Short report:

Smart cities and communities - a step towards more balanced and sustainable EU regional development?

29 November 2018, Poligon, Ljubljana, Slovenia

A workshop *"Smart solutions for regional development: the case of "Bike-Sharing"* and a round table *"Smart cities and communities - stepping stones towards smart regional development and a future foundation for better quality of living in the"* were held on 29th of November in Poligon, Ljubljana, Slovenia, jointly organised by European liberal forum (ELF), Zavod 14, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit and Institute Novum.

The event was focused on a very topical issue, smart cities and communities and their close relations to the EU Regional policy. In nowadays digitized world smart solutions, based on new technologies and inter-connectivity, are the next logical stepping stones and platform which will drive the regional development. Although population growth and urbanization in EU are currently not a serious issue, certain regions and cities are becoming more aware of smart solutions and how they can economically, environmentally and socially improve QoL (quality of living) of population and consequently diminish regional disparities on both EU and national level.

The workshop's purpose was to presented an example of smart solutions - bike sharing systems, examples of their implementation in Slovenia, their impact and obstacles cities face with their deployment. Furthermore, also the forthcoming ELF&Zavod14 publication *"European Regional Development: Fate, Fortune or Good Policies?"* was presented to the event audience. During the Round table, with the help of the guest speakers we assessed the potential of current implementation of smart solutions in Slovenia and EU within the EU Cohesion policy framework. We also addressed the potential obstacles and possible solutions for faster and more widespread implementation of smart solutions, locally and regionally within the EU.

The event was attended by Mr. Simon Zajc, State Secretary (Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning), who pointed out in his address that development of so-called smart cities must start with effective and strategic planning, with cities recognizing their potential and developing a vision, followed by concrete policies and measures in order to achieve that vision whereas. In this context, technology development and digitalization play an important part.

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