



MUNICIPAL NEWS

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNION OF CYPRUS MUNICIPALITIES

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“Combine efforts. Be pro-active, committed and efficient”.

EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner, in her exclusive interview to MUNICIPAL NEWS, expressed the opinion that even if financing is to be considered as given, European local authorities will have to join forces and be creative, pro-active, committed and efficient in order to obtain it.

Her interview follows:

You recently expressed the opinion that the local dimension in the EU should be reinforced. Could you explain us what you mean by that and how this reinforcement could be achieved?

Across the European Union local and regional authorities play an increasing role as political and organisational actors.

Dynamic local communities, with strong participation of the citizens, are a pre-requisite to reaching the overall European goals of sustainable development and growth.

The planning and implementation of European Funds in the next programming period will take place under the sign of multi-level governance with the ambition to allow local stakeholders to duly contribute to Lisbon objectives of growth and jobs.



One of the Commission's main experiences from the previous funding period is the fact that strong local ownership over projects and measures is a key to successful elaboration and implementation of projects and measures (*continue to page 2*).

The new Website of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities now on-line

Part of our efforts to better communicate with local authorities stakeholders in the EU and the rest of the world, our new website is now available on the internet.

The new website is available on our current address: www.ucm.org.cy and offers in its English version more information on the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, as well as access to information material, our latest editions and news, and useful links.

Visitors can also acquire information on the upcoming local elections in Cyprus, the celebration of civil marriages on the island as well as a number of useful contact details.

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The Union of Cyprus Municipalities is the main association of Local Authorities in Cyprus. Its core functions are to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-à-vis the central government and other national institutions. It also takes an active stand in the relations between Cyprus and the European Union.

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The Compounding of Offences Law [Download](#)

(from page 1) The legal framework for the coming financing period opens up for specific actions on sustainable urban development. It encourages the elaboration of participative, integrated and sustainable strategies to tackle the high concentration of economic, environmental and social problems affecting urban areas.

The strategies should aim at the strengthening of economic growth, the rehabilitation of the physical environment, brown-field re-development, preservation and development of natural and cultural heritage or the promotion of entrepreneurship.

To reach these aims, a wide range of activities and investments are eligible for European co-financing.

The new financial programming period is starting. Which are the main characteristics of this reform and how do they influence local authorities in Cyprus?

Over the 7 year period from 2007 to 2013 it is of vital importance that we channel European regional policy to investments which are compatible with the Lisbon objectives of increasing growth and employment as they are identified in every National Reform Programme.

To ensure consistency between the Lisbon Agenda and Cohesion Policy, the European Commission has elaborated a set of Community Strategic Guidelines, which should assist Member States in drawing-up their main strategic documents.



All Member States, including Cyprus, are currently putting together their principle strategy, the so-called National Strategic

Reference Framework, which will form the basis for specific operational programmes, including their financial allocations. We hope to finalise the decisional process in the first months of 2007.

High on the agenda are investments in research development, innovation, higher education, and life-long learning, which should enable Europe to keep pace with its international competitors.

Another important part of these investments will — like in the case of Cyprus — be allocated to investments in basic infrastructure in order to improve the quality of the environment, accessibility of the island of Cyprus, and the transport systems.

What should Municipalities pay special attention to and which are the main challenges they have to face through the new Structural Funds?

Already in this period many municipalities took initiatives to implement projects with European funding, notably with a view to increasing the attractiveness of local communities and thereby increasing tourist revenue.

For the coming programming period it is important that municipalities invest time and effort in both the shaping of the main strategic documents - which should be subject to a wide consultation process within each Member State - and in the development of specific community projects.

Time is therefore one of the most important factors. Substantial resources are available, but the time to invest them is limited. For this reason it is important to draw up projects in a timely manner and to ensure efficient delivery.

In short, the earlier you start and the better organised you are, the higher are your chances of obtaining a fair share of the available financing.

What advice would you give to small municipalities, like those in Cyprus, in order for them to better exploit the opportunities offered to them by the new regional policy of the EU?

My first advice to local authorities, in Cyprus as in other Member States, is to be proactive, committed and efficient.

Very often projects or initiatives will be too big for one specific municipality to organise and it is therefore necessary to combine efforts. Such grouping takes time, as you have to obtain the necessary political and organisation consensus, but often this investment will have an effect beyond the specific initiative, in as much as it can become the embryo of long-term inter-municipal co-operation in other areas.

The financing is there, what we need are ideas and organisation to spend it wisely and efficiently, and for that we would hope to see a strong participation of local authorities.

Many European municipalities have chosen to participate in the URBACT network, which allows for the transfer between local authorities of experience with integrated urban regeneration projects.

Moreover, the new JESSICA instrument (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas), which the European Commission has launched together with the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank, will be an important tool to enhance cooperation on financial engineering for sustainable urban development.

JESSICA provides a framework that, based on a contribution from the programmes to urban development funds, adds specialist expertise, levers-in additional ban resources, and facilitates the relationships with project promoters leading to new investments on the ground.

2007-2013 Regulations available on-line

The Regulations on the:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)
- Cohesion Fund
- General provisions on the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund
- Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

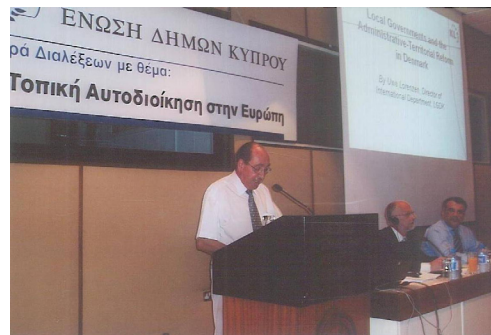
have been recently made available online.

They can be downloaded from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:SOM:EN:HTML>

The Institutional Framework of Local Government in Denmark

The need for essential changes and radical revision of the institutional framework that governs the operation of Local Authorities in Cyprus was the basic conclusion that resulted from the discussion and exchange of opinions that followed the presentation of the institutional framework that regulates the operation of Local Government in Denmark.

The guidelines and main objectives of the recently revised institutional framework in Denmark were presented by Mr. Uwe Lorenzen, Head of LGDK's (Local Government Denmark) Department of Int. Relations.



The presentation of the new Danish system proved to be particularly useful for the Mayors and Municipal staff, as well as representatives of the Central Administration of Cyprus who attended the presentation.

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities supports the fight against trafficking

The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has recently launched an appeal to Europe's regions and municipalities for the online signature of the Declaration against trafficking.

The Congress has set up a website for this purpose to gather as many signatures as possible from Europe's local and regional elected representatives.

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities has actively responded to this appeal by urging local authorities to sign the declaration and help fight human trafficking.

To sign online the Declaration against trafficking, please visit: www.coe.int/stop-trafficking

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THE UNION OF CYPRUS MUNICIPALITIES

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities was established in 1981. Even though membership is voluntary, all municipalities (33), accounting for 65 per cent of the population of Cyprus, are represented.

The main objective of the Union is to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-à-vis the central government and other national organisations and institutions.

The Union's decision-making power is vested in the General Assembly, which may look into and decide for all issues. The Executive Committee implements decisions taken by the General Assembly. The President of the Union represents the Union before any authority, while the Secretary is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Union.

The Union follows closely and participates in international activities related to Local Authorities and in recent years, especially after the accession of the Republic to the EU, it takes an active stand and develops relations with organisations, institutions and departments of the European Union that concern Local Authorities. In this regard, the Union has, since July 2005, opened an Office in Brussels.

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