



Photo: X-BAY/Leif Johansson

From Innsbruck to Malmö

Climate change and the economic and financial crisis are the most pressing issues for Europe's local and regional governments. That was the message that came out of the opening ceremony of the 24th general assembly of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, in Malmö.

We need to cooperate. The regions and the towns of Europe need each other while facing the great difficulties of today, said the host of the general assembly and mayor of Malmö Ilmar Reepalu.

CEMR's flag was handed over from the mayor of Innsbruck, Hilde Zach, who hosted the previous general assembly in 2006 to Ilmar Reepalu, in front of over 1,000 delegates from over 40 countries. The official ceremony signaled the start of three days of sessions that aim to give

delegates new ideas on how to deal with today and tomorrow's challenges, and to get "fit for the future".

Hilde Zach, Mayor of Innsbruck, emphasized the important role of regions and towns: *The financial crisis will not be solved in the bank offices. We have to do it ourselves, as we represent the citizens of our towns. We can't afford to wait!*

The Mayor of Malmö, Ilmar Reepalu, described the changes of the city and the region as an example of how

important cooperation is. In the 1990's Malmö was going through an extremely rough industrial and economic crisis. Hard work and important decisions together with cooperation made it possible to change the development: *Today the crossborder region with Skåne and Denmark is one of the most important regions in northern Europe,* says Jerker Swanstein, President of the Executive Board, Region of Skåne.

We have big challenges ahead, but now is the time to focus on education and development. And I do hope that we will all leave Malmö with good and inspiring memories, said Anders Knappe, First Vice President of CEMR.



Photo: X-BAY/Leif Johansson

Hilde Zach and Ilmar Reepalu passing the flag from Innsbruck to Malmö.

General Assembly 2012: it will be Cadiz!

The policy committee of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) met ahead of CEMR's General Assembly in Malmö, on 22 April 2009.

More than 100 representatives of local and regional government from all over Europe voted to decide on the next host city of CEMR's General Assembly. Two cities were still in the running, Athens and Cadiz. The majority of the members of the policy committee have expressed their support for the capital of the province of Cadiz, in Andalusia (Spain).

CEMR also presented its Manifesto for the elections to the European Parliament, aimed at local and regional governments. It consists of a list of key issues for local and regional authorities, ranging from public services to sustainable development to the economic crisis and social inclusion, and urges political parties to address these issues.



Photo: Superintanzam



Photo: European Commission

Blagoy Stanchev
Bulgaria



Photo: CEMR-CGRE

- It's important to find working models for the regions. One way of doing that is to meet other people and discuss the important issues.

Ursula Schwarzl
Austria



Photo: CEMR-CGRE

- I'm looking forward to meeting people and I'm excited of what I've seen in Malmö so far.

Michel Sabatier
France



Photo: CEMR-CGRE

- I'm representing India and Europe and hope to spread information about how much we need each other. I hope for a useful meeting in Malmö.

Angela Madsen-Jonson
Sweden



Photo: CEMR-CGRE

- I hope to bring back some useful ideas to my town. In Sweden we have to start getting in to our minds that we are a part of Europe, and that we need each other.

Marianne Schrijner
The Netherlands



Photo: CEMR-CGRE

- It's important that different municipalities of Europe meet to exchange perspectives. For example, how are we going to face the worries? What can we learn from each other?

Thriving or surviving!

Thriving or surviving? That was the title of the forum moderated by former mayor of Heidelberg Beate Weber. Local and regional authorities are face with increasing challenges ranging from demographic changes to the financial and economic crisis, climate change and pressures from national and European institutions.

We need a macro-regional cooperating system to handle the new challenges, said Cecilia Malmström, the Swedish minister of European Union Affairs. She stressed the importance of finding methods and projects to work for common goals, and to get people more interested in European questions.

The distance between Brussels and your own kitchen is not that big. We need to

get people to see that. I think that's the key to create committed citizens.

Eva Srejber the vice-president of the European Investment Bank talked about the bank as an investment partner, a funding partner in the strive for sustainable solutions. 85 %

We can see globalisation in two ways, is it a challenge or is it an opportunity?

of GDP in Europe is generated in the cities, and therefore we must focus on the cities. We can provide tailored solutions for local enquirements.

At the moment we are sitting in a part of Malmö where the energy is 100 percent renewable. This part of the city is all self sufficient in energy, said Håkan

Buskhe, chief executive officer of energy company E.ON Nordic and Sweden. *In the Western Harbor, Malmö shows that it is possible to change and make a difference.*

The managing director of the Gallup Organisation Europe, Robert Manchin, emphasized the importance of attitudes and that there is not such a thing as one European answer. All different countries bring something different to the table, and we all need to have a look at what we as individuals can do in a situation like this. *We can see globalisation in two ways, is it a challenge or is it an opportunity?*

Vassilios Koromantzios, the deputy mayor of Athens, brought up the very important notion of Europe as a unit, and that Europe needs to unite in its diversity. He also mentioned the different models with which regions and municipalities work today, the social model, the Scandinavian model, and the continental model. *It is important for us to create a European model, and not stay national,* Vassilios Koromantzios concluded.

The economic and financial crisis: impact on local and regional authorities

The general assembly is also the occasion for CEMR to launch new publications and studies, available at CEMR's stand.

One of them is the result of a survey CEMR has conducted among its members based on four questions

related to how the economic and financial crisis has affected towns and regions, and what measures have been taken in each country to overcome the crisis. The publication also includes a short overview of the European economic recovery plan proposed by the European Commission. The study is available in English.





Impressions of a colourful opening day





Photo: X-RAY/Leif Johansson

What will you follow today?

Local and regional governments are increasingly involved in co-operation development at a time when one billion human beings live off less than 1Euro per day.

Today's plenary session (PLENUM, 16:15) will therefore focus on international development: How to assess local and regional's actions? How to enhance the value of the role we, local and regional governments, play in poverty reduction in developing countries? Further to the plenary session, participants have the opportunity to learn more about cooperation development at CEMR's "international corner" located behind CEMR's stand.

Cohesion policy was mentioned several times during yesterday's debate. It will also be the theme of the parallel session (PLENUM, 14:30) entitled "Priorities for a new cohesion policy – beyond the urban-rural divide". Speakers will debate about the future of the cohesion policy as well as the divide between funding for urban and rural development, with one main question: where does the urban end, where does the rural

start? At the same time, in the Scania room, the session on the EU and its neighbours will focus on the European neighborhood and Partnership Instrument since many local and regional authorities in the EU share borders with non Member States. It will also illustrate CEMR's efforts to work with local and regional authorities from non EU Member States, especially in South East Europe.

Local and regional governments are the closest to our citizens, a statement supported by statistics showing that local elections show higher turn-outs than national or European polls. But how can we make our citizens participate more actively in the life of their community? That will be the core issue of the session on participation and inclusion (PLENUM, 09:30). The session will consist of two parts, the first looking at gender equality in our towns and regions, the second on social inclusion.

The parallel session (SCANIA, 09:30) will be dedicated to public services. Delivering efficient, reliable and affordable public service is the core mission of local and regional authorities. Not an easy mission at all times, but even more challenging in these days of demographic changes (migration, ageing, low fertility...).

The second parallel session on public services (SCANIA, 11:30) will address the burning issue of improving our public services while finding the best ways to evaluate the performance and controlling the expenses.

Being "fit for the future" includes having the best structures to fulfill our mission. This will be addressed at the session entitled local and regional government facing change (PLENUM, 11:30). It is the follow-up to CEMR's seminar on changes in local and regional structures held in Copenhagen, end of 2009. A study on this issue is available at CEMR's stand.

WHAT'S ON TODAY:

08.30-09.30 Meetings of national delegations

09.30-11.00 Technical Visits

09.30-11.00

Series 1 parallel sessions:
1A. Participation and inclusion – towards a deeper democracy
1B. Demographic change – what impact on our services and workforces?

11.30-13.00

Series 2 parallel sessions:
2A. Local and regional government facing change
2B. Focus on quality – improving and evaluating what we do

13.00-14.30 Lunch

14.00-16.00 Technical Visits

14.30-16.00

Series 3 parallel sessions:
3A. Priorities for a new cohesion policy – beyond the urban-rural divide
3B. The EU and its neighbours: co-operation for peace, stability and integration

16.15-18.00 Plenary Session I:
New roles, new partnerships for international development

19.30 Gala evening

Energetic technical visit?

Many visits took place alongside CEMR's general assembly.

It was an opportunity for participants to attend numerous study tours (list of tours), including one

on the environmentally friendly solutions developed to revitalize the Western Harbour district in Malmö. Sun, wind, water and waste generate the basic energy supply.

