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NEWSLETTER

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CEMR • EUROPÄISCHER GEMEINDETAG • ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX DU CCRE

A European City at heart

Hilde Zach, Mayor of the City of Innsbruck, on the significance of the General Assembly of CEMR and on Innsbruck as a city of congress.



Foto: Fikde

"I myself regard it altogether crucial that decision-makers exchange informations."

How will the General Assembly affect Innsbruck?

Once more, cities, municipalities and regions all over Europe are looking towards Innsbruck. This is proof that Innsbruck rightfully calls itself a "European City". I myself regard it altogether crucial that decision-makers exchange experiences and information. We can only gain from learning from each other.

Were there particular challenges you encountered while preparing the General Assembly?

Of course there were. The translations, simultaneous or otherwise, into eight languages are very complex and also quite costly. Which brings me to the next point: the funding. Fortunately we have found two main sponsors and several others. Thus the financial contribution of the city

of Innsbruck could be kept within bounds.

When did the preparatory work for the conference begin?

On the very day we knew we had made the race – that is, in Poznan in May 2003. My heartiest thanks, on this occasion, go out to Dr. Michael Bielowski. He stood by me in preparing the bid and ultimately in winning the race "for Innsbruck". And there is the team around Mag. Katrin Heiss, of course, to whom I am particularly grateful for preparing the conference so perfectly.

Does Innsbruck often play host to conferences of this magnitude?

Yes it does, I am glad to say. Every year numerous international congresses are held in Innsbruck, and the Congress Innsbruck deservedly was awarded the title "world's best

JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO



The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, will address CEMR's general assembly, this Wednesday 10 May 2006. Mr. Barroso will focus his intervention on public services and the role of local and regional governments in Europe.

Foto: CCRE

congress centre" on several occasions. Which means that there are real professionals working there. Our city's economy profits enormously from congress tourism. After all, Innsbruck, after Vienna, is the most important congress destination in Austria. ■

Poznań '03 was a success

Poznań was the venue of CEMR 2003 general assembly. The mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny, explains what it means to host such a big event.

Mr. Grobelny, what was it like for you to host CEMR's general assembly in Poznań, in 2003?

It was a great honour for Poznań. We received distinguished guests from the whole Europe. CEMR general assembly was a unique opportunity to establish direct contacts and share our experience.

What would you say Poznań gained from the general assembly?

CEMR general assembly was an opportunity to promote the city and demonstrate our experience and expertise in organizing international events. Thousands of guests and city residents watched and participated in a number of

special cultural events which accompanied the assembly. As a result, the cycle called „Imprezy warte Poznania" created especially for CEMR guests became a permanent element of the cultural calendar in Poznań.

It is only one of many examples of benefits for the city associated with the organization of the assembly in 2003. The prestige related to the status of the assembly organizer cannot be underestimated.

What do you remember mostly from the Poznań general assembly?

The opening ceremony was particularly memorable. I was overwhelmed both by the meeting with Valéry Gis-

card d'Estaing, who focused on critical contexts of the political situation associated with the EU enlargement, and the music accompanying the event. The music impressed everybody, both owing to the score by Wojciech Kilar and the interpretation of Orkiestra Amadeus, one of Poland's best export products.

What do you expect from the Innsbruck general assembly?

My expectations related to this year's assembly are mainly with the discussion on the European forum on the liberalization of local services of general interest (SLI). Complete liberalization is not in line with the



Foto: CCRE

"Complete liberalization of local SLIs is not in line with the principle of subsidiarity."

principle of subsidiarity, which is one of the basic principles of European democracy. Local communities must have their say as regards the way their local services are organized. It cannot be regulated only by the market. ■

ELISABETH GATEAU
SECRETARY GENERAL OF UCLG



The strong participation in this General Assembly reflects the commitment of CEMR, UCLG's European Section, to developing the local government agenda in Europe and internationally. This event not only stimulates strong cooperation between local authorities in Europe, but also strengthens the European contribution to debates at global level through United Cities and Local Governments, the world local government organisation. As the partner of the United Nations, UCLG and its members across the world will certainly be taking forward the discussions taking place in Innsbruck, particularly on Access to Basic Services and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

FRANÇOIS ZARAGOSSA
SECRETARY GENERAL OF AFCCRE



The main subject of CEMR's 23rd general assembly, the future of public services in Europe, meets the concerns of European citizens who expect Europe to set the rules for our continent to become a haven of solidarity. Local public services are an indispensable tool to strengthen local and regional cohesion, and cohesion between citizens, which in turn helps defeat all kinds of exclusions. I have also high expectations as towards the debates on the issue of local government in South East Europe.

ROBERTO DI GIOVAN PAOLO
SECRETARY GENERAL OF AICCRE



I was in Poznan, three years ago. On my way, I stopped in Warsaw to visit the remains of the Jewish ghetto. I then drove to Poznan, through the heart of Poland, from one town to another. Poznan's old town reminded me of Italian medieval towns, and its dishes with forest fruit were reminiscent of some Tuscan or Umbrian recipes... CEMR's general assembly is not only a political event for local and regional representatives; it is also the discovery of a town and of her inhabitants. I am looking forward to discovering Innsbruck and her citizens.

Welcome to CEMR

The mayor and governor of Vienna, Michael Häupl, has been president of CEMR since 2005. He believes it is CEMR's role to address a wide range of issues, from public services to the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The main image I keep of CEMR's last general assembly, in Poznan in 2003, is of hundreds of local and regional representatives from all over Europe talking to each other; swapping business cards and telephone numbers, talking about their respective experience in their municipalities or regions. This, in my view, is what CEMR general assemblies are all about!

Between 10 and 12 May 2006, some 1200 of us will debate issues that matter to us: What role for our towns and regions in tomorrow's European Union? How can we best deliver public services to our citizens as financial, legal and demographic factors combine to make it more and more difficult? Moreover, our general assembly will have an extra-

dimension since it will address two issues that illustrate the importance of CEMR's role: gender equality in Europe's towns and cities, and our contribution to the Millennium Development Goals.

Only CEMR could launch a charter to encourage local politicians to commit themselves to achieving true gender equality in their towns, only CEMR could be the channel through which Europe's local and regional government can speak as one on the Millennium Goals which commit all of us to tackle issues of hunger, poverty, pandemics like AIDS and malaria, and to improve the lives of hundreds of millions of slum-dwellers. Without cities and local government, these goals will not be achieved.



"Only CEMR could launch a charter to encourage local politicians to commit themselves to achieving true gender equality in their towns".

CEMR: 100.000 municipalities and regions

Every three years, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) holds its general assembly. As its 2006 general assembly opens, here is a brief summary of what CEMR does and how.

The members of CEMR are national associations of local and regional governments from over thirty European countries. The main aim of CEMR is to

promote a strong, united Europe based on local and regional self-government and democracy; a Europe in which decisions are taken as closely as possible

to its citizens, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. CEMR's work covers a wide range of themes, including public services, transport, regional policy, the environment, equal opportunities... CEMR is also active on the international stage. It is the European section of the world organisation of cities and municipalities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Membership is open to representative national associations of local and regional government from countries that belong to the Council of Europe. In addition to its members from EU states, CEMR has members from non EU countries (Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Ukraine, Serbia, Macedonia...)

To join CEMR, an association must formally apply to CEMR's policy committee. It must also demonstrate its representativity at the national level. CEMR members pay a yearly subscription fee based on the GNP and the size of the population of their country.

CEMR: a Europe with a local and a regional dimension.



The European Parliament's message to CEMR

The President of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell, highlights two issues addressed in Innsbruck: the future of public services and the Charter for gender equality in local life.



"services of general interest are an integral part of the European social model".

I am very glad to be able to address these few words to you within the framework of your XXIII General Assembly on the future of public services in Europe, and I can only regret that I cannot be here with you for the full three days.

The European Parliament believes that services of general interest are an

integral part of the European social model. The efficient, non-discriminatory provision of services of general interest is the sine qua non for securing the European Union's economic, social and regional integration.

Given the growing disquiet of European citizens with regard to their future and that of their children, the

need for the social debate is greater than ever, and I have no doubt that your work will help this debate to move forward.

CEMR has also chosen to devote this General Assembly to the issue of gender equality, establishing a 'European Charter for the Equality of Men and Women in Local Life'.

Decisive progress towards equality has unquestionably been made in recent years. But we still have a long way to go before we fully overcome the cultural, economic, educational, legal and political barriers which help perpetuate discrimination as far as women are concerned. There is no more appropriate level at which to be working than the local level, rooted as it is in daily life, if we really want to fight this discrimination at the root.

I am aware that other subjects too will be receiving your attention during this General Assembly, and while I am grateful that you have given me the chance to refer to one of two areas on which you will be working, I wish you every success with all of the work you are going to be doing here.

A framework directive for SGIs

For the president of the Committee of the Regions, social services of general interest should be excluded from the scope of the EU directive on services.

I am happy to be among you today. The Committee of Regions has for a long time had an excellent cooperation with CEMR. Today, your General Assembly touches on issues that are dear to me: the future of public services in Europe.

The Commission's presentation in April of last year of its altered proposition for the directive on services is, aside from the agreement on the financial outlook, one of the best bits of news for the European Union since the outcome of the referendums in France and the Netherlands.

The Committee of the Regions is all the more glad for the fact that we have renewed our appeal for exclusion of all social public services that are often under the control of local and regional governments, from the field of implementation of the planned directive. We have been heard, but



Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of the Regions

we cannot be satisfied with the status quo: what matters to local and regional governments is legal security for their activities as providers of public services. At present, on the basis only of existing treaties and with no legislation regarding SGIs, this security is not guaranteed.

We therefore require the adoption of a framework directive on SGIs that include public social services. This would allow for the European social system to be altered not for the worse, but for the better.

Local and regional governments were elected to take care, within the framework of social services, of aims of public interest that cannot be allowed to be ruled only by the laws of the market. These aims may be called equal opportunities, opposition to discrimination or protection of the weakest and solidarity.

JAN OLBRYCHT

MEMBER OF THE EU PARLIAMENT (POL)



I have been active in CEMR for many years; I believe that among other organisations

CEMR is the only one representing the interests of both local and regional governments from the whole Europe, not just the EU. I attended the CEMR General Assembly in Poznan in 2003 when Poland was not part of the EU yet, and I felt that CEMR was where Polish municipalities and regions could make their voice heard and meet their European counterparts. I will attend the General Assembly in Innsbruck to exchange views, share experience and discuss crucial issues such as the role of local and regional governments in the EU and the future of public services in the forum representing 35 European countries being members of the CEMR. I am happy to be part of it.

OLDRYCH VLASAK

MEMBER OF THE EU PARLIAMENT (CZE)



I have been active in local politics for more than ten years, mostly as a mayor.

The more I work for my town, the more I am convinced that those who prepare the legislation must listen to us who have to implement it. We, in Europe's towns, municipalities and regions, know best what impact such legislation can have on our citizen's daily lives.

As an MEP, I can say that this applies even more for the institutions involved in the European legislation process.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions establishes this link between those who make the law and those who implement it. This is why I have always supported CEMR and why I decided to take an active role in CEMR's general assembly, here in Innsbruck.



Foto: Innsbruck Tourismus

Heart of the Alps

Innsbruck is the commercial centre of Tyrol, home to a university, it hosted the Olympics twice – and was the Habsburgs' darling.

The construction of the emperor's palace in Innsbruck in the 15th century made the hitherto insignificant town a residential town. Innsbruck is characterised by living history, in connection to names such as Maximilian I. and Maria Theresia. It was here that Emperor Maximilian I. started to put his vision of a unique European centre of culture and communication into practise. Around 1500 he erected the Goldenes Dachl, the "golden roof" right in the middle of the historical centre. This roof has since become the symbol of Innsbruck. Under the rule of archduke Ferdinand II., from 1564 till 1595, members of the court started to sojourn in Innsbruck more and more. The archduke had the castle of Schloss Ambras redone as a renaissance castle, and nowadays it is one of

the most important cultural treasures of Europe.

Even though no regional duke resided in Innsbruck after 1665, the city lost none of its relevance. The construction of the university in 1669 and the remodeling of the residential palace under the rule of empress Maria Theresia was decisive for the town's current appearance. An appearance that has been marked by history. Innsbruck has seen it all: times of war and destruction as well as times of peace and prosperity. Nature, culture, sport and tradition all come together in Innsbruck, it is the commercial centre of Tyrol, has hosted the Olympic games twice (1964 and 1976), is home to a famed university and is a capital of tourism. And, perhaps most importantly, it is the heart of the Alps. ■

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CEMR 2006 – PROGRAM:

Wednesday May 10th		
15 h 00	OPENING CEREMONY (Saal Tirol)	
16 h 00	PLENARY OPENING SESSION (Saal Tirol) Which way forward for Europe? What role for local and regional government?	
18 h 00	Reception	
19 h 00	Tyrolean evening programme	
Thursday May 11th		
8 h 30 – 9 h 30	Meetings of national delegations	
9 h 30 – 10 h 30	FIRST PLENARY SESSION (Saal Tirol) Providing high quality public services for our citizens	
11 h 00 – 12 h 30	WORKSHOPS A Local and regional public services: sources of cohesion • Adapting to the demographic challenge (Saal Tirol) • Access for all to public services: dream or reality? (Saal Innsbruck) • Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable: learning from each other (Plenarsaal)	
12 h 30	Lunch	
14 h 00 – 15 h 00	SPECIAL SESSION (Saal Tirol) Local and regional authorities of South-East Europe	
15 h 00 – 16 h 30	WORKSHOPS B Adapting and financing local & regional public services • The challenge of finances (Saal Tirol) • Improving and evaluating our public services (Saal Innsbruck) • Delivering services to the citizens: what strategies, what results? Self-delivery and in-house provision, public-private partnerships, inter-communal cooperation, outsourcing, privatisation (Saal Brüssel)	
16 h 45 – 18 h 15	SPECIAL SESSION ON TWINNING: (Saal Tirol) Twinning and Social Inclusion: how to involve the entire population, how to reflect diversity	
17 h 00	Committee of Resolutions (for members of this committee only) (SAAL BRÜSSEL)	
20 h 00	Gala evening	
Friday May 12th		
9 h 30 – 11 h 00	SPECIAL SESSION ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: the European contribution to the millenium development goals campaign (Saal Tirol)	
11 h 00 – 12 h 00	Launch of the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life (Saal Tirol)	
12 h 00 – 13 h 00	CLOSING CEREMONY (Saal Tirol)	
13 h 15	Lunch	

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