to cutting off supplies – and for greater European cooperation on defence.

Similarly, we must take advantage of the valuable opportunity that this Localism Summit represents and draw up guidelines and examples of good practice to put forward to the European Parliament and European Commission, as timely and practical solutions that can be applied to a rapidly changing reality.

Climate change and the disasters that have ensued have gone from being occasional emergencies to becoming increasingly recurring phenomena, which are now considered almost inevitable. But that is not so; we cannot and must not give up and resign ourselves to living with earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, drought and floods. We cannot leave the local communities on their own; they, as we know, have to face these terrible events with their own resources, which are often insufficient and unsuitable. The question we are asking here is what support, with due regard to the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity, can local and regional authorities expect from the European Union? What institutional and financial instruments could the EU make available to local communities?

Another crucial issue that needs to be explored is the demographic decline and depopulation of inland areas, which is affecting Europe as a whole. The old continent, as we call it with a touch of pride due to its long history, is, paradoxically, grappling with an ageing population, a worrying phenomenon that is coinciding with a sharp decline in its birth rate. Bearing the consequences of this array of problems are rural areas and mountain villages, in particular, which are hampered

by living conditions that are no longer competitive compared to large cities and coastal areas.

However, inland areas are the custodians of the cultural identity, history, landscape and monuments of our regions, a heritage that we cannot turn our backs on, and that must not only be defended but promoted.

I have no doubt that during our days in L'Aquila we will explore all of these issues in depth and instil new impetus into our cooperation as conservative regions of Europe.

MARCO MARSILIO

President of the ECR Group in the European Committee of the Region
President of Abruzzo region



Costa dei Trabocchi, Province of Chieti, Abruzzo region

10 November 2022 | ECR CoR Localism Summit in L'Aquila, Italy

| Agenda | General information |

Interpreting: *Czech, English, Hungarian, Italian, Polish*

■ Agenda

9:00 – 13:15

ECR Localism Summit 2022: Between Natural Disasters and Demographic Decline: Challenges for Local Communities

Venue: Abruzzo Regional Council, (IPOGEA hall) / Address:
Via Michele Iacobucci, 4, 67100 L'Aquila AQ, Italy

8:30 – 8:55

Registration

Introduction to the event

Sen. Etelwardo Sigismondi, Senator of the Italian Republic and Coordinator of the Fratelli d'Italia party for the Abruzzo Region, Italy

9:00 – 9:20

Opening speeches

Marco Marsilio, President of the Abruzzo Region and President of the ECR CoR group, Italy

Anna Magyar, Member of the County Council of Csongrád-Csanád and Vice-President of the ECR CoR group, Hungary

Pierluigi Biondi, Mayor of the City of L'Aquila and Coordinator of Fratelli d'Italia party for the province of L'Aquila, Italy

Lorenzo Sospiri, President of the Abruzzo Regional Council, Italy

Guerino Testa MP, Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Chair of the Fratelli d'Italia group in the Regional Council of Abruzzo, Italy

Vincenzo D'Incecco, Chair of the Lega group in the Abruzzo Regional Council, Italy

9:20 – 10:20

Round Table I: Climate change, hydrogeological instability, and natural disasters: the assistance that local and regional authorities expect from the European Union

Moderator: Paolo Pacitti, Editor-in-chief of RAI Abruzzo

Pavel Branda, Deputy Mayor of Rádlo, Czech Republic

Mauro Casinghini, Director of the Civil Protection Agency of the Abruzzo Region, Italy

Roberto Ciambetti, President of the Regional Council of the Veneto Region, Italy

Emanuele Imprudente, Vice-President of the Abruzzo Region and Regional Minister responsible for agriculture, hunting and fishing, water management and environment, Italy

Oszkár Seszták, President of the Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg Region, Hungary

10:20 – 10:45

Coffee break

10:45 – 11:45

Round Table II: Tackling demographic decline and the depopulation of inland areas

Moderator: Luca Prospero, Editor-in-chief of ANSA Abruzzo

Juraj Droba, President of the Bratislava Region, Slovakia

Juan García-Gallardo Frings, Vice-President of the Castilla y León Region, Spain

Ádám Karácsony, Vice-President of Pest County Council,
Hungary

Sen. Guido Quintino Liris, Senator of the Italian Republic,
Regional Minister responsible for internal areas of the Abruzzo
Region, Italy

Fabio Rampelli MP, Deputy Chair of the Italian Chamber of
Deputies, Italy

11:45 – 11:50

Video presentation “The rebirth of L’Aquila”

11:50 – 12:50

**Round Table III held by the ECR group’s Young Elected
Politicians: Young MPs, mayors and councillors discuss
the regions of the future**

Lajos Barcsa, Deputy-Mayor of Debrecen, Hungary

Mateusz Cebula, Councillor in Dębica, Poland

José Maria Figaredo MP, Member of the Congress of
Deputies, Spain

Gabriel Kroon, Shadow Mayor in Stockholm City Council, Sweden

Fabio Roscani MP, Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies,
Italy

12:50 – 13:00

Conclusions

Raffaele Fitto MP, Minister for European Affairs, Cohesion
Policy and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Italy

13:00 – 13:15

**Press briefing and signing of the political declaration
by representatives of local and regional governments
in the ECR Group**

13:15 – 14:15

Buffet lunch in the Regional Council building

■ General information

The ECR Group's 2022 Localism Summit will be held in l'Aquila, capital of the Abruzzo region. Marco Marsilio, President of the Abruzzo region, will be hosting this event. The topics to be discussed are:

1. Climate change, hydrogeological instability, and natural disasters: what assistance can local and regional authorities expect from the European Union?
2. Tackling demographic decline and the depopulation of inland areas.

■ Topics

1. CLIMATE CHANGE, HYDROGEOLOGICAL INSTABILITY, AND NATURAL DISASTERS: THE ASSISTANCE THAT LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES EXPECT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

While there is still much debate on the details, there is little doubt that climate change is a real phenomenon, which is having drastically negative effects on the environment and society at large. Droughts, storms, and an increasingly wild oscillation between extreme seasonal weather are only some examples that are causing devastating impacts across Europe. In Italy a phenomenon of particular concern is hydrogeological instability and earthquakes - increased rainfall in Italy's overwhelmingly mountainous terrain has meant that the occurrence of landslides, avalanches, and floods has increased.

Local and regional authorities are frequently at the frontline when it comes to dealing with natural disasters. But how can local authorities best prepare for potential disasters? Are emergency services better left in the hands of centralised national governments, or in the hands of those communities who know their own specificities better? This panel will also discuss the European dimension of these questions, such as what aid the EU can bring to local and regional authorities, and

how such help can best be used whilst respecting the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity.

2. TACKLING DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE AND THE DEPOPULATION OF INLAND AREAS

As a whole, Europe faces numerous demographic problems, most notably a declining birth rate and an ageing population. In peripheral, rural, and inland areas these issues are particularly acute. Over the past decades, large segments of the population have moved either to coastal areas or to urban centres, with younger people in particular moving to the latter in pursuit of career opportunities. This creates a number of issues for the areas and localities in question, with development and policy focused on big cities, which in turn causes them to attract and draw more people from rural areas.

In this panel, discussions will focus on the impact of these demographic issues, and what local and regional authorities can do to tackle them. With the convergence of EU policies on territorial and digital cohesion, how can depopulated rural localities take advantage of the economic and technological transformations to breathe new life into their communities? In the meantime, how do such authorities manage the costs and services for disproportionately older populations? And finally, what is the impact of demographic flows on the metropolitan areas the population of which grows very fast?

■ Why in Abruzzo?

The city of L'Aquila is the second largest city in the Abruzzo region, and is the capital of both L'Aquila province and of Abruzzo region.

L'Aquila and its surrounding region offer many relevant examples for the topics which are to be discussed. Tragically, in 2009 it was the epicentre of one of the most devastating earthquakes in Italy's modern history, which took over 300 lives and left over 40 000 homeless. The trials, successes, and failures Abruzzo faced in anticipating, surviving, and recovering from this disaster contain many invaluable lessons for local and regional authorities all over Europe.



Lago di Scanno, Province of L'Aquila, Abruzzo region

Abruzzo sits in the centre of the Apennines, and as a region with a mostly mountainous interior, hydrogeological instability is a present and ongoing concern for the daily lives of its inhabitants. The way in which Abruzzo has dealt and will continue to deal with the effects of climate change on its native environment, infrastructure, and society is a relevant story for all local administrations.

Finally, it is the region of Marco Marsilio, who currently serves as its president. Mr Marsilio is also the president of the ECR Group in the CoR and a founding member of the Fratelli d'Italia party.



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2022 Localism Summit

L'Aquila, Italy

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