

European Council of Spatial Planners

Conseil Européen des Urbanistes

COMMUNIQUE:

Results of the Conference and General Assembly in Bergen on 18-20 May 2006

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

One of the newest members of ECTP, the Forum for Kommunale Planleggere in Norway, invited delegates from ECTP to a professional conference on *Implementation and effectiveness in planning: Private partnership and democratic challenges*. It was followed by the regular Spring business meeting of the Council.

Delegates from Norway and all over Europe heard presentations from distinguished speakers covering a wide range of experience of private-public partnership from Alto Adige/South Tyrol in Italy, France, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Estonia, Norway and London, with reflections, too, on the overall EU regional planning framework into which such activity must fit.

Despite differences in the administrative and legislative environment, common features emerged, notably that whatever the formal model, informal partnerships and dialogues develop within the framework of the project and can be a distinct factor in their success; that developers and investors appreciate the certainty that spatial planning can promote, and that planners' long view and emphasis on process are valuable, and even that a longer term and larger-scale regeneration can be "kick-started" by well-chosen threshold investments. However, speakers were aware that the partnership way of working can present some difficulties, and that some planners still struggle with exposure to the relevant financial instruments. Finally, the Norwegian experience, characterised by the state's revenues from North Sea Oil and gas having the potential to dominate all investment, showed that *public-public* partnerships are also changing, becoming more like private-public relations. An unexpected benefit is therefore that overall a more co-operative environment results.

The lessons from this experience are that key factors in success are good leadership and openness, good planning and management, and that partners can trust in some well-established processes.

The presentations at the conference will shortly be available as PDF files in the Discussion documents area of the ECTP website (<http://www.ceu-ectp.org/e/disdocs.html>)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Business meeting)

The President particularly welcomed the representatives of the Romanian association of planners (APUR), attending for the first time.

The business of the General Assembly began with a full discussion of the Policy and Strategy document prepared by the new Secretary General of ECTP, Debbie Sorkin, and adopted by the Executive Committee as a "route map" for the Council's work in 2006-7. It contained a celebration of what ECTP achieves despite its tiny budget (no paid staff, no office!) and based largely on the efforts and expertise of talented individuals and the support of their home organisations. It is worth quoting this in full; member associations might like to include this in their reports back to their own members:

ECTP ... has a key role in standing up for, and representing, the overall role and importance of spatial planning in a European context. It can engage in dialogue with government and local, national and European level, and can address national and international audiences all over the world, not just in Europe; in fact, it is probably the only planning organisation at pan-European level that has true authority to do so. In

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addition, through its wide-ranging work, it supports and builds links with planners and planning organisations all over Europe, setting standards of education and conduct for the planning profession, and celebrating examples of good planning and encouraging best practice through its European Planning Awards.

Proof of this came in a reassuring letter from European Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner, who acknowledged the wisdom of ECTP's call for more input from planning practitioners in the next phase of the work of the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON).

The Policy and Strategy document proved a good basis for discussion of two key current topics: Education and Recognition of Professional Qualifications. These are closely linked: mutual recognition of qualifications can only come about if there is confidence that the education and training of planners are harmonised (but *not* uniform) across European countries. The report of the ECTP Education Task force was adopted to form the basis of a new policy. It will gain additional sections detailing information on definitions of what planners do and what their skills and competences are.

Two ECTP Task Forces are hard at work on the implementation of the New Charter of Athens – ECTP's vision for sustainable European cities in the 21st century. Tales of Cities will be a web-based publication featuring inspiring stories from real (and perhaps imaginary) cities, while Regional Planning Towards Territorial Cohesion aims to do for sustainable development at the regional level what the New Charter did for cities: provide policy-makers with soundly planning based principles deriving from shared values.

Elsewhere in the meeting, the Council agreed to the next stage of creation of a small office for ECTP in the Brussels European Liaison Office (BELO) near the European Commission and other key European Institutions; admission into membership of the German Academy for City and Regional Planning Research (DASL), preparatory work on next year's Biennial of European Towns and Town Planners in Budapest, and a very positive result in the 6th European Urban and Regional Planning Awards (the "Grand Prix"). There have been 35 Awards entries from 13 countries, the jury has met twice and the winners have been chosen. Their identity remains a closely-guarded secret until the Awards Ceremony in Seville in November, for which the arrangements are well in hand with AETU, the Spanish member of ECTP, whose much-appreciated support was acknowledged with gratitude.

The meeting ended with declarations of commitment of all member organisations to the work programme and their own part in it. The Council meets again in Sevilla in November.