

Regional and Local Dimension in Europe
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Regional and local authorities are an indispensable part of the process of European integration. While their role varies widely across the European Union – and the degree of variance is only likely to increase following enlargement – **regional and local authorities are often crucial actors** when it comes to implementation of concrete policy measures. We therefore welcome their acknowledgment in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. We do not oppose the mention of regional and local authorities in the opening articles of the constitutional treaty, however when considering this we should take into account a great deal of diversity among them, differences in their degree of influence and competencies. In addition, **an explicit reference to these authorities in the future constitution may simply be doubling the existing provisions.** After all, the mention of regional and local authorities in the Charter of Fundamental Rights already reflects the respect for identity of Member States as the constitutive elements of the EU, including the respect for the organization of their public authorities at national, regional and local level.

We welcome the reinforcement of **consultation and partnership principles.** In our Working Group on Subsidiarity, we felt that the principle would only be applied better when accounted for early in the legislative process. **In preparation of legislative proposals, the Commission should consult all relevant players that may be affected by new legislation – including regional and local authorities when applicable. Regional and local authorities should also be involved in the process of assessing possible financial and legislative impact of new Directives. This assessment should be reflected on the “subsidiarity sheet”. The partnership principle that applies to implementation of the Structural Funds should be enhanced while respecting the internal division of competencies in Member States.**

We believe that the Committee of regions should keep its advisory status and issue opinions on matters mentioned in the Treaty or when requested by the Commission or the European Parliament. Its ability to take legal action should reflect the advisory role assigned to it. Regions should possess the right of referral to the European Court of Justice in defense of its own prerogatives according to national law.