

### **European Conference**

## **"A key factor of success in promoting social cohesion: the contribution of partnerships between local authorities and organisations of general interest"**

**16 May 2008**

**Venue: Committee of the Regions, Rue Belliard 101, Brussels**

The strengthening of social cohesion *within* European territories and *among* European territories is a cornerstone for the accomplishment of the Lisbon objectives as well as for the full realisation of the European social model.

It means, above all, to reinforce links *within* and *between* local communities and to strive for the full participation of all local actors in the shaping of processes fostering social cohesion. Respect of fundamental rights and their guarantee to all citizens and inhabitants are herein crucial.

It appears thus of utmost importance to remove all obstacles of social and economic nature that might hinder individuals to have access to these rights and to fully enjoy them. A model of sustainable and fair development which follows the European social objectives expressed in the treaties and in the Lisbon strategy can be achieved only that way. Moreover, it would be in line with the objective of territorial cohesion such as it can be found in the new Lisbon treaty.

Local and regional authorities as well as organisations of social interest have a key role to play in this process, as they are closest to citizens and able to activate effective bottom-up processes.

With the term "organisations of social interest" we refer to all expressions of organised civil society, community enterprises, social economy and other organisations providing opportunities for an active participation of European citizens and inhabitants in civic, economic and social life. Activities of these organisations are led by the objective to work for the general interest rather than being profit-oriented.

A comparative analysis of the main characteristics of local authorities (such as they derive from different national laws and are enshrined in the European Charter of local self-government 1985) as well as of the features of the above mentioned organisations of social interest (see definition by Social Economy Europe) shows to what extent aims and activities of these two local key actors are similar.

Analysis and experiences thus call for the establishment of stable partnerships between them.

Since more than 10 years, REVES, the European Network of Cities and Regions for Social Economy, is active in the definition and construction of local partnerships that are able to pursue the establishment of cohesive, fair and inclusive local societies. Through its initiatives, REVES is in a position to individuate the potentialities of such partnerships, but also the constraints that often inhibit them from working properly in the pursuit of common objectives.

In this context, a half-day conference, conceived under the patronage of the Committee of the Regions and with the support of Mr. Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, will be organised on 16 May 2008 in the framework of the REVES General Assembly. It aims to analyse:

- a) the contribution of local partnerships to the achievement of the objective of social cohesion;
- b) the European political and legal framework for such partnerships face to territorial experiences in terms of political and legal constraints;
- c) possible perspectives and actions to be taken in order to take full advantage of local experiences.

Programme:

**16 May 2008: Conference "A key factor of success in promoting social cohesion: the contribution of partnerships between local authorities and organisations of general interest"**

9 a.m. Introduction by Jens Nilsson, REVES vice-president and member of the Committee of the Regions

9.15 *Models of local partnership for the improvement of social cohesion*

France: Promotion of social and solidarity-based economy: Experience of the Ecossolies in Nantes  
Italy: Striving for quality employment - the Job Centre in Genoa  
Sweden: Promotion of employment in the social economy sector - L&SEK in Örebro

9.45 a.m. *Panel discussion: The key role of local partnerships in the promotion of social cohesion*

Chair: Jan Olsson, member of the European Economic and Social Committee

Panellists:

Luc Van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions (tbc)  
Anne Ferreira, MEP, Co-president of the Intergroup for Social Economy at the European Parliament  
Alain Coheur, President, Social Economy Europe

11 a.m. *Conclusions*

*Interpretation will be provided from and into English, French and Italian*