



### **DECISIVE PROJECT:** **STUDY VISIT IN BRUSSELS**

The study visit of the DECISIVE project in Brussels took place from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of November. 40 participants attended the trip, including 38 citizens, elected officials and municipal officers from 16 Cypriot municipalities, the twinning officer of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and a representative of the Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of the Prefecture of Chios.

The participants were selected by the Union of Cyprus Municipalities according to the following criteria:

a) It was obligatory for the participants to have participated to the first training seminar of the DECISIVE project, which was held in Cyprus on May 18, 2010.

b) Nearly all citizens who have expressed real interest in the project and town twinning have been selected to participate in the study visit, provided that their municipality has proven over the last few years that is interested in town twinning and that it could send an officer to Brussels to participate in the study visit.

c) For each selected municipality, there should be at least one officer and one citizen or elected representative participating in the study visit. As the

DECISIVE project seeks to develop cooperation between municipalities and volunteers, it would be pointless to have only officers participating from a municipality without citizens and vice versa.

d) As far as possible, participants of the study visit were chosen among organized groups of citizens or among the so-called multipliers, in order to convey the purpose of the project and their experiences to as many other citizens as possible.



The group of participants arrived at Brussels on November 2. The same evening the participants attended a dinner where they met the two officers of the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities who would accompany them throughout the course of the study visit.

On November 3, the participants visited the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, where they attended initially a presentation on the role of the Office and the programme of the study visit.

### **Future major DECISIVE activities:**

**January:** Final Report

**For more information:** [http://www.ucm.org.cy/ENG/Promo/Promo\\_004.htm](http://www.ucm.org.cy/ENG/Promo/Promo_004.htm)

This was followed by a presentation from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) titled "[The European Town Twinning Movement, role and activities of CEMR](#)". The CEMR officer responsible for Town Twinning also presented the [www.twinning.org](http://www.twinning.org) website, which is one of the main tools for Municipalities wishing to participate in Town Twinning.

A lunch followed the presentation and then, the participants attended a session with a review of the DECISIVE project's progress. Later on, every participating municipality presented its current situation in relation to Town Twinning and the activities they undertook after the first training session of the DECISIVE project. Opinions of citizens were also heard on how to improve their communication with municipalities, as well as ideas for improving the operating procedures within the municipalities. The same evening all the participants attended a dinner.



On November 4, the participants visited the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the EU. The Agency's activities and the application process for the funding of Town Twinning projects were presented to the group. During the discussion, participants had the opportunity to address their questions and become better acquainted with EU officials, who handle applications submitted by the municipalities for funding through the Europe for Citizens programme.

A lunch followed again and then participants returned to the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, where a presentation on the conclusions of the study visit took place, followed by a discussion on the joint preparation by all of the participants of the second training seminar of the DECISIVE project that would follow after two weeks in Cyprus. A dinner was offered to the participants in the evening.



On November 5, the participants travelled to the city of Oudenaarde, where they attended a presentation of the Town Twinning committee in the medieval town hall building, followed by a discussion, a lunch and a tour of the City. The same evening, the participants left for Cyprus.

### ***DECISIVE Project: Second training seminar in Cyprus***

A few days after the study visit of the DECISIVE project in Brussels, the second training seminar of the project was held in Cyprus. 150 volunteers, selected by Cypriot municipalities and organized citizen groups, were trained in drafting proposals for funding through the Europe for Citizens programme. The training session was held, on Tuesday, November 23 the Mediterranean Beach Hotel in Limassol. The opening of the training session was made by the Secretary General of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Mr. Yiannis Antoniadis.

Initially, a general presentation on the [actual situation of Town Twinning in Cyprus](#) was given by Mrs. Kalia Martides, Twinning Officer of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities.



Following that, a presentation on the progress and a brief assessment of the DECISIVE project were given by Mr. Fanourios Pantelogiannis, Head of the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities. Subsequently, Mr. Stylianos Odysseos, Teacher and Citizen of the Municipality of Lakatamia, presented the [study visit in Brussels](#), in which he had participated.

Mrs. Anne Geens, officer of the Association of Municipalities of Flanders, spoke on [the future of Town Twinning and the future of Europe for Citizens Programme](#).

Then, Mr. Filip Deheegher, International Relations Officer of the Municipality of Ieper (Flanders - Belgium), presented [the history and good practices of the Town Twinning committee of Ieper](#).

Mrs. Anna Michaelides, officer for Municipal Committees of the Municipality of Idalion (CY) presented the good practices of her Municipality and especially how it works with volunteer groups on twinning issues.

The floor was then handed over to by Mrs. Irene Demetriou, Project Manager of the Cypriot National Contact Point for the

Europe for Citizens Programme, who spoke on the [potential involvement of Cypriot Organizations in the Europe for Citizens Programme](#).



After a short break, a workshop took place, during which the municipalities' officers, the elected representatives and the volunteers were trained with the use of computers, on the drafting and submitting of proposals for funding through the Europe for Citizens Programme. A lunch was offered after the session.

## ***27<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities***

On Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities was held in Nicosia.

The Assembly was attended and addressed by the President of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Demetris Christofias and the Minister of Interior, Mr. Neoclis Sylikiotis. The event was also attended by the President of the Cypriot Parliament, Mr. Marios Karoyian, leaders and party representatives, Ministers, MPs and senior officials of the State.

Mr. Andreas Christou, Mayor of Limassol and President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities presented the activity report of the association for 2009.

According to Mr. Christou, 2009 was a year of intense activity for the Union of Cyprus Municipalities (UCM).

Among other activities, the UCM has been active in promoting cooperation and twinning activities between Cypriot and other European municipalities through the Europe for Citizens programme. The UCM also participated –in cooperation with the CEMR- in the process of drafting a strategic document for the future of the programme.



As Mr. Christou said, the UCM also applied and obtained funding for two European projects for promoting twinning in Cyprus, with a total financing of ca 100.000,00€. "The first project, titled DECISIVE, aims at training volunteers and officials of Cypriot Municipalities for the development of twinings with other European towns. The second project, titled SKILLS, aims at developing twinings with Italian Municipalities", said Mr. Christou.

### ***Organization of the CIVEX Commission of the CoR in Cyprus***

The National Delegation of the Republic of Cyprus to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and particularly Mrs. Eleni Loucaidou, Municipal Councillor of Nicosia, submitted a proposal to organize in Cyprus a meeting of the CIVEX (Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and Foreign Affairs) Commission of the CoR.

According to the proposal, the city of Nicosia will host the Committee members (representatives of European local and regional authorities), not only for the external meeting but also for a seminar with the following subject: "Promotion of European Citizenship: the contribution of Local and Regional Authorities".

The purpose of this seminar is to exchange views on the progress made in this area. In particular, participants will have the opportunity to determine the role of local and regional authorities and their contribution to the strengthening of European Citizenship and the revitalization of the relations between citizens and the European Union.

The proposal has been accepted by the members of CIVEX Commission during their last meeting, held in Brussels on October 12<sup>th</sup>. The event will take place in Nicosia on 6 and 7 June 2011.

### ***Participation in the General Assembly of the AER***

On 10-13 November, the General Assembly of the AER (Assembly of European Regions), was held in Istanbul. The event was attended by 250 representatives from regional authorities of Europe. Dr. Andreas Hadjiloizou, Mayor of Ayios Dhometios participated in the event as representative of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, which is a member of AER.



## ***DECISIVE project: results and conclusions***

The DECISIVE project for the training of citizens and officers of the Municipalities of Cyprus, which was funded under the "Europe for Citizens" programme came to an end. For the last 12 months, the Union of Municipalities and Communities of Flanders from Belgium (VVSG), the Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of Chios Prefecture from Greece (TEDK Chios) and the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, tried to see whether they could apply in Cyprus and Greece the methodology which is followed by many municipalities in Flanders, when they are involved in twinings.

In these municipalities, the citizens themselves prepare and run twinning projects on a voluntary basis. This method not only relieves the municipalities from a significant administrative burden, but also enhances the sense of ownership of citizens over the twinning projects.

As it turned out, the interest of the Cypriot Citizens, in particular those belonging to organized groups of citizens, is significant. The seminars held in the framework of the project have also shown what more or less we already knew: That the drafting of applications for funding twinning activities has been simplified to such an extent by the managing authority that the participation of citizens in the process is fully facilitated.

For the municipalities of Cyprus, it proved that their -so far- small participation in twinning projects was not due to lack of interest, but due to lack of knowledge and resources. Regarding the participation of citizens in the application process, it proved that the municipalities are very positive in cooperation -especially with organized groups- when it concerns exchange of ideas or partner selection, but they need

more guidance and better information before completely trusting the running of a project to citizens. This of course does not apply to all municipalities. As it was demonstrated, some Cypriot municipalities have already been working very closely with citizens on twinning issues well before the DECISIVE project and some others proved to be very positive in the proposed DECISIVE methodology and have already begun discussions with organized groups of citizens.



The benefits of the DECISIVE project are multiple for everybody involved in it:

**Citizens:** It is clear that citizens and organized groups involved in the project, understood (in those municipalities that it had not been understood until now), that they have the opportunity to work with municipalities and actively participate in twinning activities.

**Elected:** The DECISIVE project helped a lot of elected representatives to understand that twinings can be really useful for municipalities and that they are not just synonyms with cultural exchanges or opportunities for ceremonial trips.

**Municipalities:** When the DECISIVE project began, a lot of Cypriot municipalities did not even have one officer to deal with twinings or other European activities. Even the officers of the municipalities that were more organized, did not know each other and many were not cooperating or even communicating with the twinning officer of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities. Now, most of the municipalities have appointed at least one officer, who deals with twinning issues.

**Union of Cyprus Municipalities:** Despite continued efforts in recent years, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities had neither managed to have a full and detailed picture of the state of Twinning in Cyprus, nor had the means and resources to effectively mobilize the municipalities, in such a way that they could take full advantage of opportunities and possibilities provided by the Europe for Citizens programme.

Now, thanks to the DECISIVE project, a network of municipal officers involved in twinnings has been created. These officers have already met each other and have begun to cooperate and exchange ideas and opinions. The Union of Cyprus Municipalities is now aware of the European actions of its member municipalities.

Very important is also the fact that the Union of Cyprus Municipalities managed through the DECISIVE project, to get to know better the needs of its members, regarding European programs. Especially the process of data collection for the website of electronic networking, [http://www.ucm.org.cy/Account\\_List.aspx](http://www.ucm.org.cy/Account_List.aspx), proved extremely beneficial for both the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the municipalities of Cyprus.

**TEDK Chios:** TEDK Chios and its members had the opportunity to learn about the Support Measures and more generally the "Europe for Citizens" program, to learn more about their two project partners, get informed about the methodology used in Flanders and benefit from the activities and contacts of the project.

**VVSG:** The Association of Municipalities and Communities of Flanders had once again the possibility to diffuse the best practices of its members and itself, to meet potential partners and to exchange views and best practices.

**European Union:** The DECISIVE project

reached tens of municipalities in three European countries and has given to hundreds of citizens the chance of direct and active participation in a European project. It was also the means for a lot of new potential partners to learn about the Europe for Citizens and particularly the measure 2.2 of the programme.

As it is already known, the DECISIVE project was funded through the "Measure 2.2. Support Measures" of the Europe for Citizens program. This measure is a tool to develop the quality of projects submitted within Action 1 "Active Citizens for Europe". It also supports the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practices, as well as activities which may lead to the establishment of long-lasting partnerships and networks.

Support measures may take a variety of forms, such as:

- Consultancy to provide practical advice for preparing and running good quality projects (from application procedures to internal evaluation of projects).
- Training sessions which enable those responsible for town twinning activities to develop their knowledge of the concept and practice of town twinning and to better understand and work within the European context.
- National or trans-national events promoting the concept of town twinning amongst local authorities
- Tools facilitating partner search and networking as well as raising awareness and interest in town twinning, for example through publications, audiovisual materials and websites.
- Exchanges of best practices and the accumulation of experience in supporting town twinning in Europe.

For more information, please visit: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php).

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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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