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Dear Ms Serret,

Thank you for your joint letter related to the participation of regions in the European Recovery Plan. President Von der Leyen asked me to reply on her behalf.

I fully concur that European regions have been in the front line in dealing with the COVID 19 crisis. Given its differentiated impacts, targeted regional measures are key to pursue effective post-COVID recovery strategies in line with green and digital transitions.

As you know, one of the elements of the unprecedented European Union response (Next Generation EU) to deal with the impacts of the pandemic, as proposed by the Commission and now agreed by the Council and Parliament, is the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU). This initiative brings over EUR 50 billion (in current prices) to reinforce the current Cohesion Policy programmes until 2023, to support the most impacted sectors and regions, as well as to lay the ground for a resilient recovery. Together with Commissioner Schmit, I have written to all Member States in July 2020 providing indications on how best to mobilise REACT-EU resources. In this letter, we reiterated the importance of taking full account of the partnership principle, by involving relevant partners (e.g. civil society organisations) and regional authorities in the programming and implementation of these funds. Based on preliminary indications, Member States plan to amend over 150 existing operational programmes, most of them regional ones, which indicates that a large part of REACT EU will be delivered through the regions.

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The Recovery and Resilience Facility is the other centrepiece of Next Generation EU with EUR 672.5 billion in loans and grants available to support reforms and investments undertaken by Member States. The aim is to make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. Member States are currently working on their recovery and resilience plans to access the funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Member States are invited to engage in a broad policy dialogue, including social partners and all other relevant stakeholders to prepare the plan. While it is Member States' responsibility to organise the consultation in the way they deem most suitable, it is essential that regional and local partners are involved in the process. Member States will have to provide a summary of the consultation process as part of their recovery and resilience plans.

National ownership of these plans and an ample political and societal consensus on the priorities for reforms and investments are a key prerequisite for a successful implementation of the EU recovery funds.



Elisa Ferreira