

Flanders and Catalonia intensify cooperation

1 July 2015

The President of the Government of Catalonia, Artur Mas and Flemish Minister-President Geert Bourgeois met today at the Hotel Errera in Brussels where the **2015-2017 Work Programme** was agreed upon and where both senior officials signed a joint political statement between their respective governments.

On March 3rd 2015 President Artur Mas received Minister-President Geert Bourgeois at the Palau de la Generalitat in Barcelona, where cooperation between both governments was already discussed at length. Today, in Brussels, they met once again at the signing of the new **2015-2017 Work Programme** which focuses on the key priorities for bilateral cooperation.

The new 2015-2017 Work Programme, signed by senior officials from both administrations, sets out the priorities for cooperation between the Catalan and Flemish ministries and agencies in the coming years. Specifically, the 2015-2017 Work Programme focuses on key areas of collaboration at both an institutional and at the European level:

- In terms of **agriculture and environment**, the emphasis by both governments will be on the **organic sector and renewable energies**.
- With regard to **Youth Employment**, both parties already have a long-standing and intensive cooperation to reduce unemployment among young people.
- Moreover, the Work Programme's main focus is on **innovation and internationalisation**. Similarly, both Flanders and Catalonia have worked together successfully in these areas over the years.

During the event Minister-President Geert Bourgeois highlighted that the new work programme "**will enable us to deepen and intensify the existing cooperation**".

Furthermore, in addition to the Work Programme, a **Joint Statement** was signed by the Catalan and Flemish heads of government. This joint political statement is aimed primarily at intensifying cooperation between the two territories at the EU level, for instance, within the framework of the Europe 2020 Agenda and the European Semester implementation. Above all, Flanders and Catalonia emphasise their commitment to consolidating the subsidiarity principle in European affairs and their belief in a Europe of the citizens, which is built from the bottom upwards and remains close to its citizens. Also, the regional parliaments in the European context should play a more prominent role in the EU decision-making processes.

On his behalf, the President of the Catalan Government emphasised that "**Flanders and Catalonia have important political responsibilities in policy areas that are relevant at the EU level. For this reason, the more we work together, the stronger our voice will be heard in Brussels, also the capital of the European Union. We believe this agreement will reinforce our cooperation, strengthen economic governance and boost growth. On the other hand, with Flanders we also share a certain vision of what building a Europe of proximity should truly be: respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity and of the will of its different nations. The joint declaration stands for the desire to build closer alliances with those who share the same goals and extend them to our potential allies within Europe**".