



21 May 2014/Item 13 afternoon session

**Anders Hammarback (Chairman Local and Regional Government Standing Committee)
Speech to EPSU Congress
Local and regional Government Standing Committee Resolution “Strengthening local
democracy”**

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

The resolution from the local and regional government standing committee is the result of a broad and active discussion within the Committee in the run up to the Congress.

I make this point first as, when I look back to the two or three ‘highlights’ of the last 5 years, I want to start by highlighting the active participation of our Committee members. It is not easy to work in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual context, nor to be able free up the time to read all the papers, respond to emails, and attend the meetings. So, I would like to start by giving credit to all members for their engagement during the last Congress period. This has been fundamental to our own EPSU work and also to building social dialogue with our employers’ counterpart, the Council for Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

The other point I would like to flag up is on outcomes and what we have been able to achieve together in terms of influencing policies through our work in EPSU and in the social dialogue. We have been able to influence the discussions of the revision of the public procurement directives with a joint statement and a joint letter to the European Parliament rapporteur that we supported the inclusion of social criteria into public procurement directives. We also influenced the European discussions on restructuring to which local and regional governments are prone to. We had a very successful regional conference in Riga with a broad participation from EPSU affiliates on “re-municipalization local public services in Europe” with support from the Public Service Internal Research Unit (PSIRU) and other international researchers. I would also particularly like to mention the work we have started on social services jointly with the HSS in the Working Group Social Services, where we will aim to strengthen social dialogue structured and address the funding from local and regional governments to social services. We have also held several meetings with the firefighters and produced an inclusive brochure on health and safety of the profession in our sector. A highlight was certainly also the joint presentation with the employers of the social dialogue activities to the Economic and Social Committee of the Committee of Regions.

Now to our resolution that we propose. First some general remarks on the European political framework that EPSU will promote in the local and regional government sector.

EPSU will further ensure to promote local self-government, local democracy and the autonomy of local and regional government as citizens, workers and businesses depend on sustainable, inclusive and socially-just funded local public services and communities. EPSU will ensure that the diversity of local and regional government structures and competences in Europe are considered a strength, and not a weakness. And it will work towards a coordinated response to the challenges facing local and regional government, the provision of local public services, and to which its workforce is confronted. EPSU will also respond to EU policy proposals and case law stemming from the European Court of Justice there where appropriate to realizing common objectives.

Other points in the resolution can be summed up as dealing with seven broad areas:

- improving public services at local and regional level and asserting the importance of in-house provision and re-municipalisation of local public services, in particular to ensure adequate funding of municipal services
- Monitor trends of inter-municipal cooperation in relation to restructuring and de-centralization
- Gather information and facilitate exchange of information on local taxation systems and on the allocation of competences and responsibilities based on relevant experience from countries where such taxation systems exist.
- Strengthen social dialogue to improve the quality and efficiency of services, to develop sustainable workplaces, to tackle gender, race and other equality issues, and to provide jobs for young workers.

Overall, we stress that Europe needs a positive agenda for public local services, based on shared values of solidarity and equality. An agenda in which local democracy and decision-making play a fundamental part.

We look forward in the Standing Committee to translating the Resolution into a dynamic and concrete work programme for the coming years. One area which we would like to propose already is to develop a trade union guide on the implementation of the new procurement directives- to see how social and environmental criteria can be used in the procurement process.

To sum up, we look forward to contributing, along with the other Standing Committees, to building an effective EPSU, and to welcoming new members into our daily work.