



**COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONS
CONSEIL DES COMMUNES ET REGIONS D'EUROPE**

CEMR Position

Mid-term Review of the Lisbon Agenda - Message to the 2005 Spring Council –

**WORKING TOGETHER FOR
GROWTH AND JOBS
A NEW START FOR THE LISBON STRATEGY**

Brussels, March 2005

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Communication of the
European Commission COM (2005) 24

Summary

As an official recognised partner in the sectoral social dialogue at European level, representing the local and regional government sector, CEMR believes that local governments have a crucial role to play in implementing the Lisbon strategy and that they are key stakeholders in contributing to the strategy's success.

CEMR would like to strengthen its commitment in delivering the Lisbon agenda, while at the same time seeking a commitment from the European Commission and Member States to recognise more fully the role that local and regional authorities can play.

The European Commission could invite the Member States not only to involve the social partners and civil society in the preparation and implementation of their national Lisbon programmes, but also local and regional authorities.

*The **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR) represents the interests of European local and regional government. Its members are national associations of local and regional governments from over 30 countries*

1. Local and Regional Government's Role in Delivering the Lisbon Goals

As clearly set out in the European Commission's communication on the mid-term review of the Lisbon agenda, building effective partnerships, which mobilise the support and participation of stakeholders, is key to the Lisbon strategy's success. As the form of governance closest to the citizens of the EU, local and regional government have a vital role to play in communicating the Lisbon agenda's objectives.

Local and regional authorities are also crucial to the efficient implementation of all three pillars of the Lisbon strategy. In addition to being major employers in their own right, they have a key role in implementing policies in the following areas:

- Economic development
- Employment
- Innovation
- Education and youth
- Social inclusion and cohesion
- Environmental sustainability

They are also responsible for implementing structural funds programmes, which are an important tool for making an impact at local and regional level towards the Lisbon goals.

2. A Local and Regional Dimension in the Lisbon Agenda

The CEMR welcomes the Commission's recommendation in its communication on the mid-term review of the Lisbon agenda to stress that the responsibility for realising the Lisbon agenda lies with the Member States. Member States need to take ownership of the strategy and mobilise stakeholder support in drawing up the national Lisbon agendas.

The importance of the concept of ownership is one of the key messages from the mid-term review communication. Even though, as noted above, local and regional authorities do contribute to the Lisbon agenda, the level of ownership is low. However, this could be increased by, for example, **introducing a specific local guideline, or other such concrete steering mechanism, in the implementation package of the Lisbon strategy** to ensure local and regional authorities' genuine participation in planning and implementing the national Lisbon programmes. This could work in a similar way to the 'local employment guideline', which used to be part of the employment strategy, and provided a clear framework for local and regional players' participation in the process.

3. Involvement at the National Level

CEMR urges the government representatives responsible for coordinating Lisbon and taking the strategy forward ('Mr or Ms Lisbon') to involve stakeholders at all levels in delivering the Lisbon strategy. We urge Member States to enter into early dialogue with local government on their intended actions in the new Lisbon National Action Plans and related national strategies.

We welcome the Commission's companion document¹ which highlights the breadth of policy action recommendations that the Lisbon strategy covers and look forward to securing local government's role in developing flagship actions which are agreed at the Spring Council. These actions are likely to cover issues including life long learning, active ageing, public procurement, e-government, employment and entrepreneurship in schools.

CEMR welcomes the idea that Member States are urged to present their national Lisbon action programmes to national parliaments before adopting them. Local government should be actively engaged in this process. More details are needed on the Commission's intentions for the development of the open method of coordination. The process should not be a 'top down process', but should rather include the contributions of all levels of government and of the different types of actors. With a greater recognition of local authorities' role in these initiatives, there will be a greater sense of ownership, which in turn will help deliver the Lisbon agenda.

4. The balance between the three pillars (economic competitiveness, social cohesion and environmental sustainability)

The CEMR wishes to point out that competitiveness and growth is only one pillar of the Lisbon agenda. There is a need for synergy between the refocused Lisbon strategy and the reviews of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the Social Policy Agenda.

5. Involvement of the social partners

CEMR, as a recognised partner of the sectoral social dialogue at European level to represent local and regional government, is willing to contribute to the debate and to provide input to the Lisbon agenda process. The CEMR will prepare further comments and proposals to show to what extent local and regional authorities can help in achieving the identified objectives.

CEMR will organise a Policy Forum on the Lisbon Agenda in Autumn 2005. This Forum will provide a platform to local and regional politicians to contribute to the debate at European level and to show their commitment on how to achieve the objectives.

¹ « Lisbon Action Plan incorporating EU Lisbon Programme and recommendations for actions to Member States for inclusion in their national Lisbon Programmes ». Companion document to the Communication to the Spring European Council 2005 (SEC(2005)192)