



FIRST POLITICAL CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CONFEDERACY OF INTERMEDIATE LOCAL AUTHORITIES - CEPLI

CÁCERES, SPAIN, 6 FEBRUARY 2009

The first Political Conference of the European Confederation of the Local Intermediate Authorities, CEPLI, has been held on February 6, 2009 in the city of Cáceres (Spain).

The conference has brought together delegations of 10 national associations of local intermediate authorities, and two European networks. This Conference adopted the convention of the Confederation and provided itself with a President: M. Claudy LEBRETON, President of the County council of the Coasts of Armor, President of the Assembly of the Departments of France (ADF).

Also three vice-presidents have been elected:

- **Antoni FOGUE**, President of Diputació de Barcelona, President of the Diputaciones Committee in the FEMP (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, Spain);
- **Ferenc ODOR**, Prcsident of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Government, Président of MOOSZ (National Association of Megye, Hungary);
- **Helmut M. JAHN**, Président du Hohenlohekreis, membre de la Présidence du DLT (Deutscher Landkreistag, Germany).

Bringing together 8 596 european local intermediary authorities, e.g., Departments, Diputaciones, Kreises, Provinces, Megyek, County and City Councils, Powiats, Judets... The CEPLI will be from now on in the big European debates representing the local intermediate authorities at European level.

The intermediate local authorities became necessary political stakeholders within every member state. They are the entities of anchoring in the territories for all the strategies and the public policies of development of territories and social cohesion of the European Union.

The Conference of Cáceres discussed the position of the CEPLI about the Green Book on Territorial Cohesion, which will be officially submitted to the European Commission.

The final declaration of this Conference is annexed to this Communication.

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**Declaration of the European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities
(Confédération européenne des pouvoirs locaux intermédiaires, CEPLI)
on
Territorial Cohesion - Turning territorial diversity into strength**

The European Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (Confédération européenne des pouvoirs locaux intermédiaires; CEPLI) is the very first European confederation grouping National associations of Intermediary-level local authorities and associated networks, created at European level and on the free decision of its members alone. It comprises the Assembly of French Départements (Assemblée des Départements de France; ADF), the German County Association (Deutscher Landkreistag; DLT), Union of Italian Provinces (UPI), Association of Walloon Provinces (Association des Provinces Wallonnes; APW), Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP), National Association of Bulgarian Municipalities (ANMRB), Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), Union of Prefectoral Authorities of Greece (ENAE), National Association of County Governments of Hungary (MOOSZ), National Union of Judet Councils of Romania (UNCJR), Union of Powiats of Poland (UPP), as well as associated members, the Arc Latin and Partenalia networks, and intends being a model of cooperation and exchange, to benefit its members and Europe. It aims to become a recognised representative of national and European institutions.

CEPLI appreciates expressly the consultation the European Commission has opened with its "Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion" and considers it an important contribution to achieve a transparent and common understanding of central policy goals.

We furthermore encourage the Commission to pursue its intention of promoting all regions in the Union area by the means of EU cohesion policy – also beyond the year 2013.

This promotion must, however, not be understood in the sense of "strengthening the strong ones" and thus supporting one-sidedly only the growth cores.

It remains of vital importance to promote and secure equal standards of living and comparable conditions for work, supply of (public) services and economic development as well as access to public administration.

The access to economic working and development potentials and thus high quality public services are an essential condition for EU citizens not only in view of regional development, but are a basic precondition for their economic sustainability and social stability.

In addition, this is the best way to demonstrate the specific added value of EU policies to the citizens.

As a matter of principle, the concept of territorial cohesion should not be understood as a mere remedy for other sectoral policies of the EU.

Defining a central EU policy goal, it stresses horizontal validity regarding sectoral policies, but should, nevertheless, not be misinterpreted as also being able to justify financial influence on the respective policy.

In this respect, it should also be clarified that no additional competences for the EU are created by this new policy goal.

Especially spatial planning remains the responsibility of member states, regional and intermediate local level.

The concept of territorial cohesion has therefore to be seen in the context of the two other Treaty goals – the economical and the social cohesion.

To these two goals of European cohesion policy a geographical component of spatial development is added that has to be taken into consideration in the various sectoral policies.

In line with the principle of subsidiarity, it is therefore necessary to stipulate for regional and local actors – concerning the purpose of employing the funds – as wide a scope of discretion as possible.

The intermediate local level is in the best position to know the specific requirements of its region and may therefore best determine the precise need for action on site.

The provision of a wide scope for these local authorities would most likely live up to the concept of multi-level governance and partnership, as regional and local administrative bodies usually represent junctions where policy drafts from the most diverse ranges are implemented.

In this sense, so-called “regional budgets” with a sufficient freedom of action should be created, which are to be placed at the disposal of regional and intermediate local authorities.

Eventually this approach would come up to the special needs of geographically specific regions.

These could act autonomously instead of changing to an EU policy specifying in mountain, island or scarcely populated regions.

The consequences of a legislative act can only be reliably judged by those who are entrusted with the concrete implementation of the respective law.

Especially the intermediate local level as an administrative level close to the citizens can judge and communicate to what extent European law-making contributes to the well-being of EU citizens.

In addition, contradictory regulatory approaches are perceived most clearly on the local level because of its general administrative competence and jurisdiction.

Also, territorial impacts can only be reasonably judged by integrating the respective territories and their intermediate local authorities.

We do not need new impact assessment instruments of the EU-institutions, but the opening of EU legislative process for the intermediate local level – as far as their interests could be concerned.

Therefore, we call for the use of already existing structures by integration of the respective implementation and executing intermediate local authorities in the EU legislative process.

Eventually, we fear that new creation of indicators and especially their evaluation would cause additional report obligations.

As a result, the associated administrative burden for all parties concerned could exceed the advantages of some fewer stakeholders.

In this respect, the existing socio-economic criteria are adequate for the impact assessment of EU cohesion policy and show sufficiently territorial trends on EU level.