

Danish Local and Regional Government

Danish Regions • Local Government Denmark
City of Copenhagen • City of Frederiksberg

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Aarhus Declaration of Local and Regional Government

In the beginning of December, 130 local and regional politicians from the EU and the accession countries convened in Aarhus for a Local and Regional Government Summit.

The summit was organised by the Danish Local and Regional Government Partners in collaboration with the Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on the occasion of the Danish Presidency of the EU.

Mayors, presidents and other representatives of local and regional governments decided on a common declaration that was forwarded to the Copenhagen European Council on December 12-13, 2002.

Enclosed for your information, please find the Aarhus Declaration of Local and Regional Government.

On behalf of the Danish Local and Regional Government Partners

Yours sincerely,


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**Local and Regional Government Declaration
to
the Copenhagen European Council 2002**

Mayors, presidents and representatives of local and regional governments and their associations throughout Europe, meeting in Aarhus Denmark, on December 3-4, 2002 on the occasion of the Local and Regional Government Summit "Efficient and Independent Municipalities and Regions" agree on the following declaration,

At the European Summit in Copenhagen on December 12-13, 2002 a number of very important decisions concerning the future of Europe and the European integration process must be taken.

Seen from a local and regional angle especially the issues on the enlargement of the EU and the reform of the European institutions are of central importance, and the European heads of government are asked to be aware of and take into consideration local and regional viewpoints on these issues.

We, mayors, presidents and representatives of local and regional governments and their representative bodies and associations throughout Europe,

welcome this coming reform of the European Union, and expect that it will bring the EU and its institutions closer to the citizens;

reaffirm our support for the vital work initiated in the framework of the Convention on the Future of Europe, in the perspective of the future Constitutional Treaty of the Union;

welcome the coming enlargement of the European Union;

believe it necessary to include local and regional authorities in both the EU and the accession countries in the preparation for the coming accession;

call for the role of local and regional government, regardless of their national constitutional structure, to be properly reflected in the future Constitutional Treaty. Therefore ask for the strengthening of the role of the Committee of the Regions including recognition as an EU institution;

draw the attention of the Member States to the importance of inclusion of the principles of the Charter on Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe in the Treaty of the European Union;

ask that the principle of subsidiarity be applied to all spheres of government – European, national, regional and local - in order to allow decisions to be taken as close to the citizens as possible;

note in particular that 70% of EU-legislation and measures are implemented by the local and regional authorities and thus have a direct impact on these au-

thorities, and reaffirm the democratic legitimacy of the involvement of local and regional government in the EU decision-making process;

underline the importance of a systematic dialogue between the European Commission and the local and regional authorities, their representative bodies and associations in preparing European legislation and measures having a direct impact on their competences and tasks;

request that impact studies on the financial and other consequences of new legislation for local and regional authorities be systematically conducted prior to any decision and implementation.

point out that the principles applicable to the distribution of responsibility and competences between central, regional and local government in the individual Member States should be respected;

underline that cross border and interregional co-operation between local and regional authorities in both the existing and the enlarged EU as well as in third countries is of vital importance for integration and strengthening of economic coherence;

stress the importance of non bureaucratic financial facilities for cross border and interregional projects, for exchange of experience between local and regional authorities, and for twinning exchanges, including those with countries bordering on the EU;

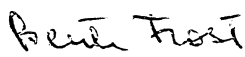
enclose with this declaration the conclusions of the Local and Regional Government Summit's four workshops;

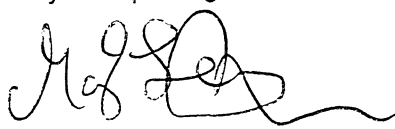
hand over this declaration to the Danish Prime Minister in his capacity of president of the EU in order to present it to the Copenhagen European Council on December 12-13, 2002.

Aarhus, December 4, 2002


Danish Regions

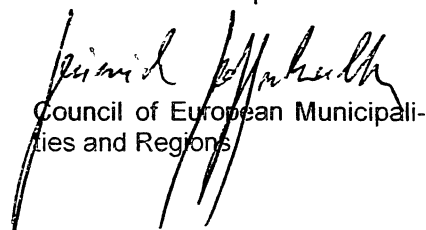

Local Government Denmark

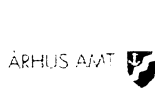

City of Copenhagen


City of Frederiksberg


Committee of the Regions


Congress of Local and Regional
Authorities of Europe


Council of European Municipalities
and Regions



Efficient and Independent Municipalities and Regions

Aarhus, December 3-4, 2002

**Conclusions from Workshop I
Local and Regional Finance and Structures**

- Historical structures and traditions of local and regional government in the different European countries are there to stay, and must be respected as long as they remain within the framework of the European Charter of Local Self Government.
- Legislative or statutory powers or the acceptance of Parliament to give sufficient room to manoeuvre within framework legislation are decisive prerequisites for independent and efficient local and regional government. A direct connection between political responsibilities and fiscal possibilities must, however, also be ensured. This necessitates rights for local and regional governments to levy their own taxes or duties.
- To establish practical, day-to-day cooperation across national borders, the relevant responsible public partners must be brought together. The partners are not always - in fact seldom - national governments.

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Aarhus, December 3-4, 2002

**Conclusions from Workshop II
Democratic Institutions of Local and
Regional Government**

- Local and regional self-government is a universal concept. But it differs in content, size and range of autonomy. No ideal model exists.
- Democracy has become very popular. Everybody wishes to be involved or to involve everybody in every decision. But take care. The stronger citizens speak out loud. Their views must be balanced against the need for equal opportunities, gender balance, minority rights, etc.
- Proximity is a key word. But proximity must be balanced against the need for quality in decisions.
- Local and regional councils shall provide strong leadership. The confidence of the citizens in their elected representatives in towns and regions is a cornerstone of democracy. Not least in Central and Eastern Europe, where sustainable local and regional structures are being vigorously re-established.

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**Conclusions from Workshop III
Local Government Association Development**

- When tasks and responsibilities of Local and Regional Authorities are changed as a result of new legislation and/or changes in existing regulations, including EU Directives etc., National Government should carry out negotiations with the respective Local and Regional Authority Associations in order to estimate what funds should be transferred to Local and Regional Authorities as full compensation. Only when Local and Regional Authorities are provided with full compensation can the tasks and responsibilities be carried out in full
- Local and Regional Authorities play an important role in providing public services to the population. In order to facilitate smooth and harmonious relations between National Government and Local and Regional Authorities, a forum for consultation should be created at the highest possible level between National Government and the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities.
- Such a forum could discuss the need for new or changed legislation and regulations, the need for capacity building in Local and Regional Authorities, how to finance the activities of Local and Regional Authorities, etc.
- When drafting new legislation or revising existing legislation that concern the activities of Local and Regional Authorities, not least legislation deriving from the EU, National Government should engage the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities actively in this. Rules for hearing procedures and involvement of Associations of Local and Regional Authorities in drafting new or changed legislation

should be formulated in writing by National Government and be binding for Ministries

- Active involvement of the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities is best done by letting their representatives join working groups drafting the new or changed legislation. The Associations of Local and Regional Authorities should as a minimum be provided with ample time to present their official opinion on the new or changed legislation.
- National Government should actively support that Associations of Local and Regional Authorities engage themselves in cooperation with their international partners with a view to exchange experience and stimulate good governance in Local and Regional Authorities across EU and the EU candidate countries.
- National Government should engage itself actively in the further development and strengthening of the work of Local and Regional Authorities. This might for instance be done in the form of “development projects” aiming at improving the performance and/or service delivery within specific areas that Local and Regional Authorities are responsible for, like public schools, health, social services, utilities, and infrastructure. In such “development projects” National Government should seek an active cooperation with the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities, and National Government should finance the major part of such “development projects”

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Conclusions from Workshop IV The Influence of Local and Regional Authorities on Policy-making in the EU: Lobbying, Networking and Co-operation

- Lobbying begins at home. There must be a “mandate” from the national associations on behalf of its members. National governments are key players in the EU decision-making process, so winning their support is important. Regions with legislative powers, where they exist, also have a big role to play within the national framework of EU policy shaping.
- Whatever the subject, local and regional authorities need to speak with a single voice. We need to work on a basis of co-operation rather than competition. The main European associations of local and regional government need to work together to reach common positions, as is the case on the Convention, and with the Committee of the Regions. We need to seek the highest common factor, not the lowest common denominator.
- Lobbying depends on excellent preparation. This requires good homework, analyses (potential allies, opponents etc.), and definition of strategy.
- But successful lobbying also requires opportunities for consultation. Consultation ranges from the informal at the very outset, through to the formal consultation via the Committee of the Regions. We need to get the formal dialogue of associations of local and regional government, as proposed in the White Paper on European Governance.
- Lobbying requires evaluation at all key stages
 - to review progress
 - to learn from the process
 - to consider the next steps
- The role of Brussels offices can be important in lobbying, provided they have the relevant mandate from “home”. They need to work in alliances with others.