

Speech of President Per Bødker Andersen at the workshop "Urban policy - the role of the Cities in the enlargement process", conference "Enlargement from a Local and Regional Perspective", Brussels, 5 July 2002

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The main aim of the Danish Presidency is to secure the enlargement process of the European Union. Enlargement is a task mainly between national governments in EU and in the applicant countries, to be finalised at the Copenhagen Summit at the end of this year.

There are a number of crucial problems to be solved in the process. Some are beyond our capacity to influence, like the Irish referendum later in the Autumn, the solution of the Common Agricultural Policy, and some other key issues.

I do think that I can say on behalf of the overwhelming majority of local authority leaders that a failure on some of these issues would be very troublesome to say the least. But this definitely does not mean that the subnational authorities have no role in the process. On the contrary, we represent a government level that is highly influenced by the enlargement, not only in the applicant countries but also in the present EU countries. Our role is in a high degree to implement the aquis and to secure that important aspects of the enlargement is successful from the grass-root level perspective.

Millions of future EU citizens are living in thousand of municipalities of all sizes. Virtually all of them have daily contact with at least some of the activities of the municipality, like when sending their children to school, walking or driving on municipal streets, disposing their waste or drinking water. Municipal authorities carry out strategic and spatial planning to the benefit of future generations of the cities and towns.

The influence of the European Union is clearly felt in all these fields of activity. Some policies have strong influence on urban policies, like the environment, other areas are only marginally influenced. There are also strong cross-sectoral influences, like public procurement or employment strategies.

In many cases it is difficult to distinguish between national legislation and the European Union directives. Believe me, if there is some good working routine or way of acting that is replaced by some complicated new national regulation, it is quite certain that a new EU directive is the force behind the change in national legislation.

As representatives of cities and towns, we of course do not object the necessary changes in legislation or way of work. Instead I think I can speak for all here that we welcome the EU enlargement and accept that the enlargement process need changes and adaptations in many ways. We must also remember that the accession countries are very different. The citizens and the local authorities of for example Poland will notice the EU accession in a different way than the citizens and local authorities in for example Estonia, or Cyprus for that matter.

I think it is possible to classify the impacts of EU accession in three categories. First, the local authorities will get access to a number of benefits, for example access to funding from the structural funds and other EU programmes. Secondly, the local authorities will experience a number of obligations that follow EU membership. These are mostly EU directives transformed to national legislation, and among these effects are public procurement regulations and employment strategies. Thirdly, the local authorities get access to a number of possibilities, and perhaps the most important of these are such possibilities that emerge from all new international contacts that are made possible in the European Union. After all, which local authority had international contacts ten or fifteen years ago at the level most local authorities have today?

Dear colleagues,

Cities and towns of Europe welcome increased European integration, and we welcome the enlargement of the European Union. We also would like to offer our special competence in many fields of activity to be utilised at the EU enlargement and consolidation process. I would even say that it is necessary to utilise local authorities better in order to get a smooth enlargement process.

I also would like to acknowledge that the European institutions have realised this and are aiming at increasing local authority level activities in many different fields. However, I also think that increased support to the adaptation process of local authorities is necessary in order to utilise the resources for a smooth transition period.

We have here a number of distinguished city leaders that will give their view on the role of cities in the enlargement process. After their speeches, there will be time for discussion.

We have also prepared a resolution to be signed by the local authority politicians present here today. We have access to a computer, and after agreeing on the wording of the resolution, we can print it and have it signed here and now, to be delivered to the European Institutions.

Thank you for your attention.

We representatives of local authorities from the applicant countries have assembled in a workshop in Brussels during the conference "Enlargement from a local and regional perspective". We have unanimously adopted the following

RESOLUTION

Considering that

Local authorities are the level of governance closest to citizens and are key actors in implementing the principle of subsidiarity. Their activity and functioning have an impact on the quality of life of citizens.

The EU enlargement will affect all local authorities in the new EU states, regardless of size, importance, location, wealth or role in the urban system. The difference is merely the scale of impact for the local authorities, not the impact itself. Almost all sectors of local authority activities are affected, some more and some less, some directly and some indirectly.

The role of local authorities in a smooth and successful EU enlargement process is vital. Local authorities need better support in order to fulfill their role and obligations during the enlargement process and after. The process is concentrated on national level; while implementation will be the task of local authorities.

The majority of the citizens in the new EU countries live in cities and towns and these cities and towns are the engines of development of their respective nations and regions.

Therefore, we representatives from local authorities in applicant countries call for

Increased awareness of the role of local authorities as the tool for a successful enlargement process - application of the *acquis communautaire*.

Increased support during the enlargement process from the European to national level. The support should be concentrated on tools for dissemination of information, training of municipal staff and certain financial assistance in order to reach European standards during the transformation period.

Increased awareness of the specific problems cities face, and the need for such problems to be solved by well adapted and targeted national and EU programs and financial support.