

Valencia Declaration

A Multi-Level Approach to Security: A Regional Roadmap for a Resilient Europe

Adopted in Valencia, 29 April 2025

We, the undersigned representatives of European regional and local authorities, gathered in Valencia for the EPP-CoR Group seminar on Strengthening Europe's Preparedness: A Societal Approach to Security and Resilience, hereby affirm our unwavering commitment to protecting our communities in an era marked by rapidly evolving challenges which have a direct impact on European society and on the daily lives of citizens.

Europe faces increasingly complex security threats – ranging from cyberattacks and disinformation to hybrid warfare, infrastructure sabotage, health emergencies and natural disasters. Recent crises highlight the urgent need for a proactive, coordinated and multi-level approach to European security and resilience. Local and regional authorities are on the frontline of these challenges and responding, and their role is essential in building a resilient Europe.

We therefore commit to the following principles and propose these actions:

1. **Empower Local and Regional Authorities in the Security Architecture:** Involve local and regional governments systematically in EU security and preparedness planning, drawing on their proximity to citizens and knowledge of local realities. The regional and local dimension must be fully integrated into all EU security and resilience strategies. Investment in early warning systems and real-time risk monitoring should be prioritised to ensure timely responses and protect critical infrastructure and populations.
2. **Build Resilience from the Ground Up:** Europe's security starts in its towns, cities and regions. Building resilience starts with a comprehensive assessment of risks, the identification of vulnerabilities and needs, and taking actions following the 'build back better' principle. This includes strengthening local infrastructure, ensuring the continuity of essential services and reinforcing civil protection in all territories as the cornerstone of a resilient Union.

3. **Recognise the Specific Vulnerabilities of Island and Outermost Regions:** These regions face unique security and resilience challenges due to their geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, dependence on external supply chains, and exposure to climate-related risks such as rising sea levels, water scarcity and extreme weather events. European security and preparedness strategies must include dedicated frameworks, support measures and contingency planning tailored to the needs of island communities.
4. **Integrate Civil Protection, Cybersecurity, Disaster Risk and Crisis Management at All Levels:** Synergies between civil protection, cybersecurity, defence, climate adaptation and digitalisation policies must be actively fostered to develop interoperable systems capable of addressing hybrid threats, health emergencies and natural disasters. Expanding shared EU emergency resources, strengthening cybersecurity and enhancing coordination across European, national, regional and local levels of governance must go hand in hand with addressing digital divides to ensure equitable access to security tools and communications.
5. **Advance a Societal Approach to Security:** Structured platforms for knowledge exchange, joint training and the co-creation of innovative security solutions should be supported at EU level to foster cooperation among authorities, businesses, civil society, academia and citizens to build trust, ensure preparedness and counter disinformation. Citizens should not be regarded merely as recipients of security and resilience measures, but as active and responsible participants who share ownership across all stages — prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Strengthening their involvement through participatory processes and community-driven initiatives is key to building trust and collective resilience.
6. **Prioritise Climate and Environmental Security as Strategic Objectives:** Address droughts, wildfires, floods and food insecurity as strategic risks. Invest in sustainable land use, water management and ecosystem resilience. Particular attention must be paid to island territories which are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, coastal erosion and freshwater shortages.
7. **Bring Forward a Comprehensive EU Health Security Strategy:** Climate change, urbanisation, environmental degradation and the overuse of antimicrobials increase opportunities for the rapid cross-border spread of infectious agents and their vectors. Biological, chemical, radiological and nuclear threats loom as dangerous as ever. Regions must be part of the planning and delivery of health security scenarios.
8. **Promote Innovation and Support Regional Defence and Security Ecosystems:** Regions play a key role in fostering innovation through research hubs and support for SMEs in the security and defence sectors. EU funding must back regions in contributing to Europe's strategic autonomy.

9. **Enhance Education, Training and Public Awareness:** Promote greater upskilling and reskilling and education in the fields of security and crisis preparedness. Support public awareness campaigns and community-level exercises.
10. **Ensure Accessible and Flexible Funding for Security and Resilience:** Sufficient EU resources must be made available for regional preparedness. Simplified access and tailored support are essential to ensure all territories can invest in resilience. A dedicated European Security and Resilience Action Plan should clarify roles for all levels of governance and provide targeted funding, including with the support of the European Investment Bank. Tailored support must be provided to regions with structural disadvantages, including outermost, mountainous and island territories, to ensure that no region is left behind in resilience planning.
11. **Foster Cross-border and Interregional Cooperation:** Security threats do not stop at borders. Enhanced cooperation across regions, not only border regions, including joint stress testing and exercises and coordinated action, will strengthen Europe's collective capacity to respond to crises.
12. **Reinforce International Partnerships and Strategic Alliances:** Maintain strong partnerships with NATO, UN agencies and other global actors, while building Europe's autonomous capacity to respond to emerging security challenges.

Through this declaration, we express our firm belief that only through multi-level governance, strategic investment and societal engagement can Europe become a truly resilient Union. We pledge to continue working together – across borders and sectors – to build a safer, stronger and more prepared Europe for all citizens.

Signed in Valencia, on 29 April 2025, by the representatives of:
