



Local & Regional
Europe

Newsletter

May 2014

Dear colleagues,

Last 25 May about 350 million Europeans were called to polls to choose their representatives in the European Parliament and to define the political direction of the European Union.



During the coming weeks and months, the newly elected representatives will start working and a new Commission will take up office. If we want to consolidate cooperation between local government and the European institutions then, dear colleagues, the time is now. This is why we have to work together and jointly detect those newly elected representatives that will support our messages in the EU debates.

Furthermore, in the last month, we devoted a lot of attention to the way EU central governments cooperated with local authorities when deciding the allocation of EU funds. Indeed, this is a crucial issue since the new EU cohesion policy will make available up to € 352 billion for regions and municipalities to create jobs, reduce social exclusion or tackle climate change, among other priorities.

The report, carried alongside our member associations, highlights that already 14 out of the 18 countries surveyed have set full or partial working partnerships with local government on the identification of needs, the definition of objectives to be achieved or the allocation of funding. However, there is still plenty of room for improvement in partnership working before funding becomes available to projects at the end of 2014. This is why we sent this report to EU institutions urging them to require Member States to respect EU rules by fully involving local government in their funding programmes.

This month's edition of the newsletter covers our activities of May.

I wish you a good reading.

*Frédéric Vallier,
Secretary General of CEMR*

Monthly highlights

Civil Society

Local government cannot be excluded from EU Commission dialogue on rural development

Today, about 80% of the rural population lives close to cities which increases the linkages between urban and rural areas. Thereby local government is the best placed to enrich EU legislation on rural issues and should therefore be involved in discussions regarding such issue. This is why we sent a letter to the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural development urging him to allow local government's participation in the civil dialogue group on rural development. The Commissioner's cabinet is currently examining our request. Contact: marlene.simeon@ccre-cemr.org

Symposium in Vilnius

First step towards stronger collaboration between academics and local and regional experts, and decision-makers

As presented by our Research and Studies officer, Nathalie Noupadja, during the meeting of the Secretaries General and Directors in the Hague, CEMR aims to strengthen its lobbying efforts with the contribution of more scientific and research-based evidence to our activities. In this context, CEMR and the Observatory on Local Autonomy jointly organised the symposium on local autonomy in Vilnius, from 9 to 10 May. Thanks to the active participation of our associations from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, we analysed the effects of the crisis on local administration reforms in the Baltic states and in the rest of Europe. This event represents a first step towards stronger collaboration between academics and local and regional experts, and decision-makers. The conclusions of the conference will be available soon. Contact: nathalie.noupadja@ccre-cemr.org

Call for Participation

E-procurement

Answer our questionnaire on the new EU directive on electronic invoicing

The recently adopted EU directive requires the mandatory reception of e-invoices in public procurement for faster payments and reduced costs in public administrations, including the sub-national ones. We want to know your opinion and insight on the new directive: what are your specific needs and the challenges you will need to face as local government? What are the best practices already implemented in your country? By answering our questionnaire you will contribute to shape the local and regional authorities' position at the European conference on e-procurement, organised by the European Commission on 20 June in Athens. The deadline to answer the survey is set on Monday 9 June. Contact: angelika.poth-moegelé@ccre-cemr.org

Floods in Balkans

Urgent appeal to European local government to help their Serbian and Bosnian counterparts

The tragic flooding in the Balkans paralysed municipalities, cities and towns, and left thousands of people without home, food or support. We call on Europe's local and regional government to help their Serbian and Bosnian counterparts to face such tragedy^①. This call comes in response to an urgent appeal from our Serbian and Bosnian member associations, asking for mobilisation of all their sister organisations throughout Europe, and their member municipalities. Contact: boris.tonhauser@ccre-cemr.org

Urban development

Give us your input on the role of small and medium-sized urban areas

Europe is characterised by a high number of small and medium-sized cities that considerably contribute to growth and territorial development. During its EU Presidency in 2015, Latvia will especially focus on this issue and we want to ensure that local and regional governments contribute to future debates. Answer our questionnaire and contribute to the recommendations we will address during a Latvian workshop in preparation to their Presidency on 19 June. Contact: marlene.simeon@ccre-cemr.org

Urban Agenda

Come and debate with us the future EU and international urban agenda

What are the next steps for CEMR to contribute to a potential urban agenda in Europe? Furthermore, to what extent can this project be supported by the international discussions on an urban sustainable development goal? Come and debate with us this issue during the next Policy Committee in Łódź (Poland) on 24 June. Contact: marlene.simeon@ccre-cemr.org & maxime.ramon@ccre-cemr.org

Intergenerational Dialogue

Join us for the second webinar on active ageing and economic crisis

In spite of how it may seem, it is possible to implement age friendly initiatives in times of crisis. If you want to know how, join us on 25 June to discuss “How to use the effects of the crisis positively and develop age-friendly initiatives”⁽ⁱ⁾. Experts from Spain, Italy and Denmark, will tell you how their projects were implemented successfully. Contact: nhu.tram@ccre-cemr.org

Library

Post-2015

Why Europe needs an urban sustainable development goal

Today about 72 % of the total EU population live in cities, towns and suburbs. This is why, together with our partners of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, we advocate for the adoption of a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanisation⁽ⁱ⁾. But, what does an urban sustainable development goal actually mean? And, why such objective makes sense in and for local government in Europe? You will find the answers to these questions in our new paper “Why Europe needs an urban sustainable development goal”. Contact: maxime.ramon@ccre-cemr.org

Structural Funds

14 out of 18 countries fully or partially collaborated with local government in their plans to spend EU funds

The study carried out alongside our member associations⁽ⁱ⁾ shows that the 18 central governments surveyed already implemented central-local working partnerships when deciding how €352 billion of EU funds should be spent over the next 7 years. However, in many cases the involvement of local government is somewhat limited or less regular. There is still significant room for improvement before funding becomes available to projects at the end of 2014. That is why this report was sent to the European institutions as a tool to persuade Member States to respect EU rules by fully involving local government in their funding programmes. Contact: marlene.simeon@ccre-cemr.org

Taxation

Response to the European Commission's consultation on the existing VAT regime

We reacted⁽ⁱ⁾ to the European Commission's consultation of the VAT regime on public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest. This consultation concentrates on the question to what extent services that are provided in the public interest should continue to be exempted from VAT taxation. In our response we highlighted that CEMR is not in favour of any harmonisation or EU-wide refund system. Member States have established their specific VAT taxation systems, which fit into their national political and financial structure. A harmonised system could require changes in the organisational structure of the Member States, for example, if inter-communal cooperation would be subject to VAT. Contact: angelika.poth-moegele@ccre-cemr.org

Urban Mobility

CEMR's opinion on the Commission's urban mobility plan

Did you know that chronic traffic congestion in cities is estimated to cost around €80 billion annually? In this context, the European Commission intends to reinforce its supporting measures to local government to elaborate mobility plans, without adding further legislation. In an opinion paper⁽ⁱ⁾ sent to the Committee of the Regions and other EU institutions we welcomed the Commission's Urban Mobility Package since it also recognises functional areas for local government, including urban and rural linkages. Contact: marlene.simeon@ccre-cemr.org