



**Generalitat de Catalunya**



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## **THE CATALAN PRESIDENCY OF THE FOUR MOTORS FOR EUROPE 2020-2021**

### **Programme**

**Strengthen the transformative resilience of our societies  
through the 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal**



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## Introduction

Throughout the network's thirty-year existence, the Four Motors for Europe have remained firmly committed to a close and continuous cooperation that will benefit the citizens living in their territories. Against a backdrop of European integration Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Catalonia have long aspired to be at the forefront of European development in a range of fields including innovation, creativity and culture, while at the same time maintaining their commitment to global challenges.

It's precisely the way these global challenges impact the inner workings of individual countries that see them increasingly encroaching on national agendas, creating the need for participation — and cooperation — at a regional level. The Covid-19 crisis is a clear example of this dynamic. All four of our regions are, to a greater or lesser extent, having to endure the consequences of a pandemic that plunged our continent into a severe crisis. And this is why the Four Motors for Europe feel especially compelled to play an active role in the recovery.

The Covid-19 pandemic should serve as a warning to humanity. This isn't just a health crisis; it's a transversal crisis: a global health crisis, a crisis of unpreparedness, a crisis of social and gender inequalities, a crisis of the current model of globalisation, a crisis of the global economic system, and a crisis of biosphere integrity loss. All issues that were already present in society, but the recent health crisis has exposed them in a much harsher light.

In addition to the much-needed response to the current emergency, we must equip ourselves with the tools to overcome similar, or potentially even more severe events in the future. In keeping with the obvious fact that global challenges require global solutions, on a European, regional and local scale, we believe the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda** can act as a compass to guide us as we overcome the current crisis, improve our resilience as a society and help the planet. Thus, the Catalan presidency of the Four Motors for Europe proposes, **as the main axis of its programme, to strengthen the transformative resilience of our societies through the 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal.**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs as a strategy for universal and transformative development. The 2030 Agenda commits the global community to achieve these goals by 2030 at the latest, adopting a comprehensive and systemic approach and maintaining the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic,



social and environmental. Catalonia proposes these three dimensions should act as a point of reference not only to strengthen, but also to transform our **economic social and environmental resilience**, to guarantee a fair transition to a sustainable economy that leaves no one behind, and, at the same time, ensure we are in the best possible position for dealing with any future global crises. Accordingly, our programme will prioritise the economic recovery from the crisis and the diminution of its ensuing social inequalities, while at the same time closely heeding the European strategy framed by the European Green Deal, which aims to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050.

The Resolution approving the 2030 Agenda recognises that the achievement of the 17 SDGs is a responsibility that must be shared by a multitude of actors on a global, regional and local scale. Within the framework of this year's United Nations 'Decade of Action', Catalonia proposes there should also be cooperation, between the Four Motors for Europe and the international community, to advance toward the achievement of the SDGs on a global scale. To this end, we will try to stimulate action in the five areas addressed by the 2030 Agenda: the planet, people, prosperity, peace and partnerships or alliances.

Beyond its main axis, and in line with the strategy to strengthen the governance approved on the occasion of the network's 30th anniversary, this programme also draws on the agenda set out by the previous presidencies of the Four Motors for Europe. It, therefore, provides for the continuity of some of the initiatives administered by previous presidencies, and also for the consolidation of cross-cutting work between our working groups, improving our corporate visibility, and boosting our collaboration in the field of EU financing.

In light of the Covid-19 crisis and the mobility restrictions currently in place across the European continent, the programme envisages a virtual format for activities planned for the coming months. Furthermore, during the Catalan presidency of the Four Motors for Europe, the programme may be widened to include any additional initiative in the common interest.



## **Transformative, economic, social and environmental resilience**

The distinguishing feature of the 2030 Agenda is its holistic vision of sustainable development, with SDGs interconnected by numerous cross-cutting elements that require integrated solutions. For this reason, this programme takes inspiration from the stance taken by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, which suggests that economies and societies should be seen as integrated parts of the biosphere. We must aspire to an economy at the service of society, so it evolves within the limits of the planet.

### **Transformative social resilience**

Primary focus: SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 16

The consequences of Covid-19 are multiple. One of them, impossible to compensate, is the loss of thousands of human lives. But to this, we must add the significant negative impacts in the social sphere, especially among the most vulnerable sectors of the population, which always suffer the most in turbulent times such as these. We must, therefore, find structural solutions to the problems which highlight the growing inequalities within our societies, such as a lack of access to housing, the underground economy, rising unemployment or the prevalence of temporary contracts, and we must approach them from an intersectional perspective that provides for a multiplicity of realities and allows us to take action in all the axes of inequality. The solution will also require increased funding for public health and social services, as well as resolute investment in research and innovation.

The pandemic has accelerated and exposed the growing need for digital training among the population as a whole. In the course of the Catalan presidency, we will organise an event to share and debate good practices from a broad perspective involving, among others, the competent educational authorities. And as a continuation of the initiatives launched during previous presidencies, the programme also includes a project that focuses explicitly on promoting female participation in the digital economy.

In autumn 2020, to coincide with the II International Congress on Gender-Based Violence, we have scheduled a parallel Four Motors for Europe event which will focus on the situations experienced during confinement, as well as on actions and campaigns for the prevention of gender-based violence among young people. With regard to the pandemic, we will propose an initiative relating to the deconfinement process and public information, which will also encompass aspects of psychosocial care and lessons learned.



Also scheduled for autumn 2020, is a Four Motors for Europe debate on citizen participation and ongoing dialogue with the citizenship.

The Catalan presidency also intends to re-activate our sporting collaboration, taking advantage of the European Week of the Sport in September 2021. And in the agricultural sphere, we will organise a workshop to share good practice examples and success stories relating to gender equality in the rural world.

In education, the Catalan presidency will put the spotlight on inclusive education as the basis for schooling that caters for all pupils, regardless of their circumstances and abilities. We will also be promoting the exchange of good practices, such as community service (encouraging students to get involved in civic engagement actions within their community) and educational ecosystems, which are based on the idea that a successful educational activity requires connection and collaboration between the academic and social agents in the local area.

In the field of higher education and research, which already has an operational Four Motors for Europe working group, two specific initiatives will be launched: a panel to discuss the significant challenges in university mobility and the internationalisation of higher education, with concrete impacts, recovery solutions and a good-practice comparison between the four regions; and an exchange of good practice examples around measures to recover and drive a knowledge system which was addressing many areas that needed urgent attention before Covid-19, and which, thanks to the pandemic, are now more pressing than ever.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has become a watershed moment in everybody's lives. We are witnessing an exceptional situation that has pushed health systems to their limits, and this has led to the deployment of new work tools and new circuits of communication and social care. In this area, the Catalan presidency will present several initiatives around emerging elements that have been thrown into the spotlight by the pandemic, and which will no doubt play an increasingly prominent role in the future of healthcare, including the remote provision of services, the integration of health and social services, and artificial intelligence. These will be complemented by pre-existing strategies that can provide a framework for developing and specifying the aforementioned emerging elements: the Health Plan, real-world data analysis and the interaction between health research and its healthcare application.

During the Catalan presidency, an ad hoc working group will be commissioned to establish working methodologies and shared services for a consolidated care continuum designed to support people experiencing complex or chronic health issues. This group will primarily be concerned with the promotion of personal autonomy and care for older



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adults, people with disabilities, and those suffering from mental illnesses, among others, and with identifying a unique and comprehensive health and social care approach to the promotion of personal autonomy and dependent living. The conclusions of this collaboration will be presented and shared between the different institutions, suppliers and third sector entities, so as to facilitate the exchange of good practices and knowledge transfer.

With regard to social policies, there will be a workshop on creating an integrated protection model through the intersectoral planning of social policies, the implementation of the Housing First model to reduce the number of people who are either homeless or living in sub-standard housing, the exercising of citizens' energy rights to address energy poverty and incorporating the gender perspective into the social services system.



### **Transformative environmental resilience**

Primary focus: SDG 6, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15

Aside from the health crisis, the global climate change crisis continues apace. Recovery from the pandemic provides us with an opportunity to rebuild and recentre the economy around sustainable development, becoming carbon neutral and conserving resources. Thus, it should include a package of measures to accelerate mobility decarbonisation and the energy transition, as well as to achieve circularity in our economies. In short, our way out of this crisis lies in curtailing our degradation of nature and fostering an economy that serves humanity while respecting the biophysical limits of the planet.

In the first instance, the Catalan presidency will oversee the incorporation of new actors to the environment working group, such as the authorities responsible for the energy sector and the application of digital tools in the field, which should help to provide a more cross-cutting response to the numerous existing challenges. In cohesion with the European Green Deal, we'll also be looking for closer cooperation with the economy workgroup, and to make that cooperation more visible we will propose that the business and institutional mission of the Four Motors for Europe should be increasingly linked to the circular economy concept.

The Catalan presidency will also support other initiatives put forward by the environment working group to gain recognition and influence for the Four Motors for Europe in the fight against the climate crisis. We will mirror the position of the European Institutions on a range of policies, including the European Green Deal, the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 — and we will organise an event themed on educating for sustainability at the UNESCO Conference on Education for Development.

In the course of the Catalan presidency, there will also be a workshop to exchange policies on energy transition in the four regions and address current issues such as the decarbonisation of industry, energy efficiency and self-generation in buildings, electric vehicles, and citizen empowerment and energy poverty.

In the current context of climate change, the dynamics of ecosystems are undergoing significant changes, particularly as a result of increasingly frequent and intense disturbances such as forest fires. Until recently, forest fires were primarily a concern for the Mediterranean areas of Europe, mainly due to climatic factors and forest fuels. But climate change has pushed these fires northwards, towards Central and Northern Europe. We will venture to address this problem from a range of standpoints at a joint



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event to pool forest fire expertise from our four regions, and to highlight the perspective and lessons learned from European projects.

The Catalan presidency will seek to intensify our agricultural collaboration and, with this in mind, will organise a virtual meeting this autumn to put various initiatives on the table for next year. Highlights include initiatives on food sovereignty in the context of the pandemic — in line with the European Farm to Fork strategy — the promotion of quality products, bioeconomics and biomass energy yield.



### **Transformative economic resilience**

Primary focus: SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 12

In economic terms, the pandemic is wreaking havoc worldwide. The forced decline in economic activity resulting from population confinement in many countries around the world has increased unemployment, decreased the purchasing power of the middle classes and increased inequality; consequences that must be reversed.

As we do every year, in 2020 the Four Motors for Europe will organise a parallel event during the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels. In the current context of the European Union's recovery plan, and in coordination with our regional delegations in Brussels, we will hold a session to present our recovery strategies, focusing on specific issues and sectors, and to discuss how the regional dimension has a critical role to play in the successful recovery of the European Union.

As detailed in the previous section, we plan to link the business and institutional mission to the circular economy concept. The Catalan presidency will also support other initiatives put forward by the economy working group, such as a virtual meeting of the cluster dialogue group to address both generic issues, such as cluster policy, and specific ones, such as responses to the pandemic. A meeting of the e-mobility group is also planned, capitalising on an important sector event during the period of the Catalan presidency.

Next year, we'll also be organising an event to exchange good practice in promoting the social and cooperative economy as an engine of transformation towards more sustainable and people-centred economic models. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the development of sustainable territorial ecosystems and identify tools to support young people with social and solidarity economy initiatives.

We will foster the exchange of good practices related to the impact of Covid-19 on the work environment, its implications for the implementation of remote working and working from home, and the importance of dialogue and social agreement concerning dignified employment and corporate social responsibility, as well as labour market insertion. With regard to vocational training, there will be a workshop to discuss a new model of job fairs to provide career guidance tools and encourage vocational discovery.

We will build on work initiated by the previous presidency in the field of cultural enterprise, and continue to promote the cultural industries of the four regions through various initiatives that will be given form by our recently created working group on culture. The group's initial focus will be on developing policies and strategies to rescue the cultural sector in the context of the pandemic.



## **Alliances**

The crisis has also underlined how imperative it is that global regions learn from each other and countries become accustomed to cooperating beyond their borders. Only together will we be able to rise to the challenges posed by the crisis. Beyond the three dimensions of sustainable development, the last SDG (17) deals with the importance of strengthening the alliances needed to make the 2030 Agenda a reality.

In this area, the headline event for the Catalan presidency will be an academic-institutional proceeding, potentially in December 2020, to address global challenges, regional cooperation, and the role of the regions in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal, two vital documents that will lead the way to increased transformative resilience in our societies.