



**Progressive Policies for cities should answer to the everyday life problems and give hope for for the younger generation**

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Dear Friends,

Thank you FEPS and my dear Ernst for inviting me to take part to this event “Greece Forward: Progressive Policies for Cities of Today and Tomorrow” which allows me the pleasure of seeing two good friends from the time we were in the European Parliament, Anna Diamantopoulou and Anna Karamanou.

As you can see, here around this table there are three women and three men who will open the first panel. So the first recommendation I would give to anyone who wants to develop a progressive policy is to include women at all levels of decisions as they are the main users of the cities in their different functions.

In such a difficult social and economical situation in many European countries where we are facing so many challenges, we have to think of a policy which should at the same time be an answer to the everyday life problems but also gives hope for the future for the younger generation.

We know that the financial means are no longer there for many areas so the solutions can't be ‘top down’ at all levels but should include ‘bottom up’ proposals. The necessity of a close coordination between all levels and citizens is also strongly required to avoid any waste of energy and means an answer to real problems.

More than this, we have to be conscious of the change in the sociological composition of the population in our cities. The citizens today want to control all the decisions taken by the political representatives to be sure of the proper and efficient use of their money. More educated or simply more informed, they want to take part in the whole process of management which can have an impact on their everyday life: not ordinary consumers but also actors of shaping their future in matters such as environment, health, mobility, housing and local investments.

So if we want to be close to the needs of the citizens, which means first listening and understanding, the first step is to promote inclusive projects in which all groups have to take part: young people, the elderly, women and also the economic partners on the territory.

A main instrument to fight against urban poverty and to foster inclusive employment and economic development is partnership. This cannot be done as previously. So promoting cities' cooperation could be a new opportunity to bring the concept of cooperation against the system of competition in local territory and bring social cohesion.

This could be also promoted, for example, at the very basic local level by using the system of participative budgets for the citizens, inspired by the initiatives of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. It is not easy but necessary to bring back trust and to show the reality of local management. Transparency of actions is a major key to a democratic and progressive policy and should clearly be a political attitude.

But today's citizens also want the opportunity to get recognised in their specific identities in each area, to resist to globalisation and loss of identity roots. Using cultural initiatives to bring life to the cities, for example by the organisation of a common event in which many specific groups of citizens are acting and not consuming can be a major asset to reactivate a common sense of collective creation and solidarity with a recognition of the abilities of everyone, acting for the community. Culture is also a real progressive tool for cohesion.

Last point but not least in our political engagement is the protection of the public services which are the best protection of the everyday life for all: the access to all services e.g. banks, post office, administration, health services, schools, shops and mobility, is the first guarantee of respect owed to everybody, which prevents the feeling of abandon, neglect which consequently leads to fear, anger and enables anybody to instrumentalise all these frustrations.

In these matters we have to be prospective.

Just a few suggestions according to my local experience ...let's discuss now!