

Suggestions for Mr Vlasak (Concluding Remarks)

- From my perspective as a former mayor and Vice-President of the CEMR as well as an active member of the EP Intergroup, this conference has proved to be an extremely valuable opportunity to learn from each other
- It is impossible to fully capture the interesting case studies that we have heard about and to reflect on the contributions my colleagues from across the EU made on how to foster an integrated approach to territorial governance and the urban-rural dynamics
- Let me try, by words of conclusion, to highlight a number of points that I feel are worth reflecting upon:
 - Urban and rural areas are becoming increasingly connected through issues such as housing, employment, education, transport and natural resources
 - Although urban-rural relations are not without tensions, there are new opportunities for partnerships of growth and sustainable development between urban and rural actors. This is particularly the case with regard to land use, housing and urban renewal, economic and commercial development; the protection of public space and the environment but also increasingly interesting for risk management, energy supply and the organisation and provision of public services
 - Such new partnerships are important not only for metropolitan growth areas but also for small- and medium-sized towns and rural communities
 - The forms these partnerships may take are varied and depend on the administrative and political traditions in our respective countries. Nevertheless, some elements were highlighted that make such new governance arrangements good governance: there needs to be a certain flexibility in terms of the geography and the type of organisational set up; they need to be based on trust, they need to include and reflect the interest of all partners involved; accountability must be considered alongside efficiency and finally they need to be based on a long-term strategy and commitment
 - Despite this diversity, the last discussion has clearly shown that there is scope for action at EU level to encourage and support urban-rural partnerships. We need to think carefully, whether we have the right balance and the right instruments, whether the EU regional and rural development policies are doing enough. The upcoming review of the EU budget and the community policies will provide ample opportunity to do so.
- Finally, I would like to highlight how fruitful and beneficial this type of cooperation between the European Parliament and the national and European associations of local and regional authorities such as the CEMR are. I very much hope we can build upon this partnership in the future.
- Let me finish by thanking all the speakers and chairs for their excellent contributions, to thank the Free State of Bavaria for their kind offer to host this conference, to thank the interpreters and to thank all of you for your participation.