



MUNICIPAL NEWS

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNION OF CYPRUS MUNICIPALITIES

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ISSUE 1

This first issue of the English version of our Newsletter marks eight months since the opening of our office in Brussels and aims to inform the European local and regional authorities' community about our activities and priorities.

We hope that "MUNICIPAL NEWS" will become an effective means of communication with all local and regional stakeholders around the European Union and an incentive for a real dialogue among all of those who share the same challenges with us.

*Demetris Kontides
Mayor of Limassol
President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities*

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities was established in 1981. Even though membership is voluntary, all 33 municipalities representing 65% of the population of Cyprus, have joined the Union.

The Union's main functions are to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-a-vis the central government and other national institutions. It also takes an active stand in the evolving relations of Cyprus with the European Union.

The Union's decision-making power is vested in the General Assembly. The Executive Committee implements decisions taken by the General Assembly. The President represents the Union before any authority, while the Secretary is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Union. The Mayor of Limassol Mr. Demetris Kontides is the President and Mr. Athos Germanos is the Secretary of the Union.

Our Brussels Office

One of the priorities of our President and of the new Executive Committee, the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities became reality in mid-July 2005. The Brussels Office of our Union is now based at Rue du Trone 98 in the centre of Brussels, near the European Parliament.

The targets and responsibilities of our Brussels office have been defined as follows:

- Networking activities.
- Representation of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities to events in Brussels.
- EU legislation monitoring.
- Information activities towards our members.
- Cooperation with the CEMR, the CoR and other European organisations and bodies.
- Cooperation with other Brussels-based regional offices and organisations.
- Cooperation with other Brussels-based Cypriot actors.
- Services to Cypriot representatives in Brussels.
- Partner-Search and financing opportunities.

The official opening of our Brussels office took place on Friday December 9, 2005.



*The Brussels Office of the
Union of Cyprus Municipalities*

Closer cooperation with the CoR

The Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, Gerhard Stahl, and the Secretary General of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Athos Germanos, have signed a declaration of common interest aimed at enhancing cooperation between their administrations. The former CoR President Peter Straub stated on the occasion in our newsletter:

Following the decision of the CoR's political bureau in May 2002, I decided to make the stepping up of cooperation between the Committee and the associations of local and regional government a priority of my presidency. The most coherent embodiment of this cooperation is through the signature of common declarations, which provide the framework for associations to interact in a systematic way with the CoR.

Thus it gives me great pleasure to be able to announce that following my official visit to Cyprus in October 2004 the Committee of Regions has now signed a declaration of common interest with the Union of Cyprus Municipalities. The Secretary-General of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Athos Germanos, was in Brussels on 9th September 2005 to sign the agreement with Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions, Gerhard Stahl.

Under the declaration, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Secretariat agrees to include the Union of Cyprus Municipalities (UCM) among the national associations which are invited to take part in the regular structured dialogue between the President of the European Commission and associations of regional and local authorities.

For its part, the UCM states that it will inform the CoR if it foresees any specific problems arising in Cyprus from the implementation of proposed EU legislation. The declaration highlights the expertise that the UCM can bring to the work of the CoR, such as support for its Commissions in their assistance to rapporteurs and in helping to monitor implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.

The Secretaries General also pledge to explore ways of improving the coordination of their communication channels and to maximise possibilities for mutual participation in conferences organised by each party. In particular, they agree to submit to their respective political authorities a proposal to co-organise a conference in Cyprus in 2006 on a theme of shared concern such as public-private partnerships.

We believe that through our cooperation with associations of regional and local government the CoR can contribute to building a Europe that is more responsive to the needs and aspirations of our citizens. I look forward to working with each and every one of the Cyprus Municipalities for the achievement of this goal.



From the signing ceremony

Participation to the CoR subsidiarity monitoring network

On October 29, 2005 the Committee of the Regions launched a test phase of its future interactive online subsidiarity monitoring network, principally aimed at giving local and regional authorities more say over the drafting of EU legislation.

The primary purpose of the network – in which the Union of Cyprus Municipalities is one of the partners - is to allow local and regional authorities **to respond more quickly to 'Brussels'** with their views on the likely administrative and financial consequences of a legislative initiative. The network will also enable them to state from the outset if they believe a proposed law would be better left in the hands of regional or national government.

Welcoming the launch of the network, former CoR President Peter Straub said: “This is a win-win idea for everyone concerned. It will serve as a very useful tool for keeping local and regional authorities informed on policy initiatives, as well as giving them a fast and effective means for reacting with comments and possible concerns at the earliest opportunity.

“It’s a modern, practical tool and I believe it will be seen as a very important contribution to the EU decision-making process. It’s also a very timely initiative in the light of the European Commission’s Plan D drive for democracy, dialogue and debate. It will enable the Commission to directly tap into the pool of expertise available at the local and regional level, as well as demonstrating the added value provided by the CoR as a bridge between the institutions and the authorities we represent. I very much look forward to working with the Union of Cyprus Municipalities in this exciting new initiative.”

In the future, the partners to the network will be invited to react to European policy initiatives in the areas where consultation of the Committee of the Regions is mandatory for the Commission and Council. The partners will have full access to all documents referred to the CoR by the Commission or Council and will receive an e-mail alert whenever the Committee calls for a subsidiarity and proportionality analysis of new policy documents (e.g. green and white papers, communications, legislative proposals). The project partners will also be able to launch their own requests for a subsidiarity/proportionality test.

The partners will return comments via a simple electronic form and these will be displayed on the website, under the policy area concerned, together with a summary of all the comments received.

The CoR presented the results of the initial test phase in early 2006. The executive summary of the relevant report is available here: http://www.cor.eu.int/document/Highlight/subsidiarity_EN.pdf

Participation to NEEBOR

NEEBOR is the Network of Eastern External Border Regions of the European Union. The eastern external borderline of the EU stretches from the Barents Sea to the Mediterranean, embracing 10 member states of the EU (Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) and more than 40 of their regions.

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities is one of the 26 founding members of the Network of Eastern External Border Regions that signed the founding declaration of the network during the first day of the official kick-off meeting of the Network that took place on the 7 - 8 December 2005 at the Premises of the Committee of the Regions.

The founding declaration of the Network states: the present eastern external borderline of the European Union embraces ten EU Member States and ten non-EU countries as well as over 40 regions. From the Barents to the Mediterranean, this 5,500-kilometre long borderline is a real challenge and opportunity for regional development and cross-border activities.

The development of this border area is of utmost importance for the whole of the European Union in order to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines and secure a zone of prosperity and harmony following EU enlargement in 2004.

The Network has been operational for the past year and a half, but the December kick-off meeting marked the official presence of the Network in Brussels.



From the official kick-off meeting

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- The portal to European Union law
<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/en/index.htm>
- Official Journal of the European Union
<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/JOIndex.do?>
- EUROPE DIRECT Information Network
http://europa.eu.int/europedirect/index_en.htm
- Court of Justice of the European Communities
<http://curia.eu.int/en/transitpage.htm>
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http://www.esc.eu.int/index_en.asp
- Summaries of EU legislation
http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/scad_en.htm
- Quick Tender Search
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl>
- EQUAL
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm
- Interreg III
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/interreg3/index_en.htm
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http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/romed/meda.htm
- Historical Archives of the European Union
<http://www.iue.it/ECArchives/EN/Index.shtml>
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<http://europa.eu.int/abc/doc/off/bull/en/welcome.htm>
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