

## European Regions for Smart Communities

Good afternoon.

I am very grateful for the challenge of being able to participate with this excellent network of regional and local decision-makers in an extraordinary exercise, so well summarized in the definition of the summit's purpose:

*A European Summit of local and regional communities to share a common vision for a smart tomorrow.*

For this exercise to be a success we have to add political will, scientific and technological knowledge, imagination (a lot of imagination), and the ability to make it happen.

This needs:

A close knowledge of the territories and the people who live there.

A keen sensitivity to the expectations and desires of the citizens.

A deep vision of sustainability and the need to preserve identity, diversity and living conditions.

**I would like to emphasize here the importance of communities and their leaders, particularly those communities that are more vulnerable for geographical or demographic reasons.**

**In a world that is increasingly fragmented politically and socially, being smart is using technologies and knowledge to make communities more resilient and stronger.**

**We live in a time when there is a lot of talk (hopefully less and less, mostly in the developed world) about pandemic waves.**

**I will tell you briefly about other waves that are great opportunities for a better post-pandemic world, and in which projects like Auroral have something to say.**

**Next Friday and Saturday, the Social Summit will take place in Portugal, under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, in the city of Porto.**

**It means a huge and fundamental concertation exercise to put into practice the European Pillar of Social Rights.**

**On May 9, the Europe Day, the Conference on the Future of Europe starts in Strasbourg.**

**It is a unique opportunity to respond to the priorities that European citizens confront us with, on a daily basis.**

**No one can ignore this clamour of Europeans because the Euro barometer is like cotton ... it does not deceive.**

**The European citizens want more**

**Employment, security, inclusion, sustainability.**

**Projects like Auroral have an important place in the Conference on the Future of Europe.**

**It has to be a conference capable of starting from solutions to possible institutional adjustments.**

**Auroral has to be able to show that it is a reference approach.**

**An approach to a new emerging and challenging reality:**

**To the second wave of digitalization.**

**To the second wave of the energy transition.**

**To the second wave of territorial development.**

**These waves are deeply interconnected and are marked by the acceleration and the brutal increase in the capacity to capture, transmit, process, store, and transform data into knowledge, solutions, products, and services.**

**The spiral of technological development is brutal.**

**Acceleration breeds data.**

**Data begets acceleration.**

**But in what direction?**

**To what end?**

**Technology at the service of people or people at the service of technology.**

**To be ahead of the machine we have to have the ability to imagine and make it happen?**

**Create the data and the patterns that later the technologies will help to materialize.**

**1 - Imagining and making quality of life happen, dignified lives with decency and equity.**

**2 - Imagining and making happen open, transparent, and democratic societies.**

**3 - Imagining and making happen a sustainable planet with biodiversity.**

**4 - To imagine and make happen a competitive economy, in network, with strategic autonomy.**

**5 - To imagine and make happen robust scientific and development systems.**

**We need an effective Green Deal, complemented with a Data Deal that makes data protection in Europe an advantage, exchanging consent of data use with security, for services, products and solutions of interest to citizens and territories.**

**With Green Hydrogen, we will be able to bottle the sun (although we still have some technological and regulatory way to go)**

**With that promoting green (and democratic and inclusive) digitalization**

**Inducing smart and voluntary relocation of people to less populated and lower density territories.**

**Creating viable cells of sustainable development that can replicate themselves and become an antidote to the desertification of the territories.**

**If I had to summarize in one sentence what I would like our common shared vision to be, I would choose this one:**

***Generate viable development cells, with critical mass and sustainability and multiply them throughout the territories, creating robust communities.***

**This is the challenge I leave you with.**

**I speak to those who can make it happen.**

**Our citizens, our lands, our regions, our countries, and the world count on us for a strong and fair recovery from the difficult times we have experienced.**

**When I end by wishing you success, I know I am being selfish.**

**Your success is also my success and the success of those who trust me. The success of Alentejo, my region.**

**My commitment is total.**

**Good work.**

**Good luck.**