

CEMR-EP/EPSU Joint Message to the Spring European Council 2009

EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Regional and Local Government

1. The financial and economic crisis is having a major impact on the living and working conditions of people. It can already be observed that the most vulnerable groups are hit hardest, for example third-country migrants and long-term unemployed, but also young people and single parent families, who risk falling into precarious situations.
2. Local and regional authorities are also confronted with the impact of the crisis on society and they have to take measures to ensure social stability and to prevent social exclusion. They also have to satisfy the increasing need for social assistance and welfare to the vulnerable and people in need.
3. It is clear that the crisis puts pressure on industry and business, which are very much affected especially in the some specific sectors. Reduced demand for products results in layoffs and increased unemployment. It is therefore relevant to take specific measures in the area of employment.
4. As the crisis deepens, there is a growing impact on the economic situation and, closely related to that, the finances and the investment capacity of cities, municipalities and regions. And this in turn can lead to a further deterioration of the economy. Adequate financial resources for local and regional authorities are therefore necessary to meet growing and new demands

brought about by the crisis.

5. CEMR-EP and EPSU wish to express that the public sector has a major positive impact on employment, which should be better taken into account when looking for solutions to the economic crisis.

6. Many measures proposed by the European Commission and the Member States concern investment in public infrastructure, energy efficiency, the promotion of low-carbon economy and further sustainable actions. All these actions are implemented to a great extent at local and regional level.

7. We welcome the message from the Employment Council on 9 March, which states that it needs a coordinated EU response that fully integrates growth, employment, social inclusion and social protection and that all relevant economic and social actors should be directly involved to achieve an effective delivery of the policy measures.

8. As social partners in the European Social Sectoral Dialogue, CEMR-EP and EPSU want to highlight that it is important for both, employers and employees, to keep employment in the local and regional government stable.

9. Our sector has an exemplary role in many aspects: the percentage of women and arrangements to allow the conciliation of work and family life is higher than in most other sectors. Many public bodies also have special work arrangements for specific groups, such as older workers, people with migrant background, persons with reduced abilities, etc. Local and regional government also provide valuable services that support gender equality and the reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities in all sectors of

the economy.

10. We wish to highlight the importance that these initiatives should not be at risk in the economic crisis but to find solutions that will allow a certain level of stability. The public sector should not be forced to give up its long-term planning and sustainable approach, which embraces the economic, social and environmental dimension.

11. CEMR-EP and EPSU discuss, share good examples and promote measures to achieve gender equality and ensure diversity in employment in local and regional government.

12. In times of increasing unemployment and structural changes it is important to invest in human capital. Education, qualification, training should be stimulated and encouraged at all levels and for all ages.

13. Special programmes for specific groups should be designed and implemented in order to better qualify the personnel for the anticipated changes. We therefore welcome the European Commission's initiative "new skills for new jobs".

14. CEMR-EP and EPSU will explore in the context of their Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, what initiatives can be taken by local and regional governments to see how this initiative can be applied in our sector.

15. Local and regional government face pressure to cut expenses and to increase the efficiency and quality of their services. Last year, we have examined reforms in public service provision and how these changes can be better prepared, implemented and monitored in cooperation by sides,

employers and employees. In following up the findings of our study, we will develop recommendations and encourage our members to make use of them.

16. Our case studies showed that reform processes and change management went smoothly if conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner, followed by scrutiny, evaluation and review procedures. This conclusion should also be taken into consideration in the current situation.

17. It is relevant to remind that the recovery of the economy cannot happen without well-functioning local and regional authorities. The quality of their services depends to a great extent on a qualified, motivated and dedicated workforce. It should therefore be in our common interest to recognise the important role and contribution of the public sector in general and the local and regional government in particular.

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