



## VERENIGING VAN VLAAMSE STEDEN EN GEMEENTEN

Communication and interaction with its members is centre-stage for the VVSG. One of the communication successes is the unique formula of the 'VVSG Trefdag', the two yearly high level gathering of local authorities. This project started in 1999 as a modest initiative from the VVSG for its members. The number of participants has been expanding into nearly 4.000 at its last edition in May 2010. This 'rendez-vous' of local authorities offers an excellent opportunity for mayors, aldermen, councilors, civil servants, other organizations dealing with local authorities' issues, to meet, exchange ideas, gather information, discuss, pick up new ideas and network.

The 'VVSG Trefdag' is offering a mix of so-called 'trefwinkels' or workshops on a wide range of topics, an information market with info stands of institutions, companies and service providers, and a cultural program. In the workshops innovative methods are used to reinforced participation and interaction of the participants. They can choose between workshops, round table discussions, political café, quiz on who is the smartest municipality, testimonies of good practices, debates, lectures. Each 'VVSG-Trefdag' has a main theme, such as Creativity and Innovation in 2010, Partnership and Networking in 2008, Strong and committed local governments in 2006, and so on. A European or international input is ensured by a speaker from a guest city such as Freiburg in 2008 and Malmö in 2010. The 'VVSG-Trefdag' has grown into a successful event and has become a 'high day' to celebrate all local authorities in Flanders working for their citizens on a daily basis.

[www.vvsg.be](http://www.vvsg.be) (online translation in EN-FR-ESP).

*'It was a great success: the Trefdag is a fantastic project. So much to see, so much to do. A full program, strong themes, inspiring debates. It was an enriching and innovative experience, and very well organized. This can only be achieved through real teamwork.'*(local councilor who participated in 2010)

The Belgian Association of Cities and Municipalities has a long standing history: it was created in 1913 to voice the concern of mayors to the Belgian state and to provide legal advice and support to its members. Over the years, the Belgian institutional context has changed considerably. From a unitary state Belgium developed into a federal state with strong regions and communities. This had its effects on the local authorities and on its association. In 1994, it was decided to reorganize the Belgian association and to create new autonomous bodies: the VVSG for Flanders, UVCW for Wallonia, AVCB-VSGB for the Brussels Capital region. They compose jointly the Belgian association that functions as a platform for exchange of information or common action if relevant.