

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Rights and Values

(2018/C 461/16)

**Rapporteur-general:** François DECOSTER (FR/ALDE), Vice-president of Hauts-de-France Regional Council

**Reference document:** COM(2018) 383 final

### I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

#### Amendment 1

##### Title

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights and Values programme	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights, Values <i>and Citizenship</i> programme

#### Reason

The title of the programme should be consistent with its objectives and measures. The section of the programme dealing with citizenship is of fundamental importance and this should therefore be added to the programme's title.

#### Amendment 2

##### Recital 4

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The Rights and Values programme (the 'Programme') should allow developing synergies to tackle the challenges that are common to the promotion and protection of values and to reach a critical dimension to have concrete results in the field. That should be achieved by building on the positive experience of the predecessor Programmes. This will enable to fully exploit the potential of synergies, to more effectively support the policy areas covered and to increase their potential to reach people. To be effective, the Programme should take into account the specific nature of the different policies, their different target groups and their particular needs through tailor-made approaches.	The Rights, Values and citizenship programme (the 'Programme') should allow developing synergies to tackle the challenges that are common to the promotion and protection of values and to reach a critical dimension to have concrete results in the field. That should be achieved by building on the positive experience of the predecessor Programmes and developing new innovative measures. This will enable to fully exploit the potential of synergies, to more effectively support the policy areas covered and to increase their potential to reach people. To be effective, the Programme should take into account the specific nature of the different policies, their different target groups and their particular needs through tailor-made approaches.

**Reason**

Reliance should not be placed entirely on existing measures, but new ones should also be developed, encouraging exchanges of best practice and information, as well as possible synergies. This could, for example, take the form of an exchange and mobility programme for local and regional elected representatives or the establishment of 'European Correspondents' in local and regional authorities in Europe.

**Amendment 3**

## Recital 5

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
In order to bring the European Union closer to its citizens, a variety of actions and coordinated efforts are necessary. Bringing together citizens in town-twinning projects or networks of towns and supporting civil society organisations in the areas covered by the programme will contribute to increase citizens' engagement in society and ultimately their involvement in the democratic life of the Union. At the same time supporting activities promoting mutual understanding, diversity, dialogue and respect for others fosters a sense of belonging and a European identity, based on a shared understanding of European values, culture, history and heritage. The promotion of a greater sense of belonging to the Union and of Union values is particularly important amongst citizens of the EU outermost regions due to their remoteness and distance from continental Europe.	In order to bring the European Union closer to its citizens, a variety of actions and coordinated efforts are necessary. Bringing together citizens in town-twinning projects or networks of towns <i>or cross-border cooperation projects</i> and supporting civil society organisations <i>and local and regional authorities</i> in the areas covered by the programme, <i>as well as training and informing local and regional elected representatives acting as multipliers</i> , will contribute to increase citizens' engagement in society and ultimately their involvement in the democratic life of the Union. At the same time supporting activities promoting mutual understanding, diversity, dialogue and respect for others fosters a sense of belonging and a European identity, based on a shared understanding of European values, culture, history and heritage. The promotion of a greater sense of belonging to the Union and of Union values is particularly important amongst citizens of the EU outermost regions due to their remoteness and distance from continental Europe.

**Reason**

The Rights and Values programme should also take account of cross-border cooperation projects, as they contribute to a sense of mutual belonging, to European identity and to overcoming national differences. Local and regional authorities also have a leading role to play in boosting public involvement, and they must receive funding, particularly in connection with citizens' rights and citizens' participation. A programme to train and inform locally and regionally elected representatives would be an excellent tool to help LRAs to contribute in this sense.

**Amendment 4**

## Recital 6

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Remembrance activities and <b>critical reflection on</b> Europe's historical memory are necessary to make citizens aware of the common history, as the foundation for a common future, moral purpose and shared values. The relevance of historical, cultural and intercultural aspects should also be taken into account, as well as the links between remembrance and the creation of a European identity and sense of belonging together.	Remembrance activities, <b>critical reflection on</b> and <b>celebration of</b> Europe's historical memory <b>and common values</b> are necessary to make citizens aware of the common history <b>and values</b> , as the foundation for a common future, <b>and mutual trust</b> , moral purpose and shared values. The relevance of historical, cultural and intercultural aspects <b>and local and national events</b> should also be taken into account, as well as the links between remembrance and the creation of a European identity and sense of belonging together.

**Reason**

Celebrations as well as remembrance are part of the foundation of a common future and a European identity which must be founded on mutual trust. This could, for example, take the form of the celebration of international days or more local events that can enhance the feeling of belonging to Europe.

**Amendment 5**

## Recital 7

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Citizens should also be more aware of their rights deriving from citizenship of the Union, and should feel at ease about living, travelling, studying, working and volunteering in another Member State, and should feel able to enjoy and exercise all their citizenship rights, place their trust in equal access, full enforceability and protection of their rights without any discrimination, no matter where in the Union they happen to be. Civil society needs to be supported for the promotion, safeguarding and raising awareness of EU common values under Article 2 TEU and in contributing to the effective enjoyment of rights under Union law.	Citizens should also be more aware of their rights deriving from citizenship of the Union, and should feel at ease about living, travelling, studying, working and volunteering in another Member State, and should feel able to enjoy and exercise all their citizenship rights, place their trust in equal access, full enforceability and protection of their rights without any discrimination, no matter where in the Union they happen to be. Civil society needs to be supported for the promotion, safeguarding and raising awareness of EU common values under Article 2 TEU and in contributing to the effective enjoyment of rights under Union law. <b>Local and regional authorities and their representative associations engaging in activities under the Rights and Values programme must receive support, particularly with a view to promoting citizens' rights and participation.</b>

**Reason**

Local and regional authorities are beneficiaries of the programme's funds and have an important role to play, in particular in promoting citizens' participation and defending the rights of EU citizens. Associations of local and regional governments have had a great role in disseminating the Programme and are still being part of it.

**Amendment 6**

## Recital 15

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Pursuant to Articles 8 and 10 TFEU, the Programme in all its activities should support gender mainstreaming and the mainstreaming of non-discrimination objectives.	Pursuant to Articles 8 and 10 TFEU, the Programme in all its activities should support gender mainstreaming and the mainstreaming of non-discrimination objectives. <b>The programme should provide for specific conditions and measures ensuring compliance with, and application of, gender equality standards and combating all forms of discrimination.</b>

**Reason**

Specific provisions should be included in the programme and its action plan with a view to achieving gender equality goals and combating discrimination. This could be done, for example, through awareness-raising campaigns involving a balanced number of women and men and members of disadvantaged minorities.

**Amendment 7**

## Recital 18

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
<p>Independent human rights bodies and civil society organisations play an essential role in promoting, safeguarding and raising awareness of the Union's common values under Article 2 TEU, and in contributing to the effective enjoyment of rights under Union law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. As reflected in the European Parliament Resolution of 18 April 2018, <b>adequate</b> financial support is key to the development of a conducive and sustainable environment for civil society organisations to strengthen their role and perform their functions independently and effectively. Complementing efforts at national level, EU funding should therefore contribute to support, empower and build the capacity of independent civil society organisations active in the promotion of human rights whose activities help the strategic enforcement of rights under EU law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, including through advocacy and watchdog activities, as well as to promote, safeguard and raise awareness of the Union's common values at national level.</p>	<p>Independent human rights bodies and civil society organisations play an essential role in promoting, safeguarding and raising awareness of the Union's common values under Article 2 TEU, and in contributing to the effective enjoyment of rights under Union law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. As reflected in the European Parliament Resolution of 18 April 2018, <b>appropriate and sufficient</b> financial support is key to the development of a conducive and sustainable environment for civil society organisations to strengthen their role and perform their functions independently and effectively. Complementing efforts at national level, EU funding should therefore contribute to support, empower and build the capacity of independent civil society organisations active in the promotion of human rights whose activities help the strategic enforcement of rights under EU law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, including through advocacy and watchdog activities, as well as to promote, safeguard and raise awareness of the Union's common values at national level.</p>

**Reason**

It is important to provide for a budget that will make it possible to support as many as possible of the projects submitted in order to avoid frustration and encourage stakeholder initiatives.

**Amendment 8**

## Recital 21

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
<p>In order to ensure efficient allocation of funds from the general budget of the Union, it is necessary to ensure the European added value of all actions carried out, their complementarity to <b>Member States'</b> actions, while consistency, complementarity and synergies shall be sought with funding programmes supporting policy areas with close links to each other, in particular within the Justice, Rights and Values Fund — and thus with the Justice Programme — as well as with Creative Europe programme, and Erasmus+ to realise the potential of cultural crossovers in the fields of culture, media, arts, education and creativity. It is necessary to create synergies with other European funding programmes, in particular in the fields of employment, internal market, enterprise, youth, health, citizenship, justice, migration, security, research, innovation, technology, industry, cohesion, tourism, external relations, trade and development.</p>	<p>In order to ensure efficient allocation of funds from the general budget of the Union, it is necessary to ensure the European added value of all actions carried out, their complementarity to actions <b>of the Member States and local and regional authorities, in accordance with the active subsidiarity principle</b>, while consistency, complementarity and synergies shall be sought with funding programmes supporting policy areas with close links to each other, in particular within the Justice, Rights and Values Fund — and thus with the Justice Programme — as well as with Creative Europe programme, and Erasmus+ to realise the potential of cultural crossovers in the fields of culture, media, arts, education and creativity. It is necessary to create synergies with other European funding programmes, in particular in the fields of employment, internal market, enterprise, youth, health, citizenship, justice, migration, security, research, innovation, technology, industry, cohesion, tourism, external relations, trade and development <b>and to encourage the development of new synergies by putting innovative, cross-cutting measures in place.</b></p>

**Reason**

Local and regional authorities are also active and their activities must be taken into account by the Member States and the EU in order to ensure overall consistency, complementarity and synergy.

The Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently' submitted its conclusions on 10 July, advocating a new 'active subsidiarity' approach that will ensure the added value of EU legislation to the benefit of the public and will lead to greater ownership of EU decisions in the Member States.

It is important to stress the launch of new innovative measures to promote the idea of European identity and citizens' participation, and particularly the establishment of an Erasmus programme for local and regional elected representatives or European Correspondents on the Austrian model.

**Amendment 9**

## Recital 24

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
<p>The types of financing and the methods of implementation under this Regulation should be chosen on the basis of their ability to achieve the specific objectives of the actions and to deliver results, taking into account, in particular, the costs of controls, the administrative burden, and the expected risk of non-compliance. This should include consideration of the use of lump sums, flat rates and unit costs, as well as financing not linked to costs as referred to in Article 125(1) of the Financial Regulation.</p>	<p>The types of financing and the methods of implementation under this Regulation should be chosen on the basis of their ability to achieve the specific objectives of the actions and to deliver results, taking into account, in particular, the costs of controls, the administrative burden, and the expected risk of non-compliance. This should include consideration of the use of lump sums, flat rates and unit costs, as well as financing not linked to costs as referred to in Article 125(1) of the Financial Regulation.</p> <p><i>The measures must keep the administrative burden on candidates as far as possible to a minimum and guarantee all potential candidate organisations access to funds. A two-step application process, consisting of a short project draft for elaboration of eligibility and a complete application in case of a promising funding perspective, should be introduced. Where possible, electronic applications should be accepted. Candidates must have access to a national contact point, which will provide them with support, answer their questions on the application procedure and check that their file is complete before it is submitted. The EU will do its utmost to provide information on financing arrangements to all potential beneficiaries in order to ensure the involvement of diverse organisations from different Member States and partner states.</i></p>

**Reason**

It is essential to simplify the application procedure, particularly for first-time candidates, smaller communities and non-profit organisations. It is important to provide as much information as possible on opportunities to all local and regional authorities and all other potentially interested stakeholders so as to ensure that it is not only the EU's privileged partners or the best informed organisations that benefit. The European Correspondents are important and should be highlighted in the European Commission's text.

**Amendment 10**

## Recital 28

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this Programme will contribute to mainstream climate action and to the achievement of an overall target of 25 % of the EU budget expenditures supporting climate objectives. Relevant actions will be identified during the Programme's preparation and implementation, and reassessed in the context of its mid-term evaluation.	Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals <b>and bearing in mind that collective action in these fields at the different levels can develop citizenship and the feeling of belonging</b> , this Programme will contribute to mainstream climate action and to the achievement of an overall target of 25 % of the EU budget expenditures supporting climate objectives. Relevant actions will be identified during the Programme's preparation and implementation, and reassessed in the context of its mid-term evaluation, <b>and existing local initiatives will be supported</b> .

**Reason**

Action on climate change and on achieving the wider UN SDGs are directly linked to creating an inclusive society and enhance the feeling of citizenship and belonging. There is a need to inform the public about international climate issues but also to involve them in collective action. This can be emphasised in the legislation, particularly as the synergies between the Rights and Values programme and combating climate change are not sufficiently explained.

The EU must support existing action rather than developing new activities; information and awareness-raising campaigns are often conducted at local level.

**Amendment 11**

## Recital 29

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Pursuant to paragraph 22 and 23 of the Inter-institutional agreement for Better Law-Making of 13 April 2016, there is a need to evaluate this Programme on the basis of information collected through specific monitoring requirements, while avoiding overregulation and administrative burdens, in particular on Member States. These requirements, where appropriate, can include measurable indicators, as a basis for evaluating the effects of the Programme on the ground.	Pursuant to paragraph 22 and 23 of the Inter-institutional agreement for Better Law-Making of 13 April 2016, there is a need to evaluate this Programme on the basis of information collected through specific monitoring requirements, while avoiding overregulation and administrative burdens, in particular on Member States. These requirements, where appropriate, can include measurable indicators, as a basis for evaluating the effects of the Programme on the ground <b>in cooperation with the local and regional authorities involved, in accordance with the active subsidiarity principle</b> .

**Reason**

The Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently' submitted its conclusions on 10 July, advocating a new 'active subsidiarity' approach that will ensure the added value of EU legislation to the benefit of the public and will lead to greater ownership of EU decisions in the Member States.

**Amendment 12**

## Chapter I, Article 1

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
This Regulation establishes the Rights <b>and</b> Values programme ('Programme').	This Regulation establishes the Rights, Values <b>and Citizenship</b> programme ('Programme').
It lays down the objectives of the Programme, the budget for the period 2021 — 2027, the forms of Union funding and the rules for providing such funding.	It lays down the objectives of the Programme, the budget for the period 2021 — 2027, the forms of Union funding and the rules for providing such funding.

**Reason**

The title of the programme should be consistent with its objectives and measures. The section of the programme dealing with citizenship is of fundamental importance and this should therefore be added to the programme's title.

**Amendment 13**

## Chapter I — Article 2

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
1. The general objective of the Programme is to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties, including by supporting civil society organisations, in order to sustain open, democratic and inclusive societies.	1. The general objective of the Programme is to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties, including by supporting civil society organisations, <b>local and regional authorities and their representatives</b> , in order to sustain open, democratic and inclusive societies.
2. Within the general objective set out in paragraph 1, the programme has the following specific objectives which correspond to strands:	2. Within the general objective set out in paragraph 1, the programme has the following specific objectives which correspond to strands:
(a) to promote equality and rights (Equality and rights strand),	(a) to promote equality and rights (Equality and rights strand),
(b) to promote citizens engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union (Citizens' engagement and participation strand),	(b) to promote citizens engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union (Citizens' engagement and participation strand),
(c) to fight violence (Daphne strand).	(c) to fight violence (Daphne strand).



**Reason**

Local and regional authorities are beneficiaries of the programme's funds and have an important role to play, in particular in promoting citizens' participation and defending the rights of EU citizens. Associations of local and regional governments have had a great role in disseminating the Programme and are still being part of it.

**Amendment 14**

Chapter I, Article 4(b) and new (c)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(b) (...) to promote citizens' civic and democratic participation allowing citizens and representative associations to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action;	(b) (...) to promote citizens' civic and democratic participation <b>at national and European level</b> allowing citizens and representative associations to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of <b>sub-national, national and</b> Union action;
	(c) <b>developing new innovative actions specifically for local and regional elected representatives as well as officials and other staff of local and regional authorities, with, for example, the development of a mobility, training and exchange programme for local and regional elected representatives and the establishment of a network of 'municipal councillors' in charge of Europe on the Austrian model to collect information on matters of topical European interest and serve as an interface between the public and the European Union.</b>

**Reason**

Citizens' participation often starts at a local level, where people are affected in their daily lives, with regard to the education of their children or their mobility. Citizens' participation at local level should be supported by the programme, as it is the first step towards participation at a higher — national or European — level. Awareness-raising campaigns at local level could be linked to citizens' participation at European level.

Currently, the opportunities for citizens to get involved in European issues remain limited and do not work as well as they should. In order to avoid frustration or disappointment, opportunities to speak at all levels, including local level, should be developed.

In order to encourage citizens' participation it is thus essential to have local and regional elected representatives as well as officials and other staff of local and regional authorities who have received training in EU issues and policies and who are fully informed about topical European issues. They can serve as an interface between the public and the EU, providing information and answering citizens' questions. This would help to reconnect the EU with its citizens, to stimulate people's interest in European issues and to answer people's questions while encouraging citizens' participation and a sense of belonging.

**Amendment 15**

Chapter I — Article 6(1) and 6(2)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
1. The financial envelope for the implementation of the Programme for the period 2021 — 2027 shall be EUR [641 705 000] in current prices.	1. The financial envelope for the implementation of the Programme for the period 2021 — 2027 shall be EUR [1 100 000 000] in current prices.
2. Within the amount referred to in paragraph 1 the following indicative amount shall be allocated to the following objective:	2. Within the amount referred to in paragraph 1 the following indicative amount shall be allocated to the following objective:

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(a) EUR [408 705 000] for the specific objectives referred to in article 2(2)(a) and 2(2)(c);	(a) EUR [450 000 000] for the specific objectives referred to in article 2(2)(a) and 2(2)(c);
(b) EUR [233 000 000] for the specific objective referred to in Article 2(2)(b);	(b) EUR [650 000 000] for the specific objective referred to in Article 2(2)(b).

**Reason**

It is necessary to increase the overall budget for the Rights and Values instrument given the enormous challenges the EU is facing as a community of values, based on rights.

**Amendment 16**

## Chapter III — Article 16(5)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
5. As soon as it adopts a delegated act, the Commission shall notify it simultaneously to the European Parliament and to the Council.	5. As soon as it adopts a delegated act, the Commission shall notify it simultaneously to the European Parliament and to the Council. <b><i>In accordance with the Better Law-Making agreement, citizens and other stakeholders may express their opinion on the draft text of a delegated act during a four-week period. The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions shall be consulted on the draft text, based on the experience of NGOs and local and regional authorities in the implementation of the programme.</i></b>

**Reason**

Given the expertise and working relations between civil society and local and regional authorities, the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions is essential for the programme's delegated acts. The experience of NGOs and local and regional authorities of implementing measures should be taken into account, in particular through the opinions of the EESC and CoR.

**Amendment 17**

## Chapter IV, Article 18(2) and new (3)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
2. The Commission shall implement information and communication actions relating to the Programme, and its actions and results. Financial resources allocated to the Programme shall also contribute to the corporate communication of the political priorities of the Union, as far as they are related to the objectives referred to in Article 2.	2. The Commission shall implement information and communication actions relating to the Programme, and its actions and results, <b><i>in particular through the Europe Direct Information Centres network.</i></b> Financial resources allocated to the Programme shall also contribute to the corporate communication of the political priorities of the Union, as far as they are related to the objectives referred to in Article 2.
	3. <b><i>The EU will do its utmost to provide information on financing arrangements to all potential beneficiaries in order to ensure the involvement of diverse organisations from different Member States and partner states. Candidates shall have access to a contact point, which will provide them with support, answer their questions on the application procedure and check that their file is complete before it is submitted.</i></b>

**Reason**

It is important to provide as much information as possible on opportunities to all local and regional authorities and all other potentially interested participants so as to ensure that it is not only the EU's privileged partners or the best informed organisations that benefit. The European Correspondents are important and should be highlighted in the European Commission's text. EDICs network is efficient and locally connected. Implementing information and communication actions through EDICs allows to meet results without increasing expenses.

**Amendment 18**

## Annex I (g)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(g) bringing together Europeans of different nationalities and cultures by giving them the opportunity to participate in <b>town-twinning</b> activities;	(g) bringing together Europeans of different nationalities and cultures by giving them the opportunity to participate in town <b>and rural community twinning</b> activities <b>as well as projects involving cross-border cooperation</b> ;

**Reason**

The Rights and Values programme should also take account of cross-border cooperation projects, as they contribute to a sense of mutual belonging, to European identity and to overcoming national differences.

**Amendment 19**

## Annex I (h)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(h) encouraging and facilitating active participation in the construction of a more democratic Union as well as awareness of rights and values through support to civil society organisations;	(h) encouraging and facilitating active participation in the construction of a more democratic Union as well as awareness of rights and values through support to civil society organisations, <b>local and regional authorities and their representative associations</b> ;

**Reason**

Local and regional authorities are beneficiaries of the programme's funds and have an important role to play, in particular in promoting citizens' participation and defending the rights of EU citizens. Associations of local and regional governments have had a great role in disseminating the Programme and are still being part of it.

**Amendment 20**

Annex I (j)

Commission text	Amendment
(j) developing the capacity of European networks to promote and further develop Union law, policy goals and strategies as well as supporting civil society organisations active in the areas covered by the Programme.	(j) developing the capacity of European networks <b>through multiannual operating grants</b> to promote and further develop Union law, <b>enhance bottom-up critical debates on</b> policy goals and strategies, as well as supporting civil society organisations, <b>local and regional authorities and their representative associations</b> active in the areas covered by the Programme.

**Reason**

Civil society is very important, but local and regional authorities and their representative associations at the local and regional level have and are playing crucial role within the general objectives of the programme, particularly within specific objectives under Article 2(2).

**Amendment 21**

Annex I (l) (new)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
	(l) <b><i>new innovative actions aimed at local and regional elected representatives as well as officials and other staff of local and regional authorities, among others, with, for example, the development of a mobility, training and exchange programme for local and regional elected representatives and the establishment of European Correspondents on the Austrian model to collect information on matters of topical European interest and serve as an interface between the public and the European Union.</i></b>

**Reason**

In order to encourage citizens' participation it is essential to have local and regional elected representatives as well as officials and other staff of local and regional authorities who have received training in EU issues and policies and who are fully informed about topical European issues. They can serve as an interface between the public and the EU, providing information and answering citizens' questions. This would help to reconnect the EU with its citizens, to stimulate people's interest in European issues and to answer people's questions while encouraging citizens' participation and a sense of belonging.

**II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS****THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

1. welcomes the European Commission's proposal on the MFF, which contains a Title II on investment in human capital, social cohesion and values; points out that this concept was put forward by the CoR in its report on an Erasmus for local and regional elected representatives;
2. welcomes the proposal for a Regulation establishing the Rights and Values programme. The three objectives of the programme are paramount at all government levels and are in line with the views already expressed by the CoR in various opinions and in its work programme;
3. regrets, however, the absence of the term 'citizenship' in the title of the fund, although this concept is at the heart of the activities to be undertaken by participants, in particular, as underlined in the Commission's text, against the background of a lack of trust, both within and between Member States, as well as towards Europe and the rise of extremism;

4. fully endorses and supports the Commission's objectives for combating violence, promotion of European rights without discrimination, e.g. as regards people with disabilities, gender equality and promotion of the right to privacy. The CoR would like to see specific measures to promote gender equality and combat discrimination and gender-based violence;
5. welcomes the Commission's proposal to merge into a common fund the Rights and Values and Justice programmes, thus making it possible to simplify procedures and improve their visibility and the budgetary flexibility allowed between programmes;
6. welcomes the new legal basis chosen by the Commission; stresses in this respect the need to apply the principle of 'active subsidiarity', as defined in the Final Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity;
7. acknowledges that the Commission's proposals comply with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
8. regrets that the amounts allocated to this fund have not been increased in view of the number of applications and the need to do more; asks therefore for an increase of the overall envelop for the Rights and Values programme to EUR 1,1 billion, EUR 513 million of which, representing one Euro per EU citizen, should be allocated to twinning and networking activities between citizens and their local and regional authorities and the establishment of new innovative actions aimed at local and regional elected representatives;
9. would like to see effective communication established to ensure that all potential applicants are aware of funding opportunities. Local and regional authorities must be directly informed of activities in which they may take part, in particular regarding citizens' participation. The work already being carried out in this area by the centres affiliated to the Commission's Europe Direct network could prove useful in this connection;
10. points out that, while the EU institutions are considered remote and technocratic, local and regional authorities, and therefore local and regional elected representatives, are close to the people and therefore represent a direct and effective link between the EU and its citizens;
11. Highlights the importance to clarify who governs the EU and calls on the EU to reinforce the role of the European commission the Union's supranational executive, subject to stronger democratic scrutiny and control;
12. considers that the development of synergies and establishment of new innovative tools will be essential to raise the profile and improve the effectiveness and follow-up of these programmes; training and information for local and regional elected representatives may thus also play a key role;
13. calls for cross-border cooperation projects also to be taken into account in the programme, as they promote cooperation between regions and organisations in different Member States and thus a shared sense of European identity;
14. asks that new innovative forms of action be included in the 'citizens' engagement and participation' strand, in particular aimed at local and regional elected representatives, for example with the development of a training and mobility programme for local and regional elected representatives, as described in the CoR opinion adopted in February 2018;
15. also asks that a network of European Correspondents based on the existing Austrian model be promoted by the European institutions in cooperation with the Member States to inform local politicians of topical European issues and enable them to respond as well as possible to citizens' expectations; this will help to combat people's lack of engagement with European issues;
16. considers that the involvement of various actors is key to achieving the objectives of the programme. The CoR suggests that preference be given to a multilevel approach, as many of the activities provided for in the programme are planned and implemented at local and regional level and as local and regional authorities can be beneficiaries of the programme funds;
17. stresses that, although information and awareness-raising campaigns are essential, they are not sufficient to ensure citizens' participation. Effective instruments to enable citizens' participation must be developed; European citizens' initiatives are an example of this at European level and several recommendations were made by the CoR in its March 2018 opinion aimed at improving this citizens' participation instrument at European level;

18. also considers that such information campaigns should focus on opportunities at local level. It is at this level that citizens can first become actively involved in issues that directly affect them in their daily lives;

19. will take part, with all local and regional authorities, in promoting citizens' rights and citizens' engagement and participation in order to raise awareness of major European issues and to increase the sense of European belonging. Measures have already been implemented by the CoR supporting the objectives of the programme, with, for example, more than 180 debates held across Europe in connection with the Reflecting on Europe programme. This demonstrates the wish of many citizens to speak out and get involved in European issues.

Brussels, 10 October 2018.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ

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