Europe 2020: competitiveness, co-operation and cohesion for all regions

LOCAL INTERMEDIATE AUTHORITIES ACTING FOR EUROPE

OPEN DAYS 2010

www.cepli.eu
CEPLI: Recent History of European Integration

In spite of its youth, we have just celebrated the 8th edition of the “European Week of the Cities and regions - Open Days” which has already become a part of the history of European integration.

It was on the occasion of the 4th edition in 2003, when a group of 6 Local Intermediate Authorities of the EU lead by the Assembly of French Departments (ADF), the Coordination of Italian Provinces (CIP), the Assembly of German States (ZPA), the Province of Limburg, Province of Namur, and the Province of Liège (BE), considered something was missing in the decision-making process of the European Union. The Local Intermediate Authorities are efficiently managing large amounts of European funding but at that time, they were neither participating in the determination nor in the evaluation of the distribution of those funds. Not only were they ignored on the institutional floor but also their value was questioned. It was necessary to take action.

Lead by the ADF and with the Open Days as a platform, the national Associations of Local Intermediate Authorities reacted and in 2008 the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI) was funded in Avignon (France).

Today, after the celebration of its 9th annual Political Council in Berlin, CEPLI has turned into a first level actor on the European stage. CEPLI is the legitimate representative of the Local Intermediate Authorities of ten EU countries and the two international associations Arc Latin and PATENALIA. A bridge between the European Union and its territories, CEPLI represents the administrations that are closest to the citizens - a step forward to a more representative and democratic Europe where Local Intermediate Authorities have a voice and are taken into due account.

www.cepli.eu

Giuseppe Castiglione

President of the Union of Italian Provinces, president of the Province of Catania (Italy), member of the Committee of Regions’ Bureau and President of the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI)

The role of the Provinces for revival economic and development of the Country. Castiglione: “In synergy with the BEI to give an answer to the crisis”

“The economic crisis, that has cut strongly the budgets of the Provinces, and the Stability Pacts’ constraints, which prevent even spend available resources, require us to find innovative solutions to give answers to our communities, and to sustain the recovery of the Country with local investments.

The European Investment Bank, to give an example, is an institution that offers amazing opportunities to the local authorities, and it allows us to react to the crisis, without having to resort to these creative financial instruments, such as derivatives, whose dramatic effects are now clear. Moreover, BEI funds programs on areas that are a priority for the Provinces: I refer to the road and school infrastructures, to new energy sources, or to sustainable development.

Presently, all these issues are for our administrations the core of regional developments policies. But the same European strategy, EU 2020, asks us to rethink our policies to overcome the crisis by investing in Innovation and Research and Sustainable Development and Energy, and this revitalizes the synergy with the BEI by setting the calculation of new financial instruments in the next future.

Therefore, EU 2020 makes it clear that existing financial instruments will be reviewed in order to promote innovation, research and sustainable development at European level. The review will operate both in terms of investment rate and thematic priorities on the basis of 2020 goals.

In order to achieve these goals, European local and regional authorities play an active role in the promotion of actions in the Province’s field of competence, like environment, territory, employment policies, and energy in the context of European and international territorial cooperation. Finally, innovation in Public Administration is still one of the most important challenges we have to deal with and the idea that we are launching it is an Erasmus for young officers of Public Administration.

www.upinet.it

Interview

Participants to the debates

On the occasion of the 8th European Week of Regions and Cities, the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI) has organized a series of 6 debates which have involved a large consortia of 25 European Local Intermediate Authorities. Complex and innovative topics have been discussed, showing the commitment and also the importance of the involvement of local intermediate authorities in the current top issues of the European Union.

The 6 debates took place in the emblematic Bibliothèque Solvay in the heart of the European Quarter of Brussels. During three days, the Bibliothèque Solvay became the House of the European Union of Local Intermediate Authorities.

These were the participants by country:

- Belgium Provinces: Province of Liège, Province of Namur, Province of Vlaams-Brabant.
- German Kreis: Kreis Dahme-Spreewald, Kreis Hohenlohe-Odenwald-Tauber, Kreis Lippe, Kreis Steinfurt.
- Greek Prefecture: Prefecture of Kastoria.
- Hungarian County Council: Boros-Albajz Zampléhely County Council.
- Italian Provinces: Provincia di Alessandria, Province of Catania, Province of Campobasso, Province of Isernia, Province of La Spezia, Province of Tarlin, Luxembourg Province: Province of Luxembourg.
- Romanian Județ: Județ of Prahova.
- Spanish Diputaciones: Diputación de Badajoz, Diputación de Cáceres, Diputación de Castellón.
- British District: District of South Cambridgeshire.

These 25 authorities have different denominations but the same intermediate character; they are situated between the regions and municipalities. They share many similar competencies, working departments, projects and, above all, the same objective of service close to the citizens and European spirit.

Together with CEPLI, other national and international associations of Local Intermediate Authorities have co-organized the debates:
- Assembly of French Departments (ADF).
- Association of Walloon Provinces (APWR).
- International Association PATENALIA.
- National Union of County Councils of Romania (UNCR).
- German County Association (DLT).
- Union of Italian Provinces (UPI).

They share many similar competencies, working departments, projects and, above all, the same objective of service close to the citizens and European spirit.

Together with CEPLI, other national and international associations of Local Intermediate Authorities have co-organized the debates:

- Assembly of French Departments (ADF).
- Association of Walloon Provinces (APWR).
- International Association PATENALIA.
- National Union of County Councils of Romania (UNCR).
- German County Association (DLT).
- Union of Italian Provinces (UPI).

The review will operate both in terms of investment rate and thematic priorities on the basis of 2020 goals.

In order to achieve these goals, European local and regional authorities play an active role in the promotion of actions in the Province’s field of competence, like environment, territory, employment policies, and energy in the context of European and international territorial cooperation. Finally, innovation in Public Administration is still one of the most important challenges we have to deal with and the idea that we are launching it is an Erasmus for young officers of Public Administration.

www.upinet.it
**Partnership: Local Intermediate Authorities Mobilising Competitive Territories. Territorial planning as a competitiveness strategy**

Chair: Didier Ades

Speakers: Jean Louis Destans, President of the County Council of Eure, France, Mari no Fiasella, President of the Province of La Spezia, Italy, Marco D’Acri, councillor for international relations for the Province of Turin, Italy and Luigi Mazzuoto, President of the Province of Isernia.

With competitiveness and innovation the key factors to enhance the new Lisbon Strategy, bearing in mind the 2010 objectives that will be set up in the near future, at a local level, territorial planning is a well-known tool that has proven to provide realistic indicators regarding these key elements. In that perspective, Local Intermediate Authorities – those who operate between the territorial and municipal level, have a central position and capability of addressing these issues, amongst which territorial planning. The debate focused on putting together local stakeholders with European experts in order to shape a new bottom-up approach to tackle local competitiveness by confronting the current European approach with the real local needs.

Chairman Ades first stressed the importance of involving inhabitants in creating a positive image for territories – to accentuate the proud histories of provinces, and to create a sense of anticipation for the future.

‘Social fabric’

To open proceedings, Marco D’Acri explained that it was important during elections to consider his own province, Turin, as being an example of just how important it was to keep the transformation of territorial needs as being sustainable, and that environmental objectives needed to be achieved in the overarching goal of creating a single territorial plan. The social fabric of all territories needed to be taken into account, he added, and that it was vital to implement educational training for the youth. Mr D’Acri said that The Province of Turin is one of Italy’s 11 Provinces, which represents an intermediate level of government between municipalities and territories. The Province, lying in the north-west of the Italian peninsula on the border with the south-east of France, is the Province at the highest number of municipalities, in Italy the 11th in terms of size, of the 17,000 municipalities in Italy with the highest number of municipalities, is one of the largest in terms of size, and has a demographic density almost double than the Italian average. The Province of Turin, D’Acri argued, plays a role in the social and economic integration of the European Union, based on its actions on the principles contained in the Lisbon process, and in particular in the area of competitiveness and competitiveness strategies.

Jean Louis Destans took the wider perspective, highlighting the recent meeting between the French and Chinese EU authorities, and that this was a positive, noteworthy development. In trying to define the 2020 Strategy, he explained, competitiveness was vital, and how this could be used in the fight against poverty. Destans stressed that the topic of territorial planning must be placed in the context of a general movement towards metropolisation, resulting of a concentration of economic activities and population in some major cities which also tend to become places of reference for socialization. This metropolisation movement generates the emergence of a new metropolitan power that competes with local intermediate authorities’ power for territorial planning. The local intermediate authorities’ role is however essential to correct this polarization’s trend and play the role of an equilibrium local authority.

His own Department of Eure, France, he said, was only too familiar with the problems being faced, and that it was very important to avoid ‘no-man’s land’ areas, as some 60 per cent of the population lived in urban conurbations and the remaining 40 per cent lived elsewhere. The ever-increasing population of city dwelling, he argued, meant that the problems of territorial cohesion had not been addressed at a political level, because economic problems held sway – employment, quality of life, provision of services and childcare were obviously very important in Eure, he concluded.

‘New technologies’

Mr. Fiasella, President of the Province of La Spezia, was next to speak, and he described his territory as having favorable living conditions, and hold an important geographical position. Historically, the Gulf of La Spezia, between Genoa and Tuscany, has held a strategic role from a military point of view, as a Mediterranean Sea terminal. With the crisis in state-owned industries and economy, the province has had to consider its own development model, and from this has emerged the true role of the provinces and all the intermediary bodies: to guard the territory, to limit the abandonment of rural areas and to provide services and accessibility.

Mr. Fiasella acknowledged that the Province of La Spezia, who is trying to re-define rural-urban partnership and rural development – and competitiveness was key to the political decisions. The regional level, he said, offered greater opportunities for spatial coherence when planning infrastructure and development schemes and it can also secure more balanced rural-urban partnership and rural development – and competitiveness was key to this approach.

The debate was opened to questions from the floor, an audience member asked the panel for their thoughts on ‘town-planning tools’ – did they exist, and were they being used correctly? President Destans affirmed the existence of ‘town-planning tools’, but explained that their true benefits would become apparent only during the course of the next 10-15 years, which was again an example of the difficulties involved in reconciling long-term aims and immediate expectations.

**From left to right: Marino Fiasella, Jean Louis Destans, Marco D’Acri and Didier Ades**

Stressing the situation in the south of Italy, Mr. Mazzuto, President of the Province of Isernia acknowledged that there were indeed provinces and provinces that had been largely abandoned in his country, and asked how these areas could be encouraged once again to play their part on the international scene? After all, he added, if citizens were deciding to leave rural areas, it was obvious that they felt that there would be a better quality of life in cities. For this reason, it was very important to pay attention to the smaller provinces, he said, and to ensure that the citizens living in these territories were responsible for the supply chain.

**From left to right: Marino Fiasella, Jean Louis Destans, Marco D’Acri and Didier Ades**

‘Longer-term vision’

President Destans returned to the positive developments that were occurring in Eure, citing the negotiations under way on a high-speed train link from Rouen to Eure, the creation of a world-leading pharmaceutical centre, and that the involvement of all municipalities and cooperation and spatial planning were “absolutely vital”, along with encouraging innovation, territorial co-ordination. It was difficult, he added, to develop coherence between long-term aims and immediate expectations, and that longer-term vision was required.

More info: www.eustat.es
In this context of the fact that sustainable growth is a crucial issue for agencies responsible for local development, this debate made efforts to focus on pointing out recent local innovative policies to provide a new pathway which leads to strengthening local growth.

Chairman Rolf Fater was joined by Giuseppe Castiglione, President of the Union of Italian Provinces, President of the Province of Catania, Italy, and new President of the CEPLI, Eric Gautier, President of the County Council of Deux-Sèvres, France, Friedel Heuwinkel, Kreis Lippe-Landra-county president, Germany; Adwin Martens, Director of Waterstof Net, Hydrogen Region Flanders-South Netherlands, Province of Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium and Georges Pire, Vice-President of the Province of Liège, Belgium.

Taking as the foundation that sustainable development is now perceived as a transversal approach, a ‘must-have’ in new development projects and regarding the actual debate concerning how Europe may change in the decades to come, sustainable development is an important part of how policies are conceived and planned, and it is for this reason, according to stakeholders, that the -

Innovative policies essential for sustainable growth

Opening on this point was Georges Pire, responsible for the Province of Liège’s external relations, who told the panel that he felt sustainable development was the best policy for growth. His province, he explained, was home to around 200,000 citizens, and was at the ‘crossroads of the EU’, but was already benefiting hugely from ‘car sharing’ and other environmental schemes.

‘Assets and synergies’

However, he added that that fact that some territories grow faster than others, and in ways that do not always conform to economic theory, was a central issue in today’s economic climate, when policymakers were looking for ways to stimulate new and sustainable growth. He said he believed that provinces and regions grow in widely varying ways, and that the simple concentration of resources in a place is not sufficient for long-term sustainable growth. Regional and Provincial assets should be used and synergies exploited to make the difference, Mr. Pire argued, and public investment should prioritize longer-term impacts on productivity growth and combine measures in an ‘integrated way’, which would mean an important role for regional policies in shaping growth and economic recovery policies and challenging policy makers to implement policy reforms.

‘Growth and development’

Giuseppe Castiglione, President of the Union of Italian Provinces, President of the Province of Catania, Italy, and new President of the CEPLI, said that he felt a sustainable growth rate – a growth rate that allows the economy to expand without compromising the equilibrium of the natural system – was one of the most important and stimulating challenges facing local authorities. As growth and development must be fitted into a sustainability framework, a society that follows this process of economic development would obtain an increase in per capita income, quality of the environment, and general social wellbeing, advances in education, health, and quality of life and growth of self-esteem and self-respect. The more a province is developed, Mr. Castiglione said, the greater and the deeper are components of its welfare.

Mr. Castiglione took the opportunity to explain to the audience the projects that the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI) is implementing on a national level in the field of sustainable energy, the goal of which is the elaboration of renewable energy development plans by local administrations, which aims to achieve, by energy-saving policies, the objectives of the European climate and energy package, 20-20-20.

Mr. Castiglione also stressed that the European Commission had noted it is impossible to achieve the development objectives set without the support and the full involvement of local intermediate authorities. So, on 17 May, UPI signed the agreement with the European Commission that will act as a support structure for all the Italian provinces in their path towards sustainability. The Covenant of Mayors is a new governance model that assigns an essential role to the provinces - the results are good so far, with already more than 622 municipalities and 36 support structures signing up. Another notable success has been the ‘C@ntieri’ project, developed in 2009 by UPI, which had received a €12 million budget for 2010.

‘Local development’

Eric Gautier, President of the County Council of Deux-Sèvres, France, argued that the world-wide financial crisis had created a dire need for companies to remain competitive, and that this made it more difficult to have innovative policies to create sustainable growth, as this was not always business’s number-one priority. As far as Deux-Sèvres was concerned, the Department included many communes, and it was important not to invest in disproportionate projects, with energy and ecologi-
the province of Liège, Belgium

- Georges Pire, Vice-President of the Province of Liège, Belgium

- Eric Glaesser, President of the County Council of Deux-Sèvres, France

- Friedel Neuwinkel, Arne Lopez, Landrat-county president, Germany

- Paul-Emile Mottard

President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

The Open Days 2010 occuring during the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, he has been asked to answer a few questions about the role of intermediate local authorities in the European construction.

The Open Days 2010 occuring in Brussels during the belgian Presidency of the UK. What is the implication of your local intermediate authority, the provinces, to the presidency?

In Belgium, the organization of the Presidency of the European Union is assumed by the federal state and federal entities, the Communities and Regions. Local authorities are not much involved in the work of the Presidency.

Despite this, the period of the Belgian Presidency of the EU is an opportunity to bring a unique perspective on the activities of the provinces, that play an important role in the implementation of European policies.

How, specifically, the provinces and intermediate local authorities in general can contribute to these European policies?

The provinces are already involved in many European projects in very diverse business sectors: the economy, health, sustainable development, culture, society ... Their main feature is the proximity with the ground realities and the ability to give substance to the European policy for its citizens.

We often hear the thoughts of Communes, companies and citizens who deplore the technical character of Europe. The provinces are the best relay for EU to transpose the European policies.

Chairman Fater, in conclusion, said that he felt sure that the debate had shown that innovation was the key to getting Europe out of the economic doldrums and back on the road to sustainable growth. Agencies responsible for local development should obviously bear this in mind, he added, as it was also at the heart of both the Europe 2020 and European Commission’s own innovation strategy.

Interview

Paul-Emile Mottard

President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

Very specifically, these actions may involve the inclusion of underprivileged people on the job market, the organization of a network of 21 schools or health care across borders, even the development of fuel to the hydrogen for cars and public transport. The examples are countless but not sufficiently highlighted.

Do you feel that the EU communicates enough about these “success stories”? That is the paradox. We lead daily policies that give meaning to the model of European development, the policy of social, economic and territorial cohesion, but at the same time the national and European authorities do not see enough interest they have partner with us. Collaboration should be strengthened and we must, for our part, better connect these projects we are implementing.

This is one of the essential roles of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities, CEPLI, which already through seminars and workshops during the Open Days, types of action should be strengthened to bring our expertise to the implementation of European policies.

www.apw.be

The provinces are already involved in many European projects in very diverse business sectors: the economy, health, sustainable development, culture, society ... Their main feature is the proximity with the ground realities and the ability to give substance to the European policy for its citizens.

We often hear the thoughts of Communes, companies and citizens who deplore the technical character of Europe. The provinces are the best relay for EU to transpose the European policies.

Chairman Fater, in conclusion, said that he felt sure that the debate had shown that innovation was the key to getting Europe out of the economic doldrums and back on the road to sustainable growth. Agencies responsible for local development should obviously bear this in mind, he added, as it was also at the heart of both the Europe 2020 and European Commission’s own innovation strategy.

Interview Paul-Emile Mottard President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

Very specifically, these actions may involve the inclusion of underprivileged people on the job market, the organization of a network of 21 schools or health care across borders, even the development of fuel to the hydrogen for cars and public transport. The examples are countless but not sufficiently highlighted.

Do you feel that the EU communicates enough about these “success stories”? That is the paradox. We lead daily policies that give meaning to the model of European development, the policy of social, economic and territorial cohesion, but at the same time the national and European authorities do not see enough interest they have partner with us. Collaboration should be strengthened and we must, for our part, better connect these projects we are implementing.

This is one of the essential roles of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities, CEPLI, which already through seminars and workshops during the Open Days, types of action should be strengthened to bring our expertise to the implementation of European policies.

www.apw.be

The provinces are already involved in many European projects in very diverse business sectors: the economy, health, sustainable development, culture, society ... Their main feature is the proximity with the ground realities and the ability to give substance to the European policy for its citizens.

We often hear the thoughts of Communes, companies and citizens who deplore the technical character of Europe. The provinces are the best relay for EU to transpose the European policies.

Chairman Fater, in conclusion, said that he felt sure that the debate had shown that innovation was the key to getting Europe out of the economic doldrums and back on the road to sustainable growth. Agencies responsible for local development should obviously bear this in mind, he added, as it was also at the heart of both the Europe 2020 and European Commission’s own innovation strategy.

Interview Paul-Emile Mottard President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

Very specifically, these actions may involve the inclusion of underprivileged people on the job market, the organization of a network of 21 schools or health care across borders, even the development of fuel to the hydrogen for cars and public transport. The examples are countless but not sufficiently highlighted.

Do you feel that the EU communicates enough about these “success stories”? That is the paradox. We lead daily policies that give meaning to the model of European development, the policy of social, economic and territorial cohesion, but at the same time the national and European authorities do not see enough interest they have partner with us. Collaboration should be strengthened and we must, for our part, better connect these projects we are implementing.

This is one of the essential roles of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities, CEPLI, which already through seminars and workshops during the Open Days, types of action should be strengthened to bring our expertise to the implementation of European policies.

www.apw.be

The provinces are already involved in many European projects in very diverse business sectors: the economy, health, sustainable development, culture, society ... Their main feature is the proximity with the ground realities and the ability to give substance to the European policy for its citizens.

We often hear the thoughts of Communes, companies and citizens who deplore the technical character of Europe. The provinces are the best relay for EU to transpose the European policies.

Chairman Fater, in conclusion, said that he felt sure that the debate had shown that innovation was the key to getting Europe out of the economic doldrums and back on the road to sustainable growth. Agencies responsible for local development should obviously bear this in mind, he added, as it was also at the heart of both the Europe 2020 and European Commission’s own innovation strategy.

Interview Paul-Emile Mottard President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

Very specifically, these actions may involve the inclusion of underprivileged people on the job market, the organization of a network of 21 schools or health care across borders, even the development of fuel to the hydrogen for cars and public transport. The examples are countless but not sufficiently highlighted.

Do you feel that the EU communicates enough about these “success stories”? That is the paradox. We lead daily policies that give meaning to the model of European development, the policy of social, economic and territorial cohesion, but at the same time the national and European authorities do not see enough interest they have partner with us. Collaboration should be strengthened and we must, for our part, better connect these projects we are implementing.

This is one of the essential roles of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities, CEPLI, which already through seminars and workshops during the Open Days, types of action should be strengthened to bring our expertise to the implementation of European policies.

www.apw.be

The provinces are already involved in many European projects in very diverse business sectors: the economy, health, sustainable development, culture, society ... Their main feature is the proximity with the ground realities and the ability to give substance to the European policy for its citizens.

We often hear the thoughts of Communes, companies and citizens who deplore the technical character of Europe. The provinces are the best relay for EU to transpose the European policies.

Chairman Fater, in conclusion, said that he felt sure that the debate had shown that innovation was the key to getting Europe out of the economic doldrums and back on the road to sustainable growth. Agencies responsible for local development should obviously bear this in mind, he added, as it was also at the heart of both the Europe 2020 and European Commission’s own innovation strategy.

Interview Paul-Emile Mottard President of the Association of Walloon provinces (Belgium), founding member and Premier Vice-President of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI)

Very specifically, these actions may involve the inclusion of underprivileged people on the job market, the organization of a network of 21 schools or health care across borders, even the development of fuel to the hydrogen for cars and public transport. The examples are countless but not sufficiently highlighted.

Do you feel that the EU communicates enough about these “success stories”? That is the paradox. We lead daily policies that give meaning to the model of European development, the policy of social, economic and territorial cohesion, but at the same time the national and European authorities do not see enough interest they have partner with us. Collaboration should be strengthened and we must, for our part, better connect these projects we are implementing.

This is one of the essential roles of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities, CEPLI, which already through seminars and workshops during the Open Days, types of action should be strengthened to bring our expertise to the implementation of European policies.

www.apw.be
Partnership: Local Intermediate Authorities - Driving Territorial Cooperation

Since its creation as part of the cohesion policy of the European Union, INTERREG and other co-operation programmes are at the origin of the involvement of local governments in numerous actions of territorial co-operation.

Local Intermediate Authorities (LIAs) significantly contributed to the development of transnational and cross-border cooperation, bringing a very concrete dimension to the process of proliferation of cross-border and inter-territorial cooperation by municipalities, LIAs and regions in Europe. Mr. Damm added that, as far as the development of cross border and inter-territorial cooperation by local authorities and regions in Europe was concerned, the past two decades had witnessed major growth in such cooperation as well as an increase in the diversity of forms of co-operation. However, he further added, there was not yet a systematic overview of different types of co-operation and how they are best used in practice. Clarification, in both conceptual and empirical terms was required, he said, of the process of proliferation of cross border and inter-territorial cooperation by municipalities, LIAs and regions in Europe.

Mr. Salez opened the discussion by stressing that it was important to acknowledge that cooperation obviously led to improved EU integration, and more flexibility for local intermediate authorities. The Lisbon Treaty, he said, had defined territorial co-operation as being integral to the EU, and that more and more importance was being acceded to territories and regions. What, then, was the role and place of local intermediate authorities?

‘Polycentric urban centres’

Hans Niessen, Director of l’Euregio Meuse-Rhine, explained that his Province was a very ‘green’ territory – local authorities, he felt, had a very significant role to play in terms of combating climate change, and that his Province had found, for example, that positive responses could be delivered both via ‘in-house activities’ (such as energy use and supply, waste) and the external services they provide and influence (planning, transport, waste, energy efficiency services and advice and housing). In addition, he said, Campobasso was a territory that sought to protect the weakest and most vulnerable members of its society, and that inter-community projects were definitely the way forward to achieve this.

‘Exchanging experience’

Gilbert Mitterrand, Vice-President of France’s Gironde Department, said that it was vital for territories to exchange experiences and focus on co-operation; dual development of the region was a major concern, he explai-
OPEN DAYS 2010
6 October 2010, 11:15-13:00

Partnership mapping a new Europe

OPEN DAYS 2010
6 October 2010, 14:30-17:00

nected to interactions between learning processes, institutions and spatial patterns of innovative activities. Geographical, organizational and institutional proximities related to the effectiveness of localized innovation systems, and the institutional framework was of particular importance in this context owing to the fact that such innovation systems are grounded on collective action at a territorial level and rely upon shared behavioural patterns.

Daniel Ledent, President of the Provincial College of the Province of Luxembourg, said that the majority of European scholars accept that the EU operated at several different administrative levels and exhibited some features of ‘governance’. However, he added, they disagreed, often fundamentally, about the precise relationships between activities at different levels. However, the EU, in Ledent’s opinion, had evolved into a system of multi-level governance as opposed to state-led government, but that it still remained an eminently European governance. ‘Territories as innovators’ Terrode spoke again next, and he touched on the relationship between technological and organizational innovation, and territories. This relationship, he argued, was connected to interactions between learning processes, institutions and spatial patterns of innovative activities. Geographical, organizational and institutional proximities related to the effectiveness of localized innovation systems, and the institutional framework was of particular importance in this context owing to the fact that such innovation systems are grounded on collective action at a territorial level and rely upon shared behavioural patterns.

Daniel Ledent, President of the Provincial College of the Province of Luxembourg, said that the majority of European scholars accept that the EU operated at several different administrative levels and exhibited some features of ‘governance’. However, he added, they disagreed, often fundamentally, about the precise relationships between activities at different levels. However, the EU, in Ledent’s opinion, had evolved into a system of multi-level governance as opposed to state-led government, but that it still remained an eminently European governance.

Territories as innovators’ Terrode spoke again next, and he touched on the relationship between technological and organizational innovation, and territories. This relationship, he argued, was connected to interactions between learning processes, institutions and spatial patterns of innovative activities. Geographical, organizational and institutional proximities related to the effectiveness of localized innovation systems, and the institutional framework was of particular importance in this context owing to the fact that such innovation systems are grounded on collective action at a territorial level and rely upon shared behavioural patterns.

Daniel Ledent, President of the Provincial College of the Province of Luxembourg, said that the majority of European scholars accept that the EU operated at several different administrative levels and exhibited some features of ‘governance’. However, he added, they disagreed, often fundamentally, about the precise relationships between activities at different levels. However, the EU, in Ledent’s opinion, had evolved into a system of multi-level governance as opposed to state-led government, but that it still remained an eminently European governance. ‘Territories as innovators’ Terrode spoke again next, and he touched on the relationship between technological and organizational innovation, and territories. This relationship, he argued, was connected to interactions between learning processes, institutions and spatial patterns of innovative activities. Geographical, organizational and institutional proximities related to the effectiveness of localized innovation systems, and the institutional framework was of particular importance in this context owing to the fact that such innovation systems are grounded on collective action at a territorial level and rely upon shared behavioural patterns.

Daniel Ledent, President of the Provincial College of the Province of Luxembourg, said that the majority of European scholars accept that the EU operated at several different administrative levels and exhibited some features of ‘governance’. However, he added, they disagreed, often fundamentally, about the precise relationships between activities at different levels. However, the EU, in Ledent’s opinion, had evolved into a system of multi-level governance as opposed to state-led government, but that it still remained an eminently European governance.
The framework of cohesion policy was vague, as necessary to highlight that the current framework was not only depending on the existence of a geographical territory, but also taking into account the challenges and economic potentialities to reinforce growth and competitiveness. A modern regional policy must keep in mind high opportunity regions and their potential. EU policy must empower regions to fully utilize their own economic strength and actively tackle new challenges such as climate change. Support for strong regions in the form of funding, policy or administrative transparency will make a major contribution to the EU wide achievement of European Union goals in terms of a more sustainable economic development. Europe, he concluded, was a project of civilization, and long may that continue.

Partenalia is a network of 21 Local Intermediate Authorities of the EU that aims to facilitate cooperation among its members and to approach them to the Europe reality in order to improve their local policies. It was created in 1993 and since March 2010 it has been established as International Association under Belgian law, Partenalia International Association is a founder member of CEPLI.

To learn more about Partenalia and its participation in the Open Days, we met with its President, Juan Andrés Tovar, President of the Diputación de Cáceres (Spain).

Mr. President, could you introduce Partenalia: What is special about this network?

Today, Partenalia is the only European generic network of supralocal authorities. It is a general network open to Local Intermediate Authorities from all Europe and its activities are divided into three very broad areas: territorial development, economy and innovation and social affairs.

You where elected President of Partenalia in 2005. How has the network changed since then? Partenalia has experienced over the past year a major change in its structure and functioning. The aims: increase its effectiveness and maximize the resources provided by its partners. After a very thoughtful restructuring process, we have become an International Association under Belgian law, which has confirmed its legal personality and has opened a broad new range of possibilities, especially the participation in European programs and access to financing.

As a result of this moment, Partenalia has become a European reference for local governments who have concerns beyond their borders and are not happy with a passive participation in building a united Europe. We are showing by the fact that local governments have much to contribute to Europe, that we know how to organize ourselves and that through associativism we can take our voice from the local to the highest institutions and present projects of high European added value. All this at a time when local authorities, and especially the LIAs, its role, its very existence, are at the heart of the debate in all Europe. Local intermediate authorities are the great unknowns in Europe. The work of integration and cohesion that we have been developing for almost two centuries is not recognized. The exception of the municipalities that we serve, we are an invisible government.

Nevertheless, we obtain the best reviews in terms of efficiency in our management, especially with European funds, and our municipalities and citizens are aware of the work we do.
Partnership: Local Intermediate Authorities - Key Actors for Cohesion

Innovative policies for territorial cohesion

The Bibliothèque Solvay, in Parc Leopold, Brussels, was the beautiful and historic venue for this debate organized under the umbrella of CEPLI, by Diputación de Badajoz and the Social Affairs group of the International Association PARTENALIA. The initiative brought together more than 50 stakeholders drawn from a wide range of European and international organizations.

The current economic crisis and the new social, labour and territorial needs have fostered and enhanced the role of local intermediate governments as key actors for cohesion. These governments are aware of the importance of developing innovative territorial strategies to help their municipalities and search for common solutions. The economic crisis has made drawing up a territorial consensus more relevant than ever.

The decrease of resources and the increase of demands have obliged the local intermediate authorities to optimize any available means in order to face the consequences of the crisis and to improve the territorial cohesion.

The debate was chaired by Beata Bibrowska, EU Policy & Project Expert, head of FP7 Department, University of Brussels, and the panelists were Luigi Mazutto, President of Provincia di Isernia, Italy; Mircea Cosma, President of the Judet of Prahova, Romania; Vicente Aparici, Vice-President of Diputación de Castellón, Spain and Maria José Hormigo, EU Policy & Project Expert, head of FP7 Department, University of Brussels and the umbrella of CEPLI, by Diputación de Badajoz and the Social Affairs group of the International Association PARTENALIA. The initiative brought together more than 50 stakeholders drawn from a wide range of European and international organizations.

The current economic crisis and the new social, labour and territorial needs have fostered and enhanced the role of local intermediate governments as key actors for cohesion. These governments are aware of the importance of developing innovative territorial strategies to help their municipalities and search for common solutions. The economic crisis has made drawing up a territorial consensus more relevant than ever.

Introduction

Vicente Aparici, as member of Political Council of Partenalia, co-organizer of the debate, officially opened the debate addressing the role of Local Intermediate Authorities (LIAs) in the framework of social cohesion. Mr. Aparici said that Partenalia, in the only generalist European network of Local Intermediate Authorities, strengthened the role played by intermediate local administrations in the process of European construction, promoting and implementing EU policies at local level.

Responds to the need and willingness of its members to cooperate at EU level was Partenalia’s purpose, he added, to exchange knowledge and best practices, develop transnational joint projects and actions, and defend common demands to EU institutions.

Partenalia’s purpose, according to Mr. Aparici, is to underline the added value that local intermediate administrations can bring into the implementation of EU policies at the local level and by transferring local messages to the EU sphere.

Introducing to the debate, Beata Bibrowska reminded that 2010 was a very special year for the EU, with the Lisbon Treaty coming into force, and the launch of the EU 2020 Strategy in March, and that this should be the real basis for improved co-operation from this year onwards.

The debate was shared into 3 main parts:

- Role of the LIAs in the cohesion policy – perspective of EU 2020 Strategy.
- Post crisis exit strategies
- Innovative projects and initiatives at local level

The current situation in the EU territories – Post crisis exit strategies

Luigi Mazutto drew attention to the worldwide financial crisis, the effect that this had had upon his own territory, but stressed that the province had been able to recover thanks to significant investments made and its plans for future priority investments. LIAs had helped to streamline companies, organize discussions to promote a series of initiatives, as well as developing new financial instruments and training programmes.

Maria José Hormigo stressed the role of Spanish LIAs in the process of crisis management. She presented an innovative manner of territory management in the time of crisis – by polling financial and human resources by local authorities in her territory.

Vicente Aparici commented then on more structural problems that his territory is facing: unemployment and depopulation in the mountain areas. These areas suffer from “digital gap”, clearly difficult access to the education and not strong entrepreneurial structure. The local government will focus both financial and political efforts in the future to redynamize these territories.

“Innovative projects at local level.

Mircea Cosma cited Prahova, which is north of Bucharest, as being a very important tourist province, with more than 800,000 citizens and three refineries, with a streamline capacity. The 2002 crisis was followed by the most recent financial meltdown. Mr. Cosma explained, but added that Prahova had managed, thanks to a 600 million euro investment, to restructure a largely military industry into a civilian one, many jobs created thanks to territorial co-operation.

Vicente Aparici then spoke again, expressing his satisfaction that his Castellón province and Castellón city were very happy with the EU and national funding that had been received for his tiny but highly populated seaside and mountainous province, which had suffered from heavy unemployment. Indeed, Castellón has an impressive experience in the management of the EU funding: the county has participated in YOUTH for Europe project, Town Twinning, CESAD project: this last one financed by European Social Fund.

Mr. Aparici commented on CEDES project, “Creation of Economic and Social Promotion Centres in the municipalities of the province of Castellón” an initiative co-financed by the ERDF lead and coordinated by the County Castellón, with a total budget of MORE than 4 mio€.

In his intervention, Mr. Landabaso emphasized the important role played by Local Intermediate Authorities (LIAs) in the EU regional policy. According to Mr. Landabaso, it is necessary to learn from the lessons of the Lisbon Strategy, the aims of which were not met on time because the transition from big political goals to the reality of territories, from theory to concrete action on behalf of citizens, was missing.

With the new Europe 2020 Strategy, it is necessary to find a way to more effectively integrate Local Intermediate Authorities. Mr. Landabaso added. The latter are the closest to individual territories which they therefore know and understand better and, therefore, can help to prevent the mistakes of the Lisbon Strategy being repeated.

For real integration in European politics, it is insufficient to merely demand of local administrations how much money they have to realize activities inside wide investment frameworks, we must also ask for their ideas and plans, once they have understood the priorities of European policies.

Therefore, the role of the LIAs must be based on their capacities.

Planning capacity

The first thing is to have ideas, and to have ideas it is necessary to bear in mind which are the strategies that must guide those ideas. Local governments must internalize the European strategy via the documents that the Commission publishes on Europe 2020. Taking those guidelines into account, they will be able to contribute their own ideas, based on their better knowledge of the territory, its needs and capacities and then request the financing. In short – ideas first, then money.

As an example, Mr. Landabaso informed the debate participants about the publication that very morning, 7 October, of two Commission ‘Rapport’ Communications concerning the Europe 2020 Strategy – one on a common European strategy concerning innovation, ‘Innovation Union’, and other about the contribution made by European regional policy to innovation and intelligent growth. Awareness of these Communications must be raised in order to successfully suggest proposals to the EU.

Co-operation capacity

According to Mr. Landabaso, nobody can work on the new Europe 2020 Strategy framework without co-operation. Besides, during this financial crisis, it is necessary to work harder to develop a system of effective governance, where all administrations co-operate and join forces to exploit complementarities. Working on co-operation, they will be able to develop the most innovative projects to help us overcome the crisis.

The example of the LIAs and their efforts to innovate in Europe promote the abovementioned efficiency.
was fundamental to finding solutions to the issue of unemployment. An agreement had been signed, he further added, with 29 other municipalities agreeing to co-operate on employment issues.

Maria José Hormigo stressed again the importance of PARTENALIA – the network which enables the LIAs to exchange the good practices of the management of the territorials between the members.

Ms. Hormigo commented on the project type “fast track” IMODI – the project financed by the European Commission which main goal is to reduce the digital gap in the rural and mountainous zones.

LIAs and future cohesion policy.

Ms. Bilibowska briefly introduced to this part -how LIAs see their role in the future cohesion policy in the context of the implementation of the new 2020 strategy and its ambitious goals. How they can participate? Which prioriti es will be important to finance in the future?

LIAs, Ms. Cosma continued, in fact carried out activities that were frequently not ‘visible’ to citizens, and were not represented in EU institutions, so such partnerships were a very important part of ensuring that citizens were kept informed.

Mr. Aparici said that in Spain LIAs can’t for the moment directly participate nor be consulted on OP for ERDF. Mr. Aparici said this was a new stake and need to take into the consideration the knowledge of territory by LIAs when national and regional government will prepare the future Ops. Mr. Aparici has the opinion of Mr. Landabaso the shape of future funding for the cohesion and territorial policy must be done with LIAs.

Aparici said that the networks as CEPI or PARTENALIA will also certainly represent the LIAs in this new process.

Ms. Hormigo presented the position of Badajoz – the EU territorial and cohesion policy should continue to contribute to reduce the gaps in economic, territorial and social development in Europe she said.

The future EU cohesion policy should promote the sustainable development and employment.

She said this new financial instrument should continue to reinforce the less developed regions and a specific attention must be paid to the regions in “phase out” – these regions can’t suffer from loss of the EU funding.

The objective “Regional competitiveness and employment” should continue to reinforce in EU the competitiveness, innovation and social cohesion. Maria José stressed on the importance of the INTERREG funding.

She underlined that the cohesion policy should be based on subsidiarity and most important paper of LIAs in this process - LIAs should be present in programming , implementing and evaluation of the cohesion policy. The Ops should be based on the bottom to up approach and active participation of all stakeholders should be ensured.

Mr. Mazzuto then went on to explain that the structure of the Lisbon Treaty was revised in order to achieve 2020 goals, as the Treaty did not fulfill all the needs and demands of citizens.

Mr. Cosma responded by saying that cohesion policy had to ensure that development was promoted and social inclusion was enhanced, saying that he believed in policies that took those perspectives into account, as “cost-reducing” policies invariably affected the poorest and most vulnerable.

In conclusion, Beata Bilibowska said that she felt the debate on territorial cohesion refers had highlighted the fact that it was a “horizontal” concept that benefited from an integrated approach, which would mean a discussion on the territorial impact and co-ordination at all levels of government in each territory on spatial development, regional development, agricultural, research and innovation, energy, climate and environment policies.

As far as the central role of the EU in territorial cohesion was concerned, she said, if member states and regional and local authorities choose to, EU funds should be used to support ‘development peaks’, but the question was defining what member states and provinces required want. In addition, Bilibowska argued, less bureaucracy and not more was needed, better European instruments, multilevel governance and simplification and subsidiarity which, she believed, LIAs could help provide.

Chairman José María Barrera, expert in social policy and European affairs, was joined by Phi-Jace Meslay, Vice-President, Consultant général de Cotes d’Armor, France; Rosario Cordero, Member of Provincial Government of Diputación de Cáceres in charge of the Local Development Department, Spain; and Karl-Heinz Klinikmüller, Vice-Landrat in Dahme-Spreewald, Germany.

Chairman Barrera opened the debate with a datum, in the European year for fighting poverty and social exclusion, 17 per cent of EU citizens still had such limited resources that they could not afford the basics. There was no miracle solution to put at an end to poverty and social exclusion. He said, but local inter-municipal authorities (LIAs) had developed some successful initiatives to change the situation. How to lead change through social inclusion was the main topic. In the open debate that followed, in the presence of politicians less- –ing the process in Europe at local level.

Rosario Cordero was first to speak, and she expressed doubts over the European Policies being implemented locally. She agreed with Mr. Landabaso, from the DG Regio of the European Commission, who highlighted the fact that transition from big political goals to the reality of the territories was missing. As mayor of the municipality of Romangor do, she experienced the relevance of the LIAs on a rural area where she has to fight in first line to reduce the poverty and avoid social exclusion of her fellow citizens. LIAs have an important role to develop as priority and double-direction links between Europe and its citizens.

‘Crisis after crisis’

The Province of Cáceres, she explained, had some 400,000 inhabitants, of whom 12 per cent were unemployed and 13 per cent active before the latest financial crisis. The figures were now 20 per cent unemployed, 30 per cent active, which represented 40,000 people without work. In particular, construction had been very badly hit by the crisis, and there were general problems over training and access to the labour market.

In particular, those aged over 50 had so very little chance of returning to work. In addition, there was a section of the community that needed to be mentored and supported to return to work, as well as those with drug and domestic violence problems.

‘Back to work’

Philippe Meslay also stressed the problem of unemployment in Cotes d’Armor, where 29 per cent were out of work. There was an unfortunate exclusion mechanism in place, he added – long-term unemployed find it hard to return to work, because employers naturally want people who have recent experience.

Therefore, the “Pôle Emplois” initiative was begun: Teams of job-hunting experts who target people who have not worked for at least two years. Support before, during and after finding a job is provided. The initiative is 50 per cent funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Cordero went on to explain how her region, Extremadura, also worked in co-operation with small municipalities and LIAs, with the aim of reducing the unemployment. The cooperation of national, regional and local authorities is needed when to deploy an effective policy. The EU has to take this into account when it is released a new strategy.

Karl-Heinz Klinikmüller was next to speak and, while he praised the support provided by the ESF, he added that it was important not to rely on EU funding alone, as the project was meant to become self-sustaining over time.

In his province, he said, there was a bus-trans-port system in place, making it easy for the inhabitants to look for a job in other locations close by, plus a focus on the good nutrition of children, with one sound meal a day made from all-natural products being provided for the poorer families in the community.
According to Mr. Meslay, although there is much work to be done by social services, the work can by itself help to ease and solve so- cial problems.

“More attention required”

Mrs. Cordero expressed her opinion that the EU should bring more attention to the social policies, as to act more decisively in or- der to assure similar social services around the EU. Exclusion has no borders, she said, and a common EU welfare should be present everywhere in Europe.

Klinkmüller said that it was simply unacceptable to leave the excluded aside – bringing them back into society was very important. There was a need, as well, to con- solidate and build on expertise levels, share what had been learned between the terri- tories, and make efforts to encourage employ- ers to rural areas, as many experts believe that exclusion in the countryside could be similar or even greater than in cities. In rural areas, where there is less access to goods, services and fa-cilities, making life difficult in many cases.

In conclusion, Chairman Barrera said that he felt the debate had illustrated well the con- cept that social inclusion incorporated mul- tiple dimensions of well-being, and was achiev- ed when everyone had the opportunity to resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, and cultural activities which are considered the societal norm.

Exclusion demanded goals and policies that avoid separation, he added, and LIAs were well placed to offer positive support, rather than negative opposition. Social inclusion had serious potential to improve the EU’s understanding of social policies, and the ex-ten to which low-paid workers fall be- hind the rest of the workforce, not only in terms of wages and income, but in a variety of di-mensions, including health, education, hou-ring, skills, advancement, and opportu- nity. Exclusion was a burden to society, inclu- sion nothing but a benefit. As the debate had highlighted, co-operation was key.

Which left it only to Philippe Meslay to ex-press heartfelt thanks to all the atten- dees of CEPLI Open Days 2010 – the six deba- tes, he said, had provided real focus, depth and a new level of clarity to the role of local intermediate authorities as far as territorial cohesion, territorial planning, social inclu- sion, sus-tainability, co-operation and inno- vation were concerned, and there could be no doubting the fact the EU’s LIAs, in Lisbon Treaty year, were facing the future with re- newed opt-imism and enthusiasm. Wishing all delegations well, he expressed his hopes that CEPLI Open Days 2011 would provide the same level of in-telligent debate, interaction and progress.

Intermediate local authorities are present in force at Open Days on 2010, is there a particular reason?

Last year, we had organized only one forum, but very successful. This year, our debates take place during three days and we address all the topics proposed by the organizers.

We’re more than 30 Local Intermediate Authorities (LIAs) from several Member States of EU. This proves that each year the for- ce of the CEPLI grows. The Local Intermediate Authorities are testing their dynamism and their creativeness.

We have spoken about territorial planning, about the competitiveness’ strategy,” about in- novation, sustainable growth, territorial coope- ration, territorial cohesion and social inclusion.

This list proves that we intervene in funda- mental competencies of the EU now.

Our common word is the one of the daily life of the Europeans, the one of social cohesion, of linkages between territories. We represent the local authorities of social and territorial solidarity.

Without us, Europe is only a space of planning and not a space of life.

This European year 2010 is important for all local authorities. It is a year of transition, since the Treaty of Lisbon, towards a new strategy for the future of Europe.

What specific message does CEPLI want to send to the European Union, to its institutions, to its Member States?

We want to influence the big strategies of the EU because we are persuaded that no national policy can be made without local authorities, but also that no European strategy will suc- ceed without us.

It happens that the big strategic orientations of the EU take shape now and will be completed in the coming weeks. I particularly think about the EU’s Cohesion Policy, about the Budget and the strategy Europe 2020.

Moreover, the 5th report on the cohesion of the EU will be delivered by Mr. Hahn at the begin- ning of November.

I would also like to greet this Commissioner, showing a big attention to the debate and the interests of local authorities, making the Cohesion policy a priority. We are a stake and this is good.

I think that we all have to thank him for having persuaded Europe of tomorrow that LIAs can improve the cohesion of territories is one of its fundamental features.

I make him therefore a proposal. The strate- gy of Lisbon points out that Europe 2020 will have to be innovative, green and inclusive.

It is necessary to add a fourth pillar to this Europe, to stress that it should be territor- ial, to register it in the Europe’s matrix now, otherwise it will be necessary to wait for 2021 and it will definitely be too late.
Final Resolution of the 3rd Political Conference of the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI)

“One year Treaty of Lisbon: Opportunities and Challenges for Local Intermediate Authorities and their Citizens”

Berlin, the 10th of November 2010

The European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI) appreciates the new essential innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon. The role of local and regional authorities, and therefore the role of Local Intermediate Authorities (LIAs), is finally recognized on primary law level. The Treaty acknowledged, for the very first time in the history of the European Union, the importance and significance the local level has in the field of policy creation and administration for its citizens.

From now on, it is necessary to put in place and develop the content of this innovation which implies the upholding of the fundamental principles of local self-government, fiscal autonomy, subsidiarity, multi-level governance and cultural diversity in the political everyday business and in all the EU strategies and policies.

As directly involved actors for the implementation of European law, the Local Intermediate Authorities can, also with respect to their key position between national government and citizens, have an important contribution to this process.

We appreciate the legitimation of the principle of local self-government in the Treaty of Lisbon also with regard to the ongoing territorial reforms in many EU Member States. Given the extensive territorial reforms taking place, the enforcement of the right to self administration and of the principle of subsidiarity is essential for LIAs.

CEPLI would therefore like to express its attachment to the principles of subsidiarity and free local administration which seems to be questioned through these reforms. CEPLI reiterates that those principles were already enshrined into the European Chart of Local Self Government of 1985 which has been ratified by all the European Union countries.

Moreover, CEPLI recalls that the inclusion of the territorial cohesion as one of the fundamental values of the European Union represents a step forward for its economic and social cohesion. This cohesion will not happen without the involvement of Local Intermediate Authorities or without the involvement of all levels of EU. In this context, we reaffirm our determination to play a significant part in shaping the future of the EU as fully committed partners and in terms of a real multi-level governance.

Thus, the political and administrative decentralization, which is progressing enormously throughout Europe, would find its recognition on European policy level.

It is essential that every European Union institution listens to the voice of the European local intermediate authorities. We will continue to try to be more involved by playing a constructive role in the further dialogue with these institutions and to work in order to ensure that EU procedures constantly take into account the on-site realities and create a real European added value for the benefit of all citizens.

Local Intermediate Authorities wish to play a role as equal partners in the definition of the European strategies and policies. Political and administrative decentralization generates quickly and concrete ways for the implementation of the European policies. In this context, it is essential that each of the EU institutions listen and acknowledge the voice of local authorities.

On this note we believe today in the importance of involving the LIAs in the process of the future of the European Cohesion Policy as well as in the debate about the new Europe 2020 strategy whereby LIAs can effectively contribute and play an important role regarding the objectives and potentially some flagship initiatives. We also think that instruments and procedures to put into practice the multilevel governance must be more clarified and formalized by the competent authorities at all levels, taking also into account, for example the CoR proposition on territorial packs.

As responsible authorities for services of general interest, the Local Intermediate Authorities meet the public requirements where needed. LIAs are playing an Essential role in bringing Europe closer to citizens by implementing European and national regulations, the intermediate level having even a strategic dimension. LIAs are a necessary linkage, covering a relevant territory and working in close cooperation with both regional and local level, having the necessary tools for achieving valuable results. Only at intermediate level it is possible to have a correct vision founded on facts, each territory having its own geographical, economic and social features. In this sense LIAs are essential for restructuring the territory and to ensure balanced and equal access to services.

The economical and financial crises lead us to adapt our strategies to the new expectations with innovative answers. As stated before, the redefinition and expansion of the principle of subsidiarity in the Treaty of Lisbon represent an important innovation and it is now time to give it some substance. Here, we would like to support especially the Committee of the Regions in the exercise of its new competencies, e.g. the subsidiarity monitoring network and the EU 2020 Monitoring Platforms.

The Treaty of Lisbon has opened larger opportunities for LIAs to participate in the European process in order to solve the major challenges they are facing at local level. It is up to us to succeed to have bigger influence on European decisions and even if it’s hard, it is also a chance that we should not miss. We are also determined to continue to be active inside our Confederation, being aware that the networking activities could be an important and needful support to our members and their communities.

CEPLI will continue to take part in the coming discussions with the EU institutions in a constructive spirit. And it will work for a European integration that always takes into account the realities of the territory and that provides added value to citizens’ quality of life.

The new Bureau is composed by:

- Premier Vice-President: Paul-Emile Mottard, President of the Association of Walloon Provinces and Provincial Deputy of Liège (Belgium);
- Secretary General: Claudie Labrebret, President of the Assembly of French Counties, President of the General Council of Côtes d’Armor (France);
- Treasurer: Helmut Jahn, Member of the Board of the German County Association, President of Landkreistag Baden Wurttemberg and Member of the CoR.

The President Castiglione presented the main priorities of his political mandate:

- To work for a large recognition of CEPLI;
- To strengthen the dialogue with European institutions, relying on his ties with the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament;
- To deepen the cooperation with the European Commission and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

“Europe 2020 Strategy, the future of the Cohesion Policy and sustainable energy policy are the first challenges that local intermediaries authorities will take up…”. These introductory remarks have allowed to the new President of CEPLI to open the debate.

The discussions to wich the Committee of Regions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the European Commission were participating focused their attention on the publication, the same day, by the Commissioner Hahn, of the 5th Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The presidents of national associations representing local and intermediate authorities, members of CEPLI noted, among other things, the very urban dimension of this Report.

They expressed their willingness to engage in the dialogue with the European Commission to contribute to the construction of a Cohesion Policy ensuring a fair and balanced development of European territories to the benefit of all citizens.
European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities

www.cepli.eu