

Draft Resolution submitted by the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions
to the EPP Congress, Warsaw, 29 -30 April 2009

Regions and cities in the front line to fight the economic and financial crisis and climate change

Regional and local authorities are the first levels of government to respond to citizens' daily needs and demands and to bridge the growing gap between policy making and their everyday lives.

Local and regional authorities (LRAs) implement up to 80% of the EU legislative acts and their know-how contributes to the shaping of European policies. They deliver concrete solutions to the European institutions' proposals for legislation through opinions, which pay special attention to citizens' concerns in the regions, cities and municipalities of the European Union.

The financial and economic crisis has a serious impact on our daily lives; on job security, social, economic and financial stability and on the organization of society. At the same time, LRAs are deeply concerned about climate change and hope that actual targets to protect and improve the quality of our environment will be met regardless of the current economic difficulties.

Local and regional authorities are responsible for one third of public expenditure and more than two thirds of public investment in the EU. They are reliable and active actors that are able to propose efficient solutions to the crisis and to promote growth and jobs.

The EPP and its Group in the Committee of the Regions therefore propose the following measures aiming at strengthening the citizens' confidence in the European project:

On the financial crisis:

- saving banks and most SMEs are firmly rooted in their regions, which means they contribute to economic and social cohesion. LRAs should therefore be consulted in the event of a new architecture of the EU financial system;
- local and regional administrations should act more consistently to decrease administrative burdens in particular for SMEs and individuals; to efficiently spend public budgets and cut down tax burdens on the private sector and citizens; finally, to promote a more entrepreneurial culture, which takes risks and develops skills for starting-up new businesses;
- LRAs will be closely monitoring the subsidiarity principle – whereby action is taken at the most appropriate level of governance - in Community lawmaking with a territorial impact, by taking into account of the principles of proportionality and simplification;
- LRAs can initiate investment activities and mobilise structural funds, in partnership with central governments, for example in quality infrastructure and innovative projects, in order to create jobs and encourage involvement from the private sector;
- new solutions should be proposed by LRAs when those citizens who are affected by the crisis claim for public services: assistance, social aid, public services, preferential tariffs for borrowing;
- LRAs should be more efficiently involved in the Lisbon Strategy and its reform; regional reform plans should be incorporated into national strategic plans, while local indicators should be developed in order to assess the national plans;
- the EIB should support the financing and investment capacities of LRAs in the fields of innovation, research, knowledge and the development of public-private partnerships;

On the climate change targets:

- climate change has multifaceted impacts – natural, social and economic. Any decision should be taken as broad as possible at national and international level; however, the effects of climate change first and foremost strike the people living in our villages, cities and regions;
- adapting to climate change and mitigating its impact call for measures from the regional and local public administration; some are already proposed by local communities, but much more investment is needed with regards to **green infrastructure**: use of green procurement; green legislative incentives; broader use of ICT in administration; energy efficient/green buildings, transportation, lightening, heating, cooling, improving security of energy supplies; forestation of deserted lands;
- moreover, promoting green investments, including the use of renewable energies, will help regions and cities to create jobs and to promote new approaches for European economic growth;
- EU initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such as the “European Green Capital of the Year” and the “Covenant of Mayors”, should be widened, These activities recognise the important role played by local stakeholders in sustainable energy and tackling climate change; The "Covenant of Mayors", for example, received great political support from the regions and cities: more than 350 cities throughout Europe representing about 60 million citizens, have expressed their willingness to join efforts to go beyond the EU's energy objective of reducing 20% CO2 emissions by 2020.

The EPP and its Group in the Committee of the Regions is asking for support for these proposed measures for the recovery of the economy and the environment, especially in view of the European elections and the renewal of the European Commission.