

1st SEMINAR OF EUROPEAN TOWN COUNCILS

PRESENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

Cáceres, 28, 29 and 30 September 2008

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INTRODUCTION

AECEO was born of the need to face the new reality of the Europe of the 27, which, in spite of offering clear opportunities in every respect, is nevertheless fraught with differences of a political, social, economic and institutional nature. In this context, various public and private entities from Extremadura have decided to join forces to address these challenges.

The objectives of AECEO are as follows:

- To promote cooperation on an economic, social and institutional level between the institutions, intermediaries and companies of Extremadura and other similar institutions and organisations in the European Union.
- To become spokespeople in European Union countries, not only for the regional government of Extremadura, but also for local and provincial administrations, on all matters relating to the economic, social and democratic development of the region.
- To contribute to the economic and social development of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, by means of cooperation agreements with the countries that have recently joined the European Union.

In order to achieve these objectives, AECEO, a non-profit organisation, carries out activities as it sees fit, including those mentioned below:

- Promoting and organising congresses, seminars, conferences, exhibitions and other dissemination events.
- Promoting the integration of entities from Extremadura in networks and associations for General and Local Development, at a national or European level.
- Transmitting innovative experience gleaned in European countries to entities from Extremadura.
- Promoting local products from Extremadura in Europe.
- Developing cooperation projects and programmes and general participatory activities within the countries of the European Union, with particular emphasis on the new members of the EU.

These activities conducted by AECEO are of a sectoral and territorial nature. Its territorial activities include the promotion of cooperation agreements

with regions or countries from Central and Eastern Europe, to increase the influence of Extremadura in this geostrategic area.

AECEO's sector-based activities include thematic seminars, organised with a view to contributing to the strategic positioning of its regional partners, decision-making at European level and involvement in governmental forums, universities, NGOs, town councils, venture capital companies, trade unions, etc.

Since 2004, AECEO has been developing its sector-based activities, successfully organising the 1st Seminar of European Universities, the 1st Seminar of European Social Organisations and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Seminars for European Trade Unions.

These seminars have afforded the University of Extremadura, Non-Profit Organisations from Extremadura and national trade unions with headquarters in Extremadura the possibility of learning about experiences at European level, while sharing know-how and good practice with similar organisations from the countries of the European Union and contributing to the design and management of European strategies in each of the above-mentioned fields.

By organising these initiatives, AECEO has brought the organisations of Extremadura closer to Europe, allowing them to participate in working networks recently established by the European Commission and institutions and entities within Europe.

One of the most significant aspects of the sectoral activities of Asociación Extremeña de Cooperación Este-Oeste (AECEO - Extremaduran Association for East-West Cooperation) for the first half of 2008 is the organisation of the 1st Seminar of European Town Councils, to be held in Extremadura.

The event will bring together representatives from 100 town councils in Europe, which, together with 50 town councils from Extremadura, will discuss various current topics relating to municipalities at the plenary session, while working groups will be established with a view to reaching conclusions and drawing up recommendations, that will in turn lead to the preparation of a conclusion document to be distributed to all town councils in the European Union.

One of the key aspects of this seminar is the focus on promoting cooperation between local corporations from Extremadura and other local corporations from Europe on various current issues arising across Europe.

1st SEMINAR OF EUROPEAN TOWN COUNCILS

1. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The 1st Seminar of European Town Councils has three general objectives:

- a. To promote dialogue regarding horizontal and sectoral matters affecting European town councils in relation to the process of European integration, their role in this process and the change demanded by the development of the European society.
- b. To promote the establishment of a stable forum for cooperation and cooperation agreements between European town councils.
- c. To develop the following sectoral aspects:
 - Municipal Governance Models
 - The future of municipal services
 - Municipal Cooperation in Europe
 - Municipalities and the environment
 - New models for the management of municipal services
 - Local development and employment

2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To establish municipal policies for intercultural development.
- To promote pooling of information, contacts and work through joint activities carried out in a stable forum for cooperation between European town councils.
- To draw up a strategic local development document with the conclusions drawn and recommendations made during the Seminar.
- Follow-up to the proposals reached at the meeting.
- Approval of the "Declaration of Cáceres" on European town councils, to be agreed in advance by the local authorities attending the seminar. It will include recommendations for future work by local corporations within Europe.

3. CONTENT

The matters to be discussed at the event can be divided into three major blocks:

- a. Municipalities in Europe: The political role of municipalities in European integration will be discussed, and questions such as what the municipalities of Europe want and whether municipalities are involved in the process of European integration will be raised. The various municipal governance models existing in Europe will also be assessed, as will the existence and function of European networks of municipal cooperation.
- b. Municipalities and development: Local development and employment will be one of the matters discussed at the round tables attended by players from the areas of business, municipal politics and trade unions. This block will include the presentation of the paper: municipalities and the environment (town planning and energy efficiency).
- c. Municipalities and services: The municipal service management models and the direction being taken by municipalities in Europe will also be examined, as will specific practices developed within town council districts and how the information society has been applied in the management of municipal services.

4. ACTIVITIES

The following activities will be developed during the 1st Seminar of European Town Councils, with a view to ensuring compliance with the objectives described above and in relation to municipal governance:

- Addresses by relevant European, national and regional dignitaries and key local authorities, who will open and close the event and promote dialogue between the participants.
- Specific papers given by experts on matters affecting European municipalities. These themes will be planned prior to the seminar.
- Working group discussions on sectoral matters of general interest and affecting municipalities, to be run by facilitators who will ensure that the debate is a model of dynamic discussion and that solid conclusions are drawn.

- The presentation of conclusions in a plenary session, where all participants will learn of the results of the Seminar.
- Approval of the "Declaration of Cáceres", which will summarise the conclusions drawn and include recommendations for the future of municipalities in Europe.

5. WORKING METHOD

The Seminar will take place in 3 rooms, suitably equipped for interpreting in 4 languages: Spanish, French, English and German. There will be 2 types of working session:

- a) Plenary sessions: for the presentation of papers and discussion of the 3 principal themes of the seminar and the presentation of the conclusions reached by the sectoral working groups.
- b) Working group sessions: for group discussion of ideas and proposals on specific sectoral themes and for the preparation of the strategic document of the seminar.

6. ASSESSMENT

Given that AECEO's purpose is to promote cooperation agreements of an economic, social and institutional nature between the entities and institutions of Europe, the work it carries out in relation to all of its activities must be of the utmost quality.

The fact that it belongs to various different European networks is an endorsement of its experience, as is its cooperation on several levels with the government of Extremadura and the backing it has had in the last 5 years from important dignitaries from the Extremaduran politics and society.

AECEO will make good use of the European local and rural development networks to which it belongs. This strategy will involve, in particular, the East West Network Europe, EWNE, the European entity of which AECEO is a member, and a co-organiser of the seminar.

The fact that it is to head the follow-up to the event and future cooperation activities, from a technical viewpoint, will ensure continuity in the relations of the City Council of Cáceres with the other town councils attending the seminar, from a political perspective.

The assessment criteria relating to the objectives of the seminar will be developed and presented in a final report on the event. These include:

- Pertinence: The degree of adequacy of the results and objectives of the Seminar will be measured.
- Efficacy: This will ascertain the degree to which the initial objectives of the seminar have been achieved. The seminar will be assessed according to the results achieved.
- Efficiency: The achievement of results in relation to the resources used will be measured.
- Impact: This will help to analyse the effects of the seminar, positive or negative, expected or unexpected, direct and indirect, collateral and induced.
- Viability: The degree of continuity through time of the positive effects of the seminar will be assessed.