



Political Declaration

Créteil, Val de Marne (France) - March 2013

Local intermediate governments or those of secondary level have a crucial role - and often a varied one - in many Member States of the Council of Europe: they are an integral part of the governance and political representation. They have a political dimension, exercise budgetary powers, have specific competences and have a regulatory and fiscal capacity. There are large differences between countries regarding both their structure and organization (German Länder, Belgian regions, Spanish "Comunidades"...) and the missions that are delegated to them and these missions are inherent to the constitutional traditions and history.

The European Union has shown late its interest for Local intermediate governments and the State remains the main institutional player. The diversity of Local intermediate governments makes it difficult to recognize a local structure common to all Member States.

Nevertheless, on a daily base and in their diversity, Local intermediate governments participate fully in the European reality: implementation of European legislation and of European projects supported by the Structural funds. In fact each year nearly 40% of EU's regional policy is assigned to specific projects conducted by **Local intermediate governments.**

Local intermediate governments hold important functions in terms of social cohesion and regional development.

They are **close to the citizens**, in terms of recognizing their needs, making decisions and implementing services which are close to the people such as "Europe Direct" which is built from a direct cooperation between the European Commission and the Local Governments.

Local intermediate governments are active at European level within influential European bodies, such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities at the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions.

These representations have "institutionalized" Local intermediate governments at European level which had been forgotten in the process of European construction. The Lisbon Treaty which entered into force on the 1st of December 2009 recognizes the existence of the local and regional levels. Nevertheless, their influence on decision-making is limited.

In the framework of the European network "Partenalia" whose specificity is to bring together European Local intermediate governments in their diversity and in their common interest, we strongly wish to reaffirm the following points:

- **Local engineering is an asset for the future of the EU and governance must be multi-level (Multi level governance).** In a globalized world, local Intermediate governments are directly involved in the identification of a territory of the European Union.

-**The success of a "closer Union which brings together European populations and in which decisions are taken as openly as possible and as close as possible to the citizens" requires greater recognition of the essential role of Local intermediate governments.**

-**Local intermediate governments represent the first level of European democracy.** Insofar as Local intermediate governments the first intermediate level closest to the European citizens, they constitute a fundamental scale to support a position in the difficult task of bringing citizens closer to the European Union. Europe, caught up in the whirlwind of globalization needs to regenerate its foundations, to be closer to its base and citizens in 2013 «the European Year of Citizens"

Local intermediate governments are essential pivots to building a concrete Europe. The EU's regional policy and EU funds are directly involved in territorial development and in the active inclusion of people.

A new balance between the triptyches of the European landscape must be found: States, EU, local Authorities. What link can be established between these three levels of power? Local intermediate governments cannot be kept away from the process of European integration. And if there are mechanisms for representation at the EU, it should be noted that their influence has limitations in terms of direct participation in decision-making. Local intermediate governments are endowed with a real ability to generate synergies around project priorities that now require a partnership approach

-**A more systematic consultation of local levels in the decision-making process is necessary** Coordination of the different interactions between the European level and the local levels involved favors good European governance. Europe must learn to "integrate the local" and rethink the approach of European public policies.

- **It is essential to have an ambitious European budget, a budget of solidarity, a recovery budget.** The agreement of February the 7th and the 8th, 2013 on the multi-annual financial framework of the European Union, which will shortly be submitted to the European Parliament, is not up to the challenges that all European countries are facing. It is urgent to restore the ambition of Europe. We therefore call for substantial budgets to be adopted in order to meet the current challenges.

In this sense, we defend the potential of the European Local Governments as key actors of development initiatives. From this perspective we believe that the EU budget should reserve a specific space for the Local Governments to finance the implementation of integral development programs within their territories

As political members of Partenalia we would like to express our disagreement about this budget which results in a significant decrease of the funds allocated to the EU cohesion policy and European fund for the most needed. We would also like to express our support to the European Parliament who has rejected the budget.

