

Minister of European Affairs Jean Pierre Jouyet, France
Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, Czech Republic
Deputy Premier for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra, Czech Republic
Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, Czech Republic
Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, Sweden
Minister of European Affairs Cecilia Malmström, Sweden

Local and regional expectations on the French, Czech and Swedish presidencies of the European Union

We are writing to you as representatives of the national associations of local and regional governments of France, Czech Republic and Sweden. Together we form a Local Trio with the main objective to raise the profile of local and regional government during the upcoming French, Czech and Swedish presidencies of the European Union.

As you know, local and regional authorities are to a large extent affected by the policies of the European Union. For example, cities, municipalities and regions are responsible for implementing EU legislation in fields such as public services, environment and transport. As representatives of the local and regional level of our countries we therefore follow closely the development of new policies at the European level.

The work of the Council is extremely important to us and we wish you all success in chairing the Council in the coming 18 months. From a local and regional perspective, the period of 1 July 2008 – 31 December 2009 is especially important since it is when many important decisions that will affect local and regional authorities will be taken. Consequently, we look forward to fruitful cooperation between the Trio and representatives of the Local Trio.

As representatives of the Local Trio, we would like to bring your attention to the following issues and hope that you will be able to take our concerns into account when chairing the European Union in the period to come.

EU budget reform

We are convinced that the EU budget must be modernized in order to better respond to the future challenges of the European Union. European local and regional authorities are important actors that will play a key role in delivering a competitive, social and environmentally sustainable Europe. A reformed EU budget must also in the future facilitate the efforts of local and regional governments in strengthening the developments within their territories.

Within the framework of the budget reform it is necessary to underline the importance of an efficient support for rural development. Moreover, it is crucial to stress that the European cohesion policy has been significantly reformed during the last years. The main focus of the cohesion policy is now also to deliver the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives. Hence, the structural funds are the necessary instruments to implement specific projects that will improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the regions of Europe. A European regional policy has significant added value and it would be a mistake to re-nationalise it or to focus only on the poorer European countries. However, it should be developed further in order to assist European local and regional authorities to better respond to the challenges ahead.

EU competition law and public services of general interest

As you know, there has for several years been an unresolved disagreement between local governments and the European Commission on how, and how far, the rules of the internal market do, or should, apply to local public services. Also in recent years, the European Court of Justice has reached a number of decisions which have been strongly criticized by the representative associations of local governments. Based on the Lisbon Treaty and the Protocol on Services of General Interest the discussions will continue. As representatives of local government we urge you to consider exploring the possibilities advanced by Article 14 and the Protocol on Services of General Interest of the Lisbon Treaty, and to fully integrate the principles of local self-government, proximity, subsidiarity and proportionality into the future discussions of the Council on EU competition law and internal market rules as far as local and regional services of general interest are concerned. As representatives of local and regional authorities we can provide you with valuable input in this regard.

Climate change and sustainable development

In the coming 18 months, the European Union will be an important actor in the global negotiations on how to combat climate change. At the local and regional level there is a clear political will to undertake concrete measures that will reduce human impact on our climate, environment and consumption of natural resources. In the local and regional authorities of Europe, a lot is already being done in this field such as green public procurement, actions to reduce energy consumption in public buildings, district heating, air pollution etc. However, a lot remains to be done. In the continued global negotiations it is necessary to recognize the concrete measures which are being implemented locally. There are many good examples of European local projects that could be transferred to other European countries and other continents and hence facilitate the achievement of the targets that will result from the global negotiations.

Involvement of sub-national actors

Finally, we would like to underline that a key to a successful presidency is the ability of the presiding country to involve and use the competence of actors which are not part of the government structures. As representatives of the Local Trio we are ready to provide you with valuable input on issues with a local and regional dimension. We would also like to propose that local and regional politicians are invited to meetings, such as informal council meetings and other conferences, where issues of concern to local and regional authorities are discussed. The local and regional politicians will not only contribute with crucial information but also to revitalise the debates.

We are looking forward to a fruitful cooperation.



Louis Le Pensec

President of the French section of the Council for European Municipalities and Regions



Oldřich Vlasak

President of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic



Anders Knappe

President of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions