



Photo: EU Commission

North-South cooperation goes local!

If one conclusion came out of the plenary session on international development, it is that local and regional governments play an increasing role in this field.

The mayor of Stuttgart and vice president of CEMR Wolfgang Schuster praised CEMR for launching the platform of local and regional government for development and for its website that enables local authorities to find partners for north-south cooperation. *Local governments can*

also help the south on a daily basis, he added, via fair trade procurement or by taking steps to reduce global warming.

The representative of the European Commission, Denis Pourchet, described local authorities' role as crucial through their exper-

tise in health, water and primary education. The platform driven by CEMR is a great way to improve our dialogue with you, he added.

Can Europe's local authorities really make the difference in the South? "Yes" said Nandi Mayathula Khoza from the South African Local government association: *Our association already cooperates with some CEMR members. We have success stories, especially with VNG,*

including a project to help our towns deal with the effects of HIV/AIDS, and another one on housing.

For too long, cooperation was the work of national governments and NGOs alone, said the secretary general of United Cities and Local Government, Elisabeth Gateau. The results clearly show that this is not enough; local authorities cannot be simply a tool for cooperation, they must be full actors!

Beyond the EU

Dušica Perišić from the Association of local governments of the Republic of Macedonia moderated the session on the European Union and its neighbours.

She presented different examples of cooperation tools that exist for local governments, including CEMR's charter for gender equality at the local level and CEMR's new website on twinning (www.twinning.org). She also illustrated the importance of good collaboration between communities of the EU and outside the EU. *Pollution does not stop at the borders of the EU. Local and regional authorities must work together if they want to resolve issues with a regional dimension.*

Her comments were reiterated by the representative of the Arab

Towns Organisation, Ghassan Samman, who described climate change, growing poverty and unemployment among the challenges that require greater cooperation between communities.

Gisela Gauggel Robinson, the representative of DG for Enlargement of the European Commission, focused her statement on the enlargement process and the integration of new EU members. *We need to consolidate internally in order to integrate new Member States, she said.*

Serhiy Odarych, mayor of Cherkassy

(Ukraine), particularly stressed the readiness of Ukrainian cities and municipalities to work with those in the EU. Refik Rugeja, the representative of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) presented the mission of the network, which is to support communities to go beyond the barriers towards greater stability in Europe.

The representative of Marrakech, El Arbi Belkeziz, described the mission of the Mediterranean Commission of United Cities and Local Governments. This body aims to promote peace, solidarity and sustainable development.

The First vice-president of the Italian section of CEMR (AICCRE), Fabio Pellegrini, closed the session by stressing the need to promote better city diplomacy, which is often more effective than at the national level.



Equality and social inclusion

The chair, Aina Simonsen from the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, opened the session by mentioning that CEMR's general assembly should be a place for local and regional authorities to find creative ways to work towards inclusion.

CEMR's charter for equality was developed during 2005-2006 and was adopted in Innsbruck 2006. The charter should be used as a tool in local and regional authorities' equality work.

Jocelyne Bougeard, Chair of the CEMR commission "Women local elected representatives" stated that the fact that so many countries have contributed to the charter shows a true European will.

The political will makes it possible for us to make progress for an equal Europe, Jocelyne Bougeard concluded.

Her predecessor at CEMR, Vicenta Bosch Palanca emphasized the fact

that the charter is a political document where CEMR members have had their say. *It is a driving force, not just a guideline!*, she said with passion. Patrizia Dini, secretary of the Tuscan Federation of AICCRES in Italy, continued by saying *that the charter is a tool where women's presence in politics is acknowledged.*

The second part of the session was about new partnerships for social inclusion. Annemarie Jorritsma, Mayor of Almere, described her town's work towards social inclusion. Almere has focused on employment opportunities, helping to keep these employment opportunities present, and caring for the newly unemployed people.

Richard Kemp, Liverpool City Councillor, explained that the current crisis give us two different alternatives to act upon. Namely, trying to go back to "normal" as fast as possible, having more credits and increasing consumption, or choosing to take advantage of the crisis and learn from our mistakes, change our behavior in order to reach a sustainable economy, as well as a sustainable environment.

Jokin Bildarratz Sorron, Mayor of Tolosa, talked about acting in new and better ways in order to increase social inclusion. Carlos Dias Teixeira, Mayor of Loures, followed and described his region's actions for better inclusion of citizens in society, which included actions to identify the needs of vulnerable groups.



Which structures?

The session on Democracy and Governance was chaired by AFCCRE Director Christophe Chaillou. It focused on local and regional governments undergoing changes.

The Mayor of Reykjavik, Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, started speaking about how Iceland has been handling the financial crisis. Going from 1 % unemployment to 9 % needed serious action. *We needed a new way of thinking,* Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir said, and explained that they focused on coordinated actions, co-operation and consultation. *People*

are dynamic, creative and daring, and think that problems are there to be solved, she continued. *Co-operation for the common good is the key word!* Political Adviser to the State Secretary of Local Government of Sweden, Daniel Liljeberg brought up the challenges of demography, decentralization and finding the right staff for the right positions. *The solution is to regionalize: local and regional authorities should be the ones handling these issues,* Liljeberg said. *See how well cross-border co-operation has worked here in the Öresund region!*

Secretary General of AICCRES, Roberto Di Giovan Paolo stressed that energy should not be spent on finding a

scapegoat for the crisis, but rather on learning from it. *We cannot have a European welfare system that only works when things are going well. The responsibility should not be at a local level just for the sake of it – it should be there to give the citizens better rights!*

Emile Eicher, Mayor of the municipality of Munshausen, talked about important actors in the situation we are now facing, and shared his experiences of co-operating with government, parliament and SYVICOL, which is the Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities. Mårten Johansson, Mayor of Raseborg, Finland, brought up the issue of "size". How large should a municipality

be in order to survive? And how do you run your business so that it's efficient? In Raseborg they have focused on political objectives as in what, when and where, as well as operative tasks as in who and how.

Prof. Dr. Hellmut Wollman concluded this session mentioning the important differences between decentralization and deconcentration. He showed how Europe has big variations when it comes to how many people are employed by the state; in Germany only 12 % and in Portugal as many as 74 %.

Demographic change and public services

The fact that Europe is facing an ageing population and at the same time will be in need of skilled labour in the near future, was the topic for one of the sessions on demographic changes on Thursday. Planning carefully is necessary to cope, was the message to the delegates.

Ilija Batljan from the city of Nynäshamn in Sweden presented his report on the big changes in the coming decades. He pointed out three key issues to handle to be prepared. That is: the increased demand for healthcare, the age distribution of employees and the decrease in the working age population.

The coming 10-15 years will be a big challenge for Europe. I think we need to be proactive. In Sweden the average age among employees in the local authorities is 46 years. We also need to deal with the ageing baby boom generation, said Ilija Batljan.

Lenia Samuel, deputy Director General of DG Employment, European Commission, pinpointed the necessity to have a comprehensive strategy

such as better conditions for families, economical growth and a warm welcome of migrants to Europe. Lenia Samuel stressed the importance of noticing the challenges, but also of seeing the opportunities.

Three out of four older people would be more than happy to work as a volunteer within the local authorities. This is good to take into consideration, to let anyone who wants to work, do it, she said.

Jolanta Barska from Nysa in Poland gave some concrete examples of what you can do to make a town more attractive. Nysa is suffering from the fact that young people go away for studies and don't come back.

We created a development strategy, trying to get people to come back. We encourage investors to make infrastructure investments, and we also cooperate with various inhabitants' associations, trying to get people more involved in their town.

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, General Secretary, European Federation of Public Service Unions, talked about the importance of working towards a sustainable society that also includes the social dimension to create equal access to public services. She also mentioned the importance of creating a balanced workforce.



QUALITY

Quality does not leave out any aspect

has like many cities passed through the phase where modernist
 plan planning with the need for air and light overruling those of
 city and humaneness. At the time there was little awareness ab
 impact of demolishing a building or a whole block. Malmö's
 are now aware that when replacing old buildings with new, t
 a community might be uprooted and the soul of the city affe
 attention. If a new or a renewed city area is to be sustainable
 quality aspect has to be attended to: material and immaterial. T
 not make sense in itself but also as part of the city as a whole





What cohesion policy for tomorrow?

WHAT'S ON TODAY:

09.15-10.30 Plenary Session II:
Climate change – what can we do, what must we do?

10.30-11.30 Keynote address:
Economic recovery: leading the way to a third Industrial Revolution – Jeremy Rifkin

11.30-12.30 Plenary Session III:
New Horizons for Twinning in a Changing Europe

12.30-13.15 Final Plenary Session IV:

The future starts now!

Adoption of Final Declaration

13.15 Lunch

13.45-16.45 Technical Visit

As the current EU funding period draws to a close, one of the hottest debates is about the (not only financial) future of the cohesion policy.

The EU Commission representative David Sweet asked the audience's input in the current debate: *We have many questions and not all the answers as to the post-2013 cohesion policy: everything remains to be played for. Personally, I think the cohesion policy should apply to all regions since there are pockets of poverty in all regions, I am also against making a distinction between urban and rural areas.*

His views were echoed by the president of AFCCRE Louis Le Pensec: *We use a new word in France: "rurbanisation", to illustrate the fact*

that more and more rural and urban areas become intertwined. Louis Le Pensec also stressed that no regions should be excluded from the structural funds and that efficient and affordable public services constitute an essential tool of cohesion. He agreed with David Sweet that economic competitiveness should not be the only criterion to define access to EU funds.

But does cohesion policy actually produce tangible results? Though David Sweet admitted it is difficult to prove some programs really

work, the mayor of Havlickuv Brod, in the Czech Republic, Jana Fiserova showed participants the concrete benefits of structural funds in her town. For his part, Johannes Peinsteiner, mayor of St. Wolfgang, Austria, illustrated the tangible gains of cooperation between local authorities to revive areas in decline.

Finally, the secretary general of Eurocities (network of large cities), Paul Bevan, shared most speakers' view that drawing a line between urban and rural areas is not always ideal: *I would rather the future cohesion policy worked on the basis of "functional areas" defined by economic boundaries rather than administrative. Would it not make more sense?*

Focus on quality

How to have quality public service and how to measure its quality? Participants established the big differences within the continent. But all agreed on the need to give effective service on a low cost, to cope with the future.

What do we get for our money? asked Håkan Sörman, from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. And then he explained why the association

started to assess their core activities, such as schools and healthcare. *Statistics can be useful for the users. For example parents want to be able to choose the best school for their children. It's also an important democratic issue that you can check the level of healthcare you get and what you pay for,* said Håkan Sörman.

Andrzej Porawski, Association of Polish Cities, has experienced a big change in his life and in his country. Poland has gone from a non-democratic country to a country striving to rebuild, in a couple of decades. *We don't have your history. We had to*

start from scratch with everything. But we look at the rest of Europe to learn. Since the 1990's Poland has implemented modern governance and we are improving the lives of our citizens.

Gunnar Schwarting, Managing Director of the Association of Cities in Rheinland-Pfalz, stressed the importance of always putting the citizens in focus, while Derek Vaughan of the Welsh LGA explained that in Wales, the Local Government Association has been developing and promoting the concept of Excellence Wales for several years, building a broad base of support at national and local level.