



Local Councils' Association

MALTA

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The Committee of the Regions (CoR) President **Mercedes Bresso** where Malta has five members, emphasized that it is the responsibility of all European institutions to propose and create a positive snowball effect for the successful implementation of the European Citizens Initiative and that this can be an instrument of constructive dialogue between EU institutions, national, regional and local levels of governance, as well as civil society and citizens.

Indeed "The European Citizens Initiative is an instrument which is close to the heart of the Committee of the Regions as we want to ensure its success in order to make it a tool to reduce the gap between the Brussels epicentre and the daily reality of the EU citizens in their specific national, regional and local context", said **Mrs Bresso**. She further underlined the role that the institution intends to play in promoting and evaluating ECIs: "Our Committee can first of all raise awareness about the ECI and spread information about how it works, also through the activities of its members in their cities and regions, and make the link between citizens of different countries at local and regional level. We could also take part in the evaluation phase of successful citizens' initiatives by 'decentralising' parts of the process in order to reach out to Europe's regions and cities".

This is how it all started

Referring to the discussion of these two days I will focus my point on a few topics which were discussed in detail during the workshops.

First of all I would like to thank my team lead by Mr. Jimmy Magro who has worked hard for the success of this conference, I also want to thank all of you who visited our Island and took part in this interesting meeting.

Adding Value to town twinning in an economic and political crises is not an easy job.

So It is imperative to operate by creating networks and seeking complementarity in order to reach the proposed results with the greatest efficiency. Likewise, with the decrease in official development aid available due to the economic crisis, there is an even more urgent need to seek collaboration among all stakeholders.

We need a Commitment to European Integration – more Intercultural dialogue - Active participation – The exchange of ideas, initiatives and specific engagement of different groups is extremely important,"

If Added Value is important Decentralised cooperation is even more

New approaches to working at sub-state level must continue to emerge and must be further explored, such as alliances for development and partnerships between the public, private and third sectors and citizens.

In doing so, it is imperative that the added value of this type of alliance in regard to those imposed at state level be taken into account, as well as the aspects of this new instrument that lead to improved results in development:

The typology and profile of these agents that can and should intervene, as well as the role each one should play in promoting the alliance, in managing the process and risk, in financing, in monitoring, and distributing benefits;

The elements that can contribute to the success and/or failure of these alliances, the challenges and obstacles that must be faced and the partnership formulas that yield the best results;

The most appropriate fields in which to act to promote alliances for development; and the control, monitoring and assessment mechanisms necessary.

Local and regional governments and civil society and the private sector are important players and they should work together in cooperation and mutual support.

public decentralised cooperation is fundamental especially in the development process shared objectives – good governance and social inclusion

It is true that the people of Europe probably feel that they have little or no say in the way in which the EU is run, and that was one of the reasons why it was decided to create the European Citizens' Initiative, to give the 'real' people of Europe a chance to put an issue of importance to them on the EU policy-making agenda.

I wonder, do we think of ourselves as European citizens?

If so, what does this mean to us?

Do we know what rights we have as a citizen of the EU? And how we can use those rights?

We've talked about some of the rights of EU citizens – such as the freedom to travel, work or study wherever you want. But there are many more that we take for granted but which without the EU would probably not exist.

If we take up the right to live in another country, we also need the right to work there and to have our education and skills recognised wherever they were earned.

If we fall ill or have an accident, we want the right to be treated and reimbursed; if we move between different countries, we need to be certain that the rights we've earned (to a pension, for example) can travel with us. All of these things, I'm glad to say, are possible as a citizen of the EU.

Do we think of ourselves as European citizens first and Maltese or other nationals, second?

Will the thought of living and working, raising a family, buying a home in another EU country fill us with fear, or will it be as easy and simple to us as doing it in our own country?

Will you feel confident that the EU listens to us, that the people making the rules in Brussels or elsewhere really know what matters to us?

Will it be second nature to us to get together with our friends and family across Europe to suggest ways in which those law makers could make life easier for all of us.

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