

## Hearing of Executive Vice-President-designate Raffaele Fitto



Raffaele Fitto during the confirmation hearing 2024 © European Union, 2024 - Source: EP

**The Committee on Regional Development questioned Raffaele Fitto, Italian candidate for Commission Executive Vice-President responsible for cohesion and reforms.**

In his opening remarks, Mr Fitto stated his intention to respond to demographic challenges and to give opportunities to everyone, and in particular young people, so they can stay and thrive in their home regions. He committed to using the so-called “[place-based approach](#)” to better address local needs and to working closer together with local authorities.

Answering MEP questions on the future of cohesion policy, Mr Fitto said that it needs to be simplified and more flexible, and that the administrative burden must be reduced. For the first time, the Commission has a dedicated [portfolio for simplification](#), he added. However,

simplification cannot mean reduced transparency or scrutiny, Mr Fitto argued. He underlined the important work of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the European Anti-Fraud Office OLAF in making sure that EU funds go where they are supposed to.

### **Strong role for local authorities**

Discussing the future of cohesion policy, MEPs quizzed Mr Fitto on whether simplification would mean centralisation. They asked if he will defend “cohesion policy as we know it”, where people and regions have a strong role. Mr Fitto committed to advancing solutions that leverage the specialised knowledge of local actors, and are flexible enough to accommodate different local needs. At the same time, he wants to develop targeted approaches to local industrial policy and leverage the potential of tourism.

In response to questions about efforts to strengthen rural regions suffering from depopulation and brain drain, Mr Fitto underlined the importance of high quality work, local administrative capacity, infrastructure - including digital - and public services in every region. He further committed to supporting talent development and employment opportunities and to accelerating the implementation of the Just Transition Fund.

### **Solutions for island regions and cities**

On support for islands, Mr Fitto pointed to his record working on the topic as an MEP, and said that coordinated efforts involving transport, agriculture, fisheries and tourism policy will be needed.

Mr Fitto also announced his intention to develop a comprehensive policy agenda for cities, including housing, digitalisation and social inclusion. Citizens who live in the EU's eastern border regions also need the EU's maximum support, he said.

MEPs also raised the issue of the rule of law and Mr Fitto's previous record on [Article 7](#) votes. Mr Fitto committed to respecting the rule of law as a fundamental EU principle, and said he has already contributed to the EU's rule of law dialogue in his previous role as an EU Affairs Minister.

### **Press point**

At the end of the hearing, the Chair of the Committee on Regional Development held a press point outside the meeting room: watch it [here](#).

### **Next steps**

The committee chair and political group coordinators will meet without delay after the hearing to assess the performance and qualification of the Commissioner-designate. Based on the committee recommendations, the Conference of Presidents (EP President Metsola and political group chairs) is set to conduct the final evaluation and declare the hearings closed on 21 November. Once the Conference of Presidents declares all hearings closed, the evaluation

letters will be published.

The election by MEPs of the full college of Commissioners (by a majority of the votes cast, by roll-call) is currently scheduled to take place during the 25-28 November plenary session in Strasbourg.

## Further information

[Committee on Regional Development](#)

[EP hearing webpage](#)

[EP research briefing](#)

[Timetable of hearings](#)

[Webstreaming of the hearing](#)

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