

# **XXII<sup>nd</sup> European Days of State Territorial Representatives 28 – 29 – 30 May 2015 – ISTANBUL (Turkey)**

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## **Profession STR**

What a beautiful subject : "STR profession", for these XXII<sup>nd</sup> Days!

What a beautiful subject to close 23 years of activity at the direction of EASTR!

But what a responsibility with this subject that already summarizes the function, to have to synthesize the synthesis!

Beyond the EASTR / OECD survey, which brings clarification and comparison of how a profession comparable but different according the countries is exercised.

Beyond the "country index" that the results of the survey will complement on our websites to give an exceptionally informed and comprehensive look on the STR's function in Europe, the challenge of this synthesis, by identifying good practices from one another, is to show what is a "good STR", if not an ideal STR.

Now, one is not STR for one's own sake.

One is a good STR through the eyes of the citizens, the economic actors, the local authorities, the Government and through his own eyes.

That will be the plan of my intervention.

### **For the citizens.**

The citizens first, because the STRs are first in the service of citizens.

King's Commissioners or Napoleonic prefects, the STRs are immersed in the inevitable context of an economic, financial and social crisis, as well as a breakdown of the society which reinforces the need for benchmarks and structures.

The economic and material resources are not sufficient to guarantee the territories prosperity. It is not even the quality and the educational level of the population that lives there. It is the institutions that make the strength of nations.

Therefore, promoting the initiative through a function of animation, the cooperation through a coordination function, and confidence through a regulatory function, formal and informal, opens a royal way to the STRs' future in Europe. Anchored in a territory and independent of special interests, committed to impartiality, they are more likely than anyone else to promote initiative, cooperation and trust. The fall of the Berlin Wall 25 years ago, caused the emergence in Europe of a number of new countries, geographically small. This had the effect of maintaining the illusion that decentralization is sufficient but also the temptation of central governments to intervene on the ground without maintaining presence.

Experience has shown that the requirement of proximity of the citizens called a State territorial representation, capable of listening to them; STRS professionals of the relationship and who for the citizens provide recourse. Still the STRs must have the humility of exercising their duty of proximity and the courage of taking their positions of authority, by assuming their duty of neutrality in the service of the public interest.

### **For the economic actors.**

Our partnership with the VEOLIA Group, all these last years, has well shown it to us: when you are a company director, and even more when you are a large private operator of collective service, you need:

- to have a public "boss";
- to know who is this boss;
- that he can constitute a recourse.

It's up to you, companies and large private operators,  
to say what your needs are.

It's up to you, STR, to favor the good adequacy of all the public actors' answer to these needs.

If the social dialogue is the business of the companies and the social partners, the social conflict, by pulling out the social dialogue from the economic framework, inevitably challenges the STR.

Whether he has or not authority over the economic and social control services, whether he is or not the person in charge of the police implementation, the STR can be a lever of reconciliation and a solutions facilitator.

The administration is often seen as the one who has the power to prevent. The STR, for his part, has for mission to be the one who makes things possible.

Generally, faced with the economic actors, governance weaknesses are often an obstacle to development.

The STR has to deal with a development that makes the subjects both more difficult to understand and to communicate because we have entered the era of complexity.

It is not expected of him to be an expert but to be a "turnkey" of public action and sometimes of private action. The specialty of the STR is to be a generalist!

Faced with economic and social actors, the STR first appears as a kind of insurance agent, who has to predict the crises in order to control the risks. He must plan just as the insurance agent has to modelize. But his role goes further: he does not just observe and record to compensate. The STR has very often to organize the management of the crisis and the return to normal. And besides, sometimes deemed unnecessary and costly in the period of monitoring and prevention, every one turns naturally towards him from everywhere when the crisis arrives, considering absolutely natural that he is the one who manages it...

### **For local authorities.**

It is sometimes admitted as evidence in our countries that decentralization is synonymous with progress and democracy. However, the transfer of skills may tend to skid and the rise of autonomies can threaten the stability of States. The example of Scotland and Spain in this respect deserves to be carefully observed. The citizens first need proximity and equity whatever the system that provides them. Faced with the inequalities between territories and the risks of patronage, the territorial State is not yet obsolete!

Two traditions coexist in Europe:

that of the countries where the State presence on the ground is historically and culturally natural, with the risk for the STR to consider that his function exists by law, regardless of the results of its action;

the countries where the STR has a function to perform before detaining a status, where the results of his action are naturally at the heart not only of his concerns, but of the future of his function.

Beyond these different traditions that are fading, a common requirement now applies to all European STRS :  
the requirement of their effectiveness and efficiency.

Whether the country is centralized or decentralized, the State must now justify itself.

To this end, the tasks are not lacking.

Today, for example, at a time when European growth tends to concentrate on cities, the territorial State has to organize the distribution of the fruits of growth across all the territories.

Equality of territories is an empty word.

There are assets, weaknesses and complementarities of these territories, which require active intervention of the territorial State.

The most common function performed by European STRs vis-à-vis the local authorities is that of control of legality of their deliberations and decisions. Of course, this function provides a very concrete grip of the STRs on the communities they control. That said, it is more commonly a strictly legal control, sometimes formal and which is subject to the final discretion of the judge.

It is probably not by the exercise of the control of legality that the STR will tomorrow ensure a real role vis-à-vis local authorities.

It is rather by being the one who will organize dialogue and coordination among the various levels of government and the one who will find opportunity syntheses in the respect of legality.

That said, it is not certain that the future of an advisory function of the STR is not linked to the future of their control function.

### **For the Government and the politicians.**

Whether he has personally gained political legitimacy by exercising managerial functions or whether he is a career civil servant, the STR is constantly in contact with the politicians.

They expect from him above all a regulatory role. Pessimists say that in the eyes of the Government, the best STR is the one you never hear of... but they are pessimistic! At a time when the regulation cannot be done solely by the law enforcement, the STR can effectively fulfill this role of regulation only if he can also be a facilitator and if, without ceasing to be loyal, he demonstrates the impartiality necessary for his credibility.

Hence the importance of the positioning he must know to be present on the ground. He must find the right balance between the need of rising up and of being close to the citizens and the local actors. Without doubt it is this, "to embody the State," that is to say, giving it flesh without betraying its nature. It's from a STR who had succeeded that I heard these wonderful words: "The prefect is the State who shakes hands with you."

If the STR is not first a man or woman of communication, he should in any case be able to communicate to give reassurance.

All in all, the professionalization of the STR's function imposes itself tendentiously by the growing diversity of the required skills and the duration of acquisition of the necessary experience. There is no more room for "amateurs" STRs. We can blame them of doing too much but we will not forgive them for not doing enough.

In this spirit, the recent Hungarian experience of STR creation is very interesting if we observe that, to create the function, 70% of the STRs have been named among members of parliament, which ensured their political legitimacy, but that at the time of their renewal, they must choose between the two functions.

Let us not forget in the European Union countries the community dimension of the STR's function. The exchanges that drive the EASTR participate modestly but concretely in the European construction, sometimes by reconciliations, always through a better understanding among all.

### **For the STR himself.**

To be a good STR, is at first to demonstrate his/her capacity ability to perform his/her functions, with the cocktail of very diverse professional qualifications and personal qualities, which is required, and that you have so ably highlighted in your responses to the survey that served as basis for the works of these days.

Then it is to exercise a role in the respect of the law, in all circumstances, but also in the respect of personal and professional ethics.

These are not confined to the respect of confidentiality or reserve duty, mentioned during our days.

This is also the question of a just balance between loyalty to the Government and guarantee of equal treatment of the citizens and communities.

It is, of course, the taste for the public service and the worship of the general interest.

It's finally to know how to demonstrate discretion, even modesty. The STR is a kind of territorial cement, without which everything can collapse, but which mustn't be seen too much.

But it's hard to be a good STR alone. Hence the interest of a fellowship with colleagues from the same country. Hence the interest of alive and friendly national STR associations.

Finally, it is, of course, the value of an active participation in the EASTR, that a French prefect dared to call "the Prefects International," offering them the slogan: "STR of all countries, unite!"

It is all the more necessary and justified that, through the wide variety of our administrative systems, we can see, by our meetings, that some countries are less centralized than it appears and others more than the idea that we have of them. That's what made J-M Bricault, say in his synthesis of last year in Liège, that "the STRs have a serious air of family."

### **Conclusion.**

The STR has a position that exceeds his remit.

The function of STR resists well enough. The example of the Land of Hessen, Germany, testifies it for the center of Europe. That of Italy for the South. Finally the example of Finland in the North.

The function is anchored neither at first by the culture of governance in a number of countries, particularly those where the STRs are more or less the heirs of the Napoleonic prefect, or even, when it exists, by the centralization of the territories management, calling logically the presence of STR.

What the history of States shows, from Alexander the Great to Mustapha Kemal via Emperor Augustus, of whom we must not forget that he was prefect, is that the STR's function is justified in any State, by the double imperative to ensure both security and proximity in the territories (see Alexander the Great, founder of the STR with his governors).

Today in Europe, the concept of security has changed considerably.

It is less and less an external issue justifying the appointment of military STR-governors.

It is not only a domestic issue of public safety, of fight against crime or maintenance of law and order, functions which are not always exercised by the STRs in Europe.

As Mustapha Kemal has said, a "sovereignty based on the barrels cannot be maintained." The current issues are also those of sanitary safety, food, industrial, etc.

But above all, security issues have become transverse. The current concept is that of global security. The fight against terrorism is not independent of food, energy or environmental safety.

Therefore, whatever the extent of his functions, there is a natural role of synthesis for the STR in Europe.

He/she is the one who, beyond particular points of view, must take a sound overview of his territory, to understand its motives, promote its cohesion and dare I say, love it.

In that respect, proximity and security are inseparable.

More than ever, the function of STR is necessary to the future of our countries.

To exert real influence on their territory, the STRs will have to be able to both demonstrate the usefulness of their function and to arouse confidence in the way they exercise it.

Compared to the past, even the recent past, we continue to evolve in a world increasingly globalized. We need new STRS for a changing world. No STR can consider the territory of which he is more or less responsible as independent of the others. The territories are increasingly interdependent, on regional, national, European or even global scale within the political, economic, social and cultural groups to which they belong.

This shows the usefulness of a confident and active collaboration between the STRs, fastened to a territory, and large educational institutions, engaged in the STRs training and cross-border and observers of the organization and territorial management.

The participation in our works of training institutes associated to EASTR is an asset, which fully justifies its formalization through the "Academic Committee", that the Board of Directors of the Association decided to create in November. It is an open window into the development of you prospective reflection, you who are often attached to ministries that willingly define themselves as "ministries of emergency."

This also shows the interest of exchanging experiences and good professional practices between STRs throughout Europe.

This finally shows to what extent, tomorrow even more than today, I'm sure that the EASTR will naturally become a must.

Fair winds and long live the EASTR!