

Cultural Village of Europe

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Theme: State and local municipalities.

The Italian Republic is made of Municipalities, Provinces, Regions and State. The Municipalities, Provinces and the Regions are autonomous Institutions, with their own Statues, powers, functions, according to the principles stated in the Constitution.

"The more than eight thousand Italian Municipalities have been and are the main protagonists off the history of our country , whose roots and traditions are based on their historical patrimony. They are the natural places of the civil aggregation, in which the feeling of Identity and the democratic conscience of the rights and duties of the citizens grow up and develop themselves. We protect the freedom and we set the concrete basis for the harmonic development of the whole country, just starting from the Municipalities".

In this way the President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi expressed himself, by emphasising that the protection of freedom and the harmonic development of the whole country are based on the Municipalities, in which the citizens' irrnediate and direct participation allows the true values of democracy to be concrete.

Assuring the local communities, as well as their administrations, autonomous powers, adequate equipments and sources, granted by Institutional and financial renewed and consolidated systems, represents the base needed to build up, on solid basements, the present and the future of the country.

Before issuing considerations as regards the relationship between State and Municipality , I believe it is necessary for us to give a brief explanation about the Italian administrative Institutions like Regions, Provinces, Municipalities, to let you better understand the institutional, administrative and economical relationships connecting them.

The Municipality represents its own community, takes care of its interests and promotes its development. It has got its own functions. The Municipality manages all the administrative actions affecting the people and the territory within the field of social services, of the setting and use of the territory and the economical development. They are in charge of their own administrative functions and of the ones the Regional and National law transfer to them. They Provinces and the Regions embody autonomy as regards the managing with economical matters (income and outcome).

Within the Italian law, the Province is the intermediary Institution, between the Region and The Municipality. The Region determined, with its own individualization and existence, the need to redefine the role of the Provinces.

The Province embodies its own administrative functions, as regards the managing and distribution of services (such as Transports, roads, formation. ..).Moreover it has got a function of coordination, promotion and proposal as well as programming functions.

The Regions were introduced in the 70s. Later in the 90s when the regions hadn't completely acquired a full legitimating, the idea of Federalism emerged.

With Federalism we intend a way whose starting point is the demonstration of the advantages of a decentralized Government, in which we don't have only one politics all over the National territory, but the opportunity to develop different politics within the inferior systems (such as Regions, Provinces and Municipalities), embodying an autonomous Governmental power, of course within their own competences

The legislative power of the Regions is divided into subjects of exclusive competence and subjects of concurrent competence (State-Region), for example: building and dealing with the territory is a matter of exclusive competence of the Region.

The small communities then have got another institutional level they have to refer to: the mountain communities. The mountain communities originated more than thirty years ago. They originated during the first half of the 70s. It deals with relatively young institutions if compared to the Municipalities, dating back to centuries before than the Italian State and if compared to the Provinces embodying more than 10 years of history. The mountain communities are Institutions over the Municipality developing politics aimed to give advantages to the small mountain municipalities, characterised by a small demographic consistence against an extended territorial dimension, rich in environment sources, useful especially to the plain as well as to the coast. In the mountain areas, where there are all sorts of problems, (inadequate basic services, transport problems...) there must be an Institutional strong organism which faces all the organisation and managing problems of the small municipalities.

I hope to have been able to represent in a clear way, the relationship connecting the Institutional organisms of the Italian Republic. Of course the relationship doesn't finish here. On the contrary I would say that right now we are getting into the real theme we are appointed to focus.

In 2001 a part of the Italian Constitution was modified. It is the reform of the Vth Title, which affects in a relevant way the world of the local autonomies: Giving legislative competence to the Regions. The new constitutional article 117 makes a strict list of the subjects reserved to the exclusive or concurrent competence of the State. The Region have exclusive competence on all the other subjects.

As regards the law dealing with local Institutions, the Constitution recognises to the State the power to issue laws only in the following subjects: The electoral laws, the Institutional organisms and the basic functions of the Municipalities, Provinces and Metropolitan towns. The latter ones, even if they are recognised by the Constitutions, they haven't been activated yet.

Tuscany, our reference Region for the Municipality of Pergine, has ruled according to an innovative system for the last years. It tried to create a qualified regional territory with a qualitative life style characterized by social and economical relationships, able to play an important role in our country, since it is competitive on an international level and protagonist on a global context.

Even if we made a lot thanks to the numerous comparing moments and with coordinate actions, in some contexts there are excessively centralized laws. For this reason the system of the Tuscan Municipalities claims a stronger role as regard the regional programming. To do this it is necessary to promote a bigger culture for a common programming of all the municipalities together, by sustaining in particular the smaller ones. We must promote the associations as regards the functions connected with the economy and Programming.

The Municipalities are interested to plan a development which is able to assure well being to all Tuscan people. In this way it must experience new life styles and life models which respect the environment and the landscape, seen as the ground of the sources in Tuscany.

From what I expressed, on a legislative level, it can seem that everything works well. But it is not like this. In our country the current Government aims to restore a centralized politics, through a financial documents with articles which are going to cancel the steps of the reform.

The actual realization of laws and reforms can be cancelled by the Governmental action which imposed limits as regards the expenses and limits to the local autonomies. The reform of the Vth title of the constitution states the limits within which the Municipalities can operate, but it emphasizes also important autonomy principles, which can be actually activated. Among these important principles there is the principle stating that the administrative activity in our country is made first of all by the Municipalities. Ultimately we have seen several times that there have been invasions of the relative fields, with the tendency to sum up to the central level important administrative functions.

Independently from the political colours, in the last year, especially in 2005, the Italian Municipalities have moved to protest against the limitation of their autonomy achieved by the central Government, by asking a change in the relationships between State and Municipalities. From the side of the Government and of the Parliament there must be the complete assumption of responsibility against an economical and social situation which is particularly serious, the one in which the Italian Municipalities live. At the moment the Italian Mayors are busy to try to reaffirm their strategic role, which is vital for the small Municipalities which, I state again, are the real and ground structure of Italy.

The small Municipality must take care of agriculture, welfare, tourism, healthy services, social and cultural services and a lot of other things.

It means to take care of everything since a small Municipality has got its own problem referred to the various mentioned themes. Lots of times unfortunately, we forget this or we ignore this.

Even if it operates within an economical negative situation, it must give answers everyday, by organising services, as well as by issuing politics aimed to protect the weaker social classes: old people, young families and it is called also to face problems connected with immigration. It answers to all these things with a lot of initiatives and solution, by trying not to get money from the tax collection. What does it mean the tax collection? Just to give an example this year the State covered the expenses in the Balance of the Municipality of Pergine with a percentage which doesn't go over the 20% of the total balance. It means that the remaining 80% of the balance is represented by our own income (citizens' taxes) and by the ones of other Institutions like Province and Region who are involved in definite projects and, when it is possible, by European Funds, always on pre-established projects. It seems to be right for us to affirm that a Municipality must be always able to manage its sources and to find some other source, but it is deeply unfair that the central Government reduces the taxes to try to get support among the citizens and on the other hand it leaves to the Municipalities the responsibility to reduce services, to increase their prices and accuses the Municipalities to have wasted common sources and with a little sense of responsibility. The citizen sees the Mayor and the local administration he represents as the first institutional referent and he turns to him/her. This happens, as everybody here know, being all of us the administrators of the small realities, of small Municipalities. And this is particularly difficult when You are not always able to give positive answers. Hence this is the reason why everybody must be willing to define through the cooperation, hearing and programmes, intervention lines which have as main purpose, the efficient organisation of services and the creation of a community of solid citizens, able to face the big transformations happening in our society.