



Photo: Malmö stad

Ilmar Reepalu, Mayor of Malmö

# Welcome to Malmö!

**Malmö and I are very proud to host CEMR's 24th general assembly. We are delighted to be the venue for what is the biggest local and regional event in Europe at a time when towns, cities and regions face crucial challenges.**

For three days, 1,000 local and regional representatives will debate here, all eager to share their experience and concerns with their peers.

During the nineties, Malmö went through a deep industrial and economic

crisis. Since then, Malmö has been transforming itself from an industrial to a sustainable city, and has hosted many international conferences on the theme. You will be able to join technical visits in the Western Harbour, a new city area that is built

with the highest ambitions for sustainability and in addition has become an international tourist attraction. But there are also many other options: one example is a study tour of transregional integration where participants will learn about the importance of cooperating rather than competing in a world with a global economy.

The final plenary session of the general assembly is entitled "The

future starts now!" How fitting... Yes, the future for our towns, cities and regions will start from 24 April; after three days of debates and discussions, we will all be able to get back home feeling stronger, better equipped to face the future.

**Ilmar Reepalu**  
Mayor of Malmö

## Fit for the future?

**The title of our general assembly in Malmö is "Fit for the Future?", and it looks at how Europe's local and regional governments are preparing themselves for the many changes and challenges they face – demographic, technological, climatic, legislative...**

However, until recently nobody could forecast the scale of the economic and financial earthquake that is now rocking our towns and regions; therefore, a few weeks ago we decided to address it at the general assembly: the crisis, what is being done about it in towns and regions, and the role they can play in overcoming it.

CEMR's general assembly is held every three years. It remains the lar-

gest forum of European local and regional government held over several days, it is the best place for local and regional representatives to meet their counterparts from all over Europe, to exchange ideas and experience with members of European institutions and experts in local and regional finance, environmental issues, social affairs and others.

Day in day out, we work on the widest range of issues: strengthening

the voice of towns and regions in the European Union, making sure EU legislation takes into account local and regional governments' concerns and needs, helping towns and regions develop in a more sustainable and more inclusive way, helping them absorb the shock of the economic crisis, promoting gender equality, improving our public services, modernising town twinning...

If you take a glance at our general assembly's programme, you will see that these issues are all within it. I welcome you where the pulse of Europe's towns and regions will be taken for the next three days!

**Michael Häupl**  
Mayor and Governor of Vienna  
President of CEMR



Photo: CEMR

Michael Häupl, Mayor and Governor of Vienna, President of CEMR

# Welded together by a spirit of solidarity



Photo: European Commission

## Message from Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Unfortunately I cannot be with you in Malmö for your General Assembly, but I would like nevertheless to convey a message to Europe's towns and regions.

We have embarked upon a decisive political process aimed at overcoming an unprecedented crisis. Since November, we have been working to prevent the collapse of the financial

system. We have proposed an economic recovery plan. We have agreed on a European framework. We have measures in the initial stages of deployment, and we gave their implementation a strong boost at the European Council in March. At the same time, the EU has taken the step of proposing that the G20 should work together to design a new international financial architecture.

This process sends a strong political signal: Europe is determined to win the battle against the crisis. It is also prepared to play the trump card of its financial solidarity.

To succeed, we must act on three fronts.

First, we must restore confidence in a revitalised, more transparent and better regulated financial system. We are making speedy progress. The Commission has already adopted a set of concrete initiatives aimed at reforming the current system, and further moves are in the pipeline. At world level, the challenge facing the G20 summit on 2 April in London was to lay the ground for a new global financial regulatory and economic governance framework. The political stakes were enormous.

Second, Europe has drawn up its battle lines on the real-economy front.

The ED's coordinated recovery plan will mobilise 3.3% of Europe's GDP in 2009 and 2010. The Commission has among other things proposed speeding up the ED's cohesion spending programmes: the Member States and the regions will receive advance payments totalling €11.2 billion in 2009.

The plan will now stimulate activity in the short term while at the same time pursuing the long-term objectives of competitiveness and sustainable growth. For we must not lose sight of the major challenges of tomorrow: the knowledge society, innovation, the green economy and energy security.

I would urge local and regional authorities to focus on these "high-return" investments. Which is why I am pleased that the ED has accepted the Commission's idea of allocating €5 billion to investment in strategic energy projects and to broadband Internet access in rural areas. It is you who are the most affected by this decision.

Third, we must fight on the social front, our chief priority. We must do everything we can to lessen the cost

of the recession for the European citizen.

We wish to find the means to help businesses retain their workforce; to help unemployed people find a new job; and to invest in skills. The Commission has set in motion a wide-ranging consultation process on these vital issues.

The European level can serve as a catalyst for a consensual approach with the social partners and all other stakeholders with a view to modernising our employment policies. To that end we are holding an employment summit with the social partners and the Council Presidency in May.

To conclude, I would note that, faced with the pressure of events, Europeans still have the reflex to unite and act as one. When we are welded together by a spirit of solidarity and cohesion, the European dimension - of which the single market and the euro are but two outstanding examples - has not only shown that it is highly effective but has also proved its great capacity to protect us all. It is here that lies our best chance of success, and the European regions will be one of the main agents of our recovery.

# EIB loans for sustainable communities



Photo: European Commission

**European cities and regions are facing challenges to find effective solutions for the fulfilment of sustainability objectives; especially as the level of incomes will deteriorate in the current financial and economic circumstances. The borrowing needs to achieve these objectives are therefore likely to increase rapidly.**

The European Investment Bank has traditionally supported the development of European cities and regions. Indeed, the Bank finances the typical global spectrum of urban investment sectors. Moreover, social housing, education and health fac-

ilities, energy efficiency in buildings, sustainable mobility solutions and rehabilitation of degraded urban infrastructures (like district heating, sewage and metro networks) are becoming increasingly central to the EIB's activity.

Within this framework, the Bank is convinced that: (i) sustainability is a starting point; (ii) a clear vision and integrated planning is necessary; and (iii) it is vital to secure funds through reliable, innovative and flexible financing products.

The Bank is leading several initiatives, shared notably with the European Commission, in order to harmonise and to accelerate urban regeneration, also considering the potential to involve private funds to work alongside public money. The

goal is to help local authorities to identify and prepare good bankable proposals.

Given the variety of ways in which it can contribute to investment, the EIB should be regarded as a strategic partner by stakeholders involved in sustainable urban and regional development. The Bank's final objective is to help local authorities improve the quality of their citizens' life and, therefore, it is open to understand local requirements and to fulfil, through different tailored products, a wide range of mid and long-term financial needs.

**Eva Srejber**  
*Vice President of the European Investment Bank (EIB)*





Photo: CEMR

# Let us build Europe together !

**The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is one of the most important partner associations for the Committee of the Regions (CoR).**

Over the years we have developed a close and efficient cooperation, and since 2002, CoR and CEMR sign action plans that are the root of a structured cooperation. On many issues, this relationship transforms itself into a strategic alliance, to the point that CEMR and CoR, through their joint political activities on issues such as the European Convention or the reform of Regional Policy, have succeeded in putting local and regional authorities at the heart of European debates.

We must keep working together and endeavour to address together the challenges that we will have to face in the coming months. The first one, the European elections, is an opportunity for us to try and explain to European citizens the importance of the elections and to convince them to vote. The economic crisis is the second challenge, since it is our dual responsibility to bring concrete solutions towards economic recovery and to shield our citizens from the crisis' impact. Our third common challenge is decentralised cooperation: here we have the perspective to shape a

world with more justice and solidarity, while showing that local and regional authorities play a key role in what has become a major issue.

I sincerely hope that CoR and CEMR will keep developing joint strategies and projects in order to make Europe closer to its citizens and to help local and regional authorities across Europe find concrete and efficient solutions to our citizens' main concerns.

**Luc Van den Brande**



*Luc Van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions of the EU*

## The City of Reykjavik in times of change

**The worldwide economic crisis hit the Icelandic economy last October. The economy had been booming for a number of years, enjoying a state of virtually no unemployment and fast rising living standards.**

While the crash of October came as a shock, it was evident that the economy was heading for a recession in 2008 and 2009. Already by mid-year it became evident that the tax revenue of the City of Reykjavik was considerably below expectations.

Against this backdrop, the new majority in the City Council decided, as early as August 2008, to set up a task force with the leaders of all political parties and to prepare a strategic plan to address the economic situation. The plan was adopted unanimously in the City Council in the midst of the dramatic events of last October. The thrust of the Action Plan was threefold.

- 1 Basic services for citizens secured
- 2 Unchanged user-fees
- 3 No layoffs of the City's employees

These principles have been the guiding lights of the City's policy making and the grounds for the preparation of the 2009 Budget. By the establishment of the task force, consensus policies ousted out conflict policies of the past. In times of uncertainties and unrest these messages of accord from the City Government were of considerable importance.

The Budget for 2009 was marred by the dire prospects for tax revenue and increasing spending on social assistance. A broad consensus was reached within the task force on the main features of the budget. Given the drop in tax revenue and the City's pledge to secure jobs, the 2009 Budget is extremely austere. In addition to spending cuts in all departments, further unallocated cuts were to be implemented in March. In order to reach the budgetary goals, it was painfully necessary to cut wage costs, mainly overtime, by 4%. The higher paid civil servants and coun-

cellors took on a 10% pay cut, while wages of the lowest paid employees remained unchanged. These are difficult measures, orchestrated in a fair and efficient manner. Our employees, at large, showed great understanding for the necessity of cutting wage costs as a way to secure jobs.

It is of utmost importance to keep a wakeful eye on the welfare of all citizens, especially children, at a time as ours in the City of Reykjavik. A special task force has been entrusted with this and reports regularly to the Mayor. Another team has been established to draw up a progressive recovery plan for the City.

These are times with new challenges for Reykjavik, as for other cities in the world. I am, however, convinced that Iceland and Reykjavik will sooner than later embark on the path of recovery, supported by its great infrastructure, natural resources and abundance of human and social capital.

**Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir**



*Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir  
Mayor of Reykjavik*



Photo: X-RAY/Leif Johansson

## Malmö - city of diversity and possibilities

### WHAT'S ON TODAY:

**09.30-14.30** Technical Visits

**15.00** Opening session

**15.30** Intermission - "5 minutes for reflection"

**15.45** Round table: Thriving or surviving? – meeting the international and European challenges

**18.00** Reception at the Congress Centre

**Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, is a commercial hub and a cosmopolitan metropolis. But with a population of 280,000 people who between them speak more than 100 languages and have roots linking them to more than 170 countries, this shouldn't come as a surprise.**

Malmö, which once belonged to the Danes, is first mentioned in writing in the 1170s. It grew in the following centuries from the size of a small village into a fortified town that played its part in the violent history of medieval period. Malmö was captured by King Magnus Eriksson of Sweden in 1332, only to fall back into Danish hands in 1360 under the reign of Danish king Valdemar Atterdag. But the tide finally turned in favour of the Swedes in 1658 when Karl X Gustav wrested control of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge from the Danish king.

Although much of its history is preserved in its architecture, Malmö is not an "old" city. It has undergone massive change at several levels, and will continue to do so. The most notable of these changes is the city's transformation from industrial city into a seat of higher learning, technology and modern housing. Malmö University, which first opened its doors in 1998, has in just a short period of time become Sweden's eighth-largest institution of higher education, with more than 21,000 students.

But in addition to Malmö's burgeoning population, the city itself is growing too, having found - and is consolidating - its position in the expanding Öresund region. Whole new districts are emerging and new housing areas are under construction. One of these is Västra Hamnen, a fascinating amalgam of different architectural styles and a pioneer in the field of eco-friendly housing. Sundspromenaden, new bathing spots and Sweden's second-tallest building, Santiago Calatrava's Turning Torso are just some of the examples of the diversity that Malmö has to offer. From Västra Hamnen you can also see Sweden's tallest construction, the Öresund Bridge.

### SO MUCH TO OFFER...

The city, the sea, the people and the joie de vivre - Malmö simply has so much to offer for people of all ages and interests.

City buzz or beach life? In Malmö you can enjoy both. In the city centre you will find Ribersborg, a two-kilometre sandy beach which has received the Blue Flag environmental certificate. In the summer months, people come here to sunbathe, swim, barbecue

or go jogging along the beach and its surrounding green belt. You can swim here in winter too, but we recommend a visit to Kallbadhuset's wood-fired sauna first!

For art and culture enthusiasts there is everything from Malmö Museums's wide and diverse range of galleries to Konsthallen, Rooseum and many more. For aficionados of design, there's the illustrious Form Design Center, which has its own shop and a varied programme of exhibitions all your round, to the eye-catching David Design and Formargruppen to name just a few.

Malmö's numerous parks are a key part of the city. In Kungsparken and Slottsparken (which border the old town centre) you will find canals, rare trees and - weather permitting - a leisurely crowd of people out for a stroll with their picnic baskets looking for that perfect spot in the grass. Pildammsparken's wide-open spaces and two large ponds attract many different species of birdlife and is occasionally a venue for fantastic light displays.

Möllevångstorget is the scene of Malmö's largest and liveliest open-air market, while around the square and in the neighbouring streets you will find stores and restaurants offering an array of tantalizing aromas and flavours from all corners of the world.