



regleg

Bundeskanzleramt  
Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel  
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1  
10557 Berlin

contact address:  
Jeremy Smith  
Secretary General  
CEMR  
Rue d'Arlon 22  
1050 Brussels  
Tel.: +32-2-500 0532

21 December 2006

Dear Chancellor,

As Presidents of the principal European associations of regional and local governments, may we start by expressing our warm wishes to you and the German government for a successful Presidency during the first half of 2007.

Your Presidency takes place at a crucial moment in the life and development of the European Union. We would like to express our willingness to co-operate on the wide range of issues and challenges in which we can and must play a strong role – for example, competitiveness, public services, demographic change and social inclusion, maritime policy, energy or climate change. We are sure you will agree that effective modern European governance requires the active involvement of, and partnership between, all levels of government.

Your Presidency has the vital but difficult task of seeking a way forward in relation to the future of the Constitutional Treaty. Our associations were all very active in the preparation of the Constitution, and were very pleased that the Constitution included a number of points of key importance for regional and local government. In summary, these points include:

- The explicit recognition of local and regional self-government (Article I-5)
- The extension of the subsidiarity principle to include local and regional government (Article I-11)
- The extension of the concept of cohesion to include *territorial* cohesion, both as an objective of the Union (Article I-3), and as a competence
- The subsidiarity / proportionality monitoring system (Protocol on subsidiarity)
- More effective consultation of regional and local governments, and more account to be taken of the financial impact of EU policies on local and regional governments (Protocol on Subsidiarity)
- The new right of the Committee of the Regions to refer subsidiarity issues to the Court of Justice

The Constitution – by strengthening the principle of multi-level governance – marks an important achievement in overcoming the gap between the EU and our citizens. It makes it easier for citizens to engage with European policies, thus ensuring that EU priorities more adequately reflect their day-to-day concerns.

We understand that the German government would wish either to maintain the Constitution as it stands (and of course it has now been ratified by 18 Member States out of the EU27), or to retain as much as possible of the Constitution's contents if a new way forward needs to be found. We share a similar perspective, being convinced that the EU needs an improved institutional and democratic framework for its future progress.

We would like to urge the German Presidency, and all Member States, to ensure that, whatever the outcome, the points cited above in relation to regional and local government continue to be included in any new constitutional or institutional Treaty. Moreover, and in line with the principle of proximity to the citizen, we also urge that the chapter on the democratic life of the Union be maintained in any future settlement.

Finally, we are pleased to note that, at the Berlin Summit of Heads of State and Government in March 2007, and marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, it is intended to issue a Declaration concerning the values of the Union in today's and tomorrow's world. We believe that there would be enormous support, if this Declaration were to include positive references to the principle of local and regional self-government, as well as the role that these levels of government play in the democratic life of the Union and in support of the aims of closer European integration. This would demonstrate that contemporary European governance is not a top-down issue, but something that involves us all.

We would be most grateful to receive your views on the above proposals. In any event, we thank you in advance for taking our points into account, and again express our sincere wishes for a successful Presidency.

Yours sincerely,



**Mr Riccardo Illy**

President of Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER)



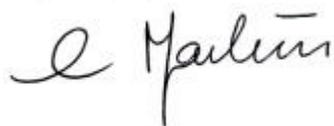
**Mr Lambert van Nistelrooij**

Member of European Parliament, President of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)



**Mr Michael Häupl**

Mayor of Vienna (Austria), President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)



**Mr Claudio Martini**

President of Tuscany (Italy), President of Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)



**Mr Gérard Collomb**

Mayor of Lyon (France), President of EUROCITIES



**Right Honourable Rhodri Morgan AM**

First Minister for Wales, President of REGLEG (Regions with Legislative Power)