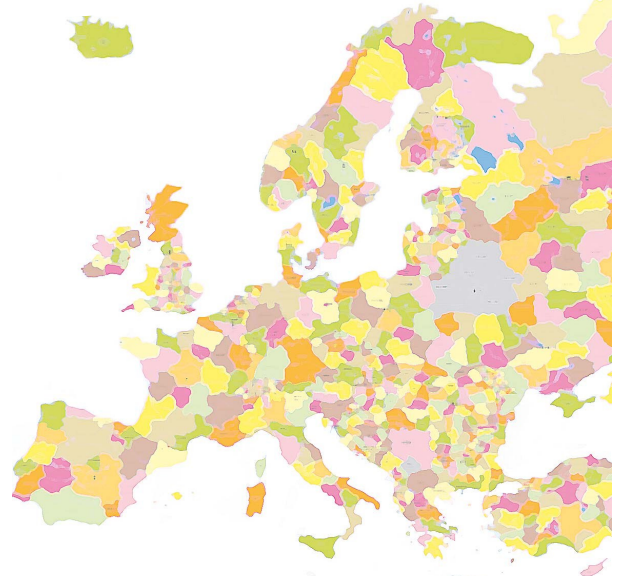




News Eurideas

March 2011 Issue

- Why Regional Representation in Brussels Matters?
- In focus: the Assembly of European Regions and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- How Food Transcends Regional Borders
- Agenda of Events in Brussels



Why Regional Representation in Brussels Matters?

Over the course of the last decade, Brussels has acquired the status of international lobbying capital of the world. European associations, trade federations, consultants, companies, NGOs, international organizations, government administrations, think-tanks... Every voice wants to ensure that it is properly heard in the EU legislative process, and regions and local authorities are no exception. Brussels registers over 300 EU regional and local representations. But, what do they do? Here are some clues:

Lobbying: Local and regional authorities feel the need to be closely involved in shaping Community strategies and initiatives, since they implement nearly 70% of Community legislation. In addition, they try to obtain EU subsidies and take part in European transnational networks.

Networking: Networking is essential to those vying for influence in Brussels, as much of the information circulates through unofficial channels. That is why it is of paramount importance to maintain a valuable network of contacts within the EU institutions, rather than relying on official statements.

Visibility: With a press corps of over 1,000 jour-

nalists accredited to the EU, Brussels is a perfect enclave in which to secure media coverage of the regions' activities and political visits. Ensuring the participation of local and regional politicians in relevant EU events and other major conferences considerably increases the visibility of these personalities at EU, national, regional and local levels.

Exchange & learning: In an environment like this, the exchange of ideas, knowledge-sharing and mutual learning among regions is inevitable, especially through platforms that promote inter-regional cooperation.

In this sense, inter-regional associations have become important venues for the creation of transnational alliances among regions. Such associations also help the regions to establish a foothold in the EU Brussels-arena.

Eurideas has held exclusive interviews with representatives of the two most important transnational organizations that represent regional governments: the Assembly of European Regions (AER); and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). We invite you to learn more about their vision and EU policy strategies.



- Organisation founded in 1985
- It brings together over 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations
- President: Michèle SABBAN, Vice-President of Ile-de-France
- Website: www.aer.eu

AER is Europe's leading network of regions. Why belonging to such a network is important for a region?

The Assembly of European Regions firmly believes that the regions are a key to the European construction. AER is not only a think tank, it is also an “action tank”. It is unique in this, that its strategy is based on three pillars: Influence, Knowledge and Action.

Influence: AER is the bridge between its member regions and European policy makers. Regular direct contact with them allows the AER to influence all EU policies and to have the demands of its members incorporated within them

Knowledge: AER allows an effective transfer of experience and knowledge through its own tools: Peer Reviews, Training Academies and competitions. Studies, surveys and reports of the AER provide Europe with the regional expertise it needs to shape its policies.

Action: to abolish the distances between Europe and its territories, the AER maintains a permanent direct link with citizens through its programs such as Eurodyssey, Summer schools and citizens' forums.

30% of your members are non-EU regions. In terms of enlargement, does the AER go a step ahead of the EU? How important is this fact for strengthening cooperation and networking among regions?

Our organization has been a pioneer of the European construction, as it began to open its doors to the Eastern regions right after the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989: that is to say long before the EU did. AER was one of the first to gather the Eastern and Western regions and to make them work together.

Being composed of a mixture of EU and non-EU regions is therefore a real strength, as it encourages mutual understanding, reinforces solidarity between the different populations of our continent, and it allows us to observe and share our knowledge with territories which do not function in the same way as the EU members do.

What kind of impact could the economic and social crisis we are going through today have on regional networking?

We acknowledge the importance of the crisis, but do not consider it as a fatality, as regions show daily that there are a lot of answers to the difficulties.

On the structural aspect, the study “From Subsidiarity to Success: The impact of decentralisation on economic growth”, conducted by the AER from 2009, has found that the economies of decentralised countries are performing significantly better across Europe than those of highly centralised states. On the practical side, regions are strongly supporting SMEs to increase RnD spending to enhance innovation in their territories, whilst attractiveness and competitiveness have to be considered as the pillars of territorial growth. By developing export-oriented clusters and a new consumer economy, we can lift Europe from the recession.

However, the crisis undoubtedly has an impact on regional networking, and at the moment our main concern is to ensure that the European policies and budgetary guidelines for the upcoming years, in the wake of “Europe 2020”, are as effective as they are equitable. Besides, our member regions are not always permitted to pay representatives to defend their interests at the European level: we are therefore here to defend them and make sure that their voice is heard.



- Founded in 1951 by a group of European mayors; later, it opened its ranks to the regions and became the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.
- It represents some 100,000 local and regional authorities through its members, who are over 50 national associations of towns, municipalities and regions from 39 countries.
- President: CEMR's President is Wolfgang Schuster, the mayor of Stuttgart.
- Website: www.ccre.org

CEMR is one of the most veteran organisations enhancing the role of local and regional authorities in Europe. Why is belonging to such a network important for a region?

Europe's regions began taking a real interest in EU affairs throughout the 1980's, as EU structural funds grew considerably and funding opportunities presented themselves in new areas such as research, environment, transport and rural development. At the same time, the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) welcomed regions within its structure in 1984, thus becoming the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). Today, CEMR provides regions with a platform and network to inform, network, lobby, and liaise, thus allowing them to defend their interests vis-à-vis EU and pan-European institutions with a strong and unified voice.

Why is town twinning one of the initiatives which you are most proud of?

CEMR considers itself to be at the origin of the town twinning movement in Europe, the first twinning link having been established in 1951 between Troyes, France, and Tournai, Belgium. Today there exist over 40 000 twinning links in the 39 European countries in which CEMR has member associations. Over the years, twinning has gone beyond the merely symbolic to encompass technical or thematic links between municipalities, notably in the fields of economy, social issues, sustainable development, environment and electronic public administration (e-Government).

This year, CEMR celebrates its 60th anniversary, and it's been a long way since the organisation took their first steps. But what will be your strategy for the coming years?

CEMR intends to enhance its role as a forum of debate and cooperation between local and regional authorities in Europe and hopes to increase its presence in Central and Eastern Europe and in neighbouring regions.

On another note, CEMR calls for a true partnership between all levels of government. Local and regional authorities must become the intermediary of the European institutions and states when it comes to devising, implementing and evaluating European policies on the ground. CEMR, its members associations and local and regional authorities must become active partners in the Europe 2020 strategy. Indeed, in order to be successful, the Europe 2020 strategy requires the mobilisation of local and regional actors so that these may elaborate concrete projects to transform the seven flagship initiatives of the strategy into concrete action plans.

Moreover, CEMR will contribute to the definition of the goals and objectives of the future of the town twinning movement through the elaboration of a white paper. This paper will be presented to the European Commission at the occasion of CEMR's Town Twinning Congress to be held in September 2011 in Rybnik, Poland.

When Food Transcends Regional Borders

For years, national borders in Europe have accentuated the existence of different national culinary traditions. Thus, we might have heard that French cuisine is refined, that Italian gastronomy draws upon healthy ingredients, and that Spanish food brims with creative culinary innovations. But, if we examine the map of Europe with a magnifying glass, we find out that, beyond national borders, one region's cookery differs hugely from that of the next.

Some regions have established a reputation for their gastronomy and products beyond their local, regional or even national confines. This is the case of some Italian regions, such as Tuscany and Sicily; other French regions, like Périgord and Alsace; and the Basque Country, in

Spain, to name but a few. Increased use of labels which serve as guarantees of origin and quality; growing consumer demand for 'bio' products and natural cooking ingredients; and a recent trend among small-scale businesses to fuse tourism and gastronomy, are all helping such regions to make a name for themselves.

To shed light on this emerging world of regional gastronomy, Eurideas met Elena Fornipopolo and Niccolò Ferro, the Italian founders of "Passion" (www.passion.wineartfood.org), a company that created a new concept in gastronomy by combining an appreciation for fine food and wine with, as the name suggests, a "passion" for natural flavours.



Elena, a former consultant, with a love of fine wine and food, and Niccolò, a Florentine chef, both convey tremendous enthusiasm for gastronomy. Two years ago, their paths crossed and they decided to embark upon an innovative "win-win" venture. They enable small-scale delicatessens and wine producers to break into the Brussels market and, at the same time, offer optimal quality products to their exclusive clients.

We meet them in a "discover & taste" event, at which traditional products from the Italian region of Piedmont are showcased. At the event, which has been organized jointly with one of their partners, thirty Piedmontese dealers are presenting delicious food and wine from their region: cheeses, oils, chocolates, pasta, rice and a whole host of other delights.

What is the added value of your project idea?

We do not work as mere distributors of food. Our goal is to share the discovery and experience of wines and foodstuffs that are natural products of the highest quality, which have also been produced using traditional techniques. We thus support local and regional producers from different regions around Europe, especially from Italy, France and Spain-producers that are almost unheard of beyond their regional borders.

We suppose that networking is essential to achieving your goals. Does the fact that you developed this activity in Brussels help you?

Yes, indeed. This initiative would have not worked in any other city in Europe. Brussels is a melting pot, where people are passionate about discovering new things, which is the leitmotiv of our business. And our philosophy does not just involve offering a simple menu, but a tasting experience. In this sense, Passion organises cultural events, followed by a tasting experience, as we did last January with a music concert, which was a real success.

We note the influence of the « slow food » concept on your philosophy...

We are all aware of how much "fast food" and precooked meals are eaten by new generations. And sometimes, they do not even realize that cooking good pasta with a natural tomato sauce only takes 15 minutes. We have to re-educate our new generations to make them appreciate real food and natural tastes.



© Pictures Edouard Jansens Photo

'Eurideas News' is a newsletter issued by Eurideas Linguistic Services. Being a translation agency specialised in EU related topics, our aim is to talk about EU projects and organisations, countries, regions, politics and culture. If you would like to contribute to one of our next newsletters with an article, please do not hesitate to contact us.

For inquiries, please contact us at translation@eurideastranslation.com

Visit our website: www.eurideastranslation.com

Tel: +32 2 669 7701

AGENDA

AGENDA



1



2



3



5

1 ► **March 19, Registration open for the "20km of Brussels"** . Registrations through the website www.20kmdebruxelles.be. The 32th edition of the "20km of Brussels" will take place on Sunday, May 29th, 2011.

2 ► **March 24-27, Passa Porta Festival, International House of Literature.** Literature is at the heart of Passa Porta, a meeting place for lovers of literature as well as those who create literature a space where the link between Dutch, French and foreign-languages literature is reinforced. It wishes to offer writers and translators the possibility to deepen their talent and increase and enrich their work.

3 ► **April 5, Dulce Pontes in concert, BOZAR.** One of the leading lights of the new fado. Pontes has a powerful, intensely and emotional voice. She is coming to Brussels to mark the release of her double album Momentos, a mix of previously

unreleased work and new versions of her best-known songs.

4 ► **April 7-19, Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Films, Tour & Taxis.** From the merely curious to the well-informed amateur, the Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Films welcomes all publics. Here are to be found all those activities which have made this event as popular as it is, with numerous films being shown and the famous 'Vampires' Ball', along with several exhibitions, the make-up contest and the theatrical entertainment.

5 ► **April 14-17, Balkan Trafik Festival, BOZAR.** For four days, BOZAR celebrates the Balkans. The multidisciplinary Balkan Trafik Festival, now on its 5th edition, presents an infectious mixture of cultural creativity from south-eastern Europe. The festival includes films, drama, music, dance and workshops.