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Local work inspires us!

Debate

Throughout the ages people have worked together to manage common problems and challenges. By sharing experiences we learn from each other. This is our starting point when it comes to European collaboration which is based on people wishing to cooperate at several levels. We are talking about interplay where committee meetings at municipal level and meetings of ministers at European level both have an impact on the future and development.

Last week we took part in the conference “From Reaction to Action – Managing regional challenges today and tomorrow, held in Flen and arranged by the Sörmland Regional Council and the Stockholm Region. Here we discussed the Lisbon Strategy, which is the EU members’ way of tackling economic and social challenges that follow from increased internationalisation of the world economies, ageing populations and pressures on the environment. The strategy is a toolbox to be used by the members for achieving the goals. The real work in realising the Lisbon Strategy takes place on a day-to-day basis in all our municipalities and county councils. This is where we find businesses – new and old, large and small – that grow and provide jobs. Here we find schools and universities that prepare people for life, and here we find health care and caring services that provide care and security in the community. The huge amount of work carried out by people every day within these activities is crucial for managing problems and exploiting opportunities together. This is where Europe’s future is created.

In order to maintain real welfare it is necessary to ensure that unemployment is kept low and that there are jobs for everyone able and willing to work. Some jobs will disappear, either because they belong to yesterday, or because they can be carried out more efficiently in another part of the world. It is crucial, however, that we continuously create the right conditions for new jobs to replace the old ones as well as a social safety net that builds bridges for an attractive and safe crossing over from the old to the new. This is about maintaining and developing the Swedish model and having a well planned labour policy where it pays to work, with driving forces that start and run businesses and where it is cheap and simple to employ people.

Economies are increasingly becoming knowledge economies. Industry is also changing and becoming more knowledge-oriented, often requiring a highly skilled work force. It is therefore important to invest in research and education by having schools that focus on knowledge and early follow-up to ensure that those who might have fallen behind receive help directly.

In order to exploit opportunities we have to cooperate at all levels. Examples of collaboration and continuous development are found not least here in Sörmland. Flen and Oxelösund have demonstrated how they work to achieve the Lisbon Strategy, thereby taking on their share of responsibility. This is positive and at the same time leads to increased participation and understanding of European collaboration. The Lisbon Strategy can only be realised if local and regional representatives create broad partnerships to identify the needs present in their own municipalities and regions. In order to make further use of this experience, the government will invite to a dialogue on how to strengthen the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy at local and regional level.

During the conference in Flen, we were able to share many exciting ideas, experiences and tangible examples from day-to-day work in the regions. This is something we can learn from and that we can use as an inspiration in our own daily work.

Ander Borg (Moderate)
Minister for Finance

Cecilia Malmström (Liberal)
Minister for EU Affairs