

REGIONS & CITIES OF EUROPE

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Special: 'Europe 2020 with regions and cities'

- Polish Minister for Regional Development, Elżbieta Bieńkowska, on priorities of the Polish Presidency
- Seven key initiatives seen by the Committee of the Regions
- Christine Chapman presents the Committee of the Regions' Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform

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The EU's assembly of regional and local representatives



Territorial pacts, an urgent need in order to tackle the crisis

In order to prevent a further setback, which Europe cannot afford, the efforts required of all parties, as well as the opportunities available, must become everybody's concern.

I would go further and say that one condition is essential to the success of European growth policies: partnerships between the stakeholders in question, with shared objectives and reciprocal commitments. These are what we call territorial pacts.

While the Member States are preparing to debate the Europe 2020 strategy and their national reform programmes once again at the summit in June 2011, it is clear that little notice has been taken of these recommendations.

It is true that, at the Committee's plenary session in May, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, said some very encouraging things regarding his will to cooperate with local and regional authorities, inviting the Committee of the Regions to the preparatory meetings for future European Councils.

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has also stated clearly that the Commission would encourage the Member States to conclude ter-

ritorial pacts. Furthermore, several national governments have expressed their interest in this approach.

However, there is still a long way to go. Although the idea appears to be gaining ground, too many national reform programmes have been presented to the Commission without any real consultation of regional and local authorities.

Do the Member States realise that, by failing to create a broad partnership, they are seriously jeopardising the Europe 2020 strategy's chances of success? If these territorial pacts are not implemented, Europe risks wasting another 10 years, as it did in the case of the Lisbon strategy.

Experience has shown that, unless it is strongly anchored in the territories, a top-down European strategy can only produce mediocre results. Sharing responsibilities — what we often call multilevel governance — is now a recognised practice in the European Union, and there is little doubt of its added value. No area must be allowed to become the exception to the rule.

The Europe 2020 strategy carries a clear political message: Europe can only overcome the crisis, and offer more than 500 million citizens a future, by opting for growth which respects social, economic and territorial cohesion, and which continues to be based on the fundamental principle of solidarity. Territorial pacts are the ideal operational instrument for achieving this.

I therefore call upon the Member States to involve local and regional authorities more closely in the drawing up and implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, so that macroeconomic and employment policies, as well as structural reforms, pursue shared objectives within the context of a broad partnership.

Europe can no longer afford to make mistakes. It must bring together all stakeholders so that they can move in the same direction, that of strengthening our social and territorial model. ■

Mercedes Bresso,
President of the CoR's

Mercedes Bresso,
President of the
Committee of the
Regions with **Herman
Van Rompuy,** President
of the European Council



It is Poland that will be responsible for supporting and channelling the energy of the European Union during the second half of 2011. When addressing these short- and long-term challenges, the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union can count on the support of European local and regional authorities. 'The Polish Presidency's emphasis on the issue of cohesion policy reform stems from its firm belief that this policy constitutes the foundation of sustainable, balanced development of the European Union as a whole and that it is contributing towards the improvement of the economic and social situation in every region of Europe.' This is the message of **Elżbieta Bieńkowska**, Polish Minister for Regional Development, who sets out her priorities for the second half of 2011 below.



Elżbieta Bieńkowska,
Polish Minister for
Regional Development

Cohesion policy is the foundation of sustainable, balanced development of the European Union as a whole

While Europe is gradually emerging from the crisis, the EU is putting into place the foundations of its strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Given this context, what are the priorities of the Polish Presidency?

The Polish Presidency has set itself three objectives in the domain of cohesion policy. The first is to ensure that negotiations on the cohesion policy legislative package run smoothly. The second is to highlight this policy as a development policy fully in line with the intentions and implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. We also wish to accord it greater political importance. We are therefore organising a formal meeting for ministers responsible for cohesion policy in the framework of the General Affairs Council.

The Polish Presidency's emphasis on the issue of cohesion policy reform stems from its firm belief that the policy constitutes the foundation of sustainable, balanced development of the European Union as a whole and that it is contributing towards the improvement of the economic and social situation in every region of Europe. This issue takes on crucial importance at this difficult time of turbulent financial markets and global economic uncertainty. The values underlying cohesion policy, and the principles of multilevel governance and partnership which inspire it, mean that the Polish Presidency believes the policy has a key role to play in achievement of the aims and vision of development set out in the Europe 2020 strategy.

This is why the link between cohesion policy and the Europe 2020 strategy will be at the core of discussions at a high-level political conference, to be attended, amongst others, by the Polish President, Mr Bronisław Komorowski, on 24 November in Poznań.

The CoR represents local and regional authorities in Europe, which implement 70 % of EU legislation. Can you tell us how the Polish Presidency plans to work with the Committee?

The Polish Presidency attaches the greatest importance to cooperation with the Committee of the Regions. We are already actively noting the requests and the opinions which it is preparing on the future of cohesion policy. So that the voice of European regions can be clearly heard in discussions on the content of future cohesion policy regulations, we have asked the Committee to draw up two exploratory opinions on an integrated approach and on the role of local and regional authorities in implementing the EU 2020 strategy. We are also relying on the Committee of the Regions to cooperate actively in supporting measures designed to give a higher profile to the role of cohesion policy in the European Union framework. This was one of the subjects I touched on in talks with the Committee of the Regions' President, Ms Mercedes Bresso. We discussed the measures which were most important to both parties and which needed to be taken as soon as possible. Moreover, the role played by the Polish regions, which cooperate very successfully with the Committee of the Regions, should be highlighted. I would like to draw your attention here to the four conferences to be organised with the Committee of the Regions during the second half of this year. They will all examine subjects to which we attach great importance, such as the TEN-T networks, the Eastern Partnership, the urban dimension of cohesion policy and the Baltic Sea strategy. These are issues of key importance to Committee of the Regions members.

What is the Europe 2020 strategy?

Europe 2020 is the growth strategy adopted by the European Union for the next 10 years. In response to a changing world, the European Commission and the Member States believe that the EU must become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three priorities must ensure high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

Specifically, the European Union has set five ambitious objectives in employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and energy to be met by 2020. Each Member State will adopt its own national objectives in each of these domains. Practical action undertaken at European and national level will underpin the strategy.

Europe 2020: the Polish Presidency listens to the CoR

As part of the preparation for its Presidency, Poland has asked the Committee of the Regions to draft a series of proposals on the role of local and regional authorities in attaining the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. **Markku Markkula** (FI/EPP), member of Espoo City Council (Finland), is responsible for coordinating this work. Alongside specific opinions on the seven flagship initiatives of the European growth strategy, the CoR wishes, via this opinion, to share its vision of responsibility with all stakeholders involved in promoting economic growth in Europe.

The CoR suggests implementing partnerships for growth through 'territorial pacts'. Herman Van Rompuy recently called the proposal 'a very fruitful idea'. How will the Polish Presidency encourage discussions about this tool with Member States?

The Polish government firmly believes that the principles of subsidiarity and partnership are key to cohesion policy and that the success of the Europe 2020 strategy depends on them. This is also why the Polish Presidency believes that it is not a question of merely upholding these principles: they must be explicitly reinforced in the framework of future cohesion policy reform. These issues will be amongst those discussed under the Polish Presidency in the framework of official negotiations on the cohesion policy regulatory package.

Poland believes it advisable to examine with due care and attention the Committee of the Regions' idea of territorial pacts, which promote public dialogue and encourage public authorities at every level to take shared responsibility for achieving regional, national and European development objectives. In Poland, the idea of territorial pacts is already being applied at grassroots level in the form of 'territorial contracts', as part of the framework of the national regional development strategy. These contracts meet the Committee of the Regions' recommendation that the form of agreements between national, regional and local powers be adapted on a case-by-case basis to cater for the special features of the Member State concerned. The Polish Presidency will also promote as wide a regional input as possible in the drafting and finalising of basic strategic texts at European and national level. ■

CoR document
CoR opinion 72/2011
on 'The role of regional and local authorities in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy'.

Within the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Union has agreed on the new growth and employment drivers which are the subject of seven flagship initiatives. The majority of these initiatives have been submitted by the Commission in recent months and accompanied by recommendations for their implementation.

Each initiative requires the European Union and the national authorities to coordinate their efforts so that they are mutually reinforcing. The Committee of the Regions has received referrals for each initiative, to enable it to examine the proposals to be negotiated. The seven CoR rapporteurs below present their analyses.



Markku Markkula,
Member of Espoo
City Council (FI/EPP)

Digital agenda for Europe

'Local and regional authorities (LRAs) are amongst the main recipients of the agenda's recommendations and can be key drivers for its implementation. These proposals will secure the quality of life and social and economic activity of citizens and will stimulate more efficient and personalised public services as well as local businesses.'



Roger Knox,
Deputy Mayor of East
Lothian (UK/EA)

Innovation Union

'Any intention to use smart specialisation as a way of prioritising already leading regions or local authorities while leaving other areas not or under-supported should be avoided. This would be against the overriding principle of EU territorial cohesion.'

Marc Schaefer,
Member of Vianden
Municipal Council
(LU/PES)



Henk Kool,
Member of the Executive
Council of The Hague
(NL/PES)



Youth on the move

'There is a close link between poor attainment at school and socioeconomic disadvantage, resulting in young people who are neither employed nor in education or training. Breaking this cycle is a challenge for local and regional authorities across Europe and must be the priority of this European initiative.'

An agenda for new skills and jobs

'The European Union has been the catalyst for changes to national employment law systems. Continued efforts and encouragement of structural change towards further social stability are necessary.'



Michel Lebrun,
Member
of the Parliament of
the French-speaking
Community (BE/EPP)



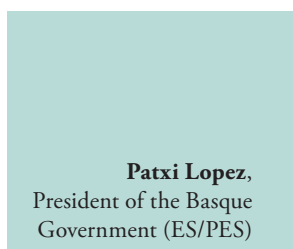
Christine Chapman,
(Member of the National
Assembly of Wales,
UK/PES)

Resource-efficient Europe

'Even if the national level retains a vital role in coordinating investments, a substantial proportion of renewable energy production and of reduction in energy consumption, in buildings especially, stems from initiatives taken at local and regional level.'

European platform against poverty

'I welcome the fact that tackling child poverty is referred to as a priority of the flagship initiative. I regret, however, the limited commitment to doing this and the narrow perspective taken of child poverty.'



Patxi Lopez,
President of the Basque
Government (ES/PES)



Siim Kallas,
EU Transport
Commissioner

An industrial policy for the globalisation era

'In the process of transforming European industry, adequate protection should be guaranteed for workers in sectors that are likely to be affected by the changes, and options for re-employment should be provided, as should retraining and support for self-employment.'

Also at the plenary session ...

EU Transport Commissioner, **Siim Kallas**, has been invited to attend the plenary session to be held on 30 June and 1 July. CoR members will be debating European Commission proposals for delivering a 'single European transport area'. The CoR is particularly interested in the implications for regional development and support for economic activity in Europe's regions and towns.

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In 2010 the CoR decided to give the **Europe 2020 platform** a political face by appointing two coordinators: **Christine Chapman**, member of the Welsh National Assembly (UK/PES) and **Nichi Vendola** (IT/PES), President of the Puglia Region. The two coordinators will represent the Platform in its dealings with other institutions and partners, besides giving a political impetus to its work and reporting to the CoR Bureau. Christine Chapman explains her work and role.

'Grassroot activities need to be reflected in the "political discussions" in Brussels'

You coordinate the work of the Europe 2020 platform set up by the CoR, particularly for economic and social issues. Can you tell us what this work consists of?

My role, together with President Vendola of Puglia, is to oversee the work of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, give a political steer, and act as voice for its work in Brussels.

We have both emphasised the importance of making Europe 2020 relevant to people on the ground, and we have sought to reflect this in the work of the platform. For example, in my rapporteurship on the Europe 2020 flagship initiative to combat poverty and social exclusion we carried out a survey of the platform's members seeking their views on this important issue. This was a tremendous success, with over 40 responses from across Europe, and a plethora of examples of good practice and challenges in our local communities.

We have also sought to give a stronger focus on Europe 2020 in the Committee of the Region's Open Days, which is reflected in the programme for 2011, and we would like to see this strengthened even further in 2012.

All of this adds up to ensuring that grassroots activities are reflected in the 'political discussions' in Brussels, including the 'Committee of the Regions Monitoring Report' produced in December each year — by the platform — in view of the European Commission's annual growth survey, to contribute to the Europe 2020 governance cycle.

In your opinion, have local and regional authorities assimilated this strategy developed at European level? Have Member States shared these goals at local and regional level?

I think the picture is mixed — on the one hand it is talked about a lot, certainly this is the case in Wales, in the National Assembly and with those involved in European activities, although I think this is very much linked to the EU cohesion policy and regional development. EU funding is something tangible, that people can understand, as it makes the EU more real, less distant to ordinary people. However, if you were to carry out a survey of ordinary people across Europe and ask them if they understand what Europe 2020 means I suspect the story might be a little different!

Turning to the question of whether Member States share these goals in terms of engaging local and regional authorities, well the results of the first Committee of the Regions monitoring report also suggest the experience is mixed, which lends weight to the view that a more concerted approach should be taken to engage all levels of governance effectively in helping to deliver the objectives of the strategy. We will see what the next monitoring report shows — and I would encourage colleagues from local and regional authorities across Europe to share their views with us in the Committee of the Regions, so that we have a clear and up-to-date picture.

Herman Van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso have expressed interest in the concept of 'territorial pacts' as put forward by the CoR. In your opinion, how can regions and cities advocate this concept with their own national authorities?

In its essence the territorial pact is a commitment to enshrining a multilevel governance approach — the European, national and local/regional levels working together towards achieving commonly agreed goals and objectives, such as Europe 2020, EU cohesion policy.

In Wales we take partnership very seriously, working closely with local authorities and with the business and voluntary sectors in particular. It is through dialogue that we can build trust, and through trust we can work together to make a difference to the communities where we live. The Welsh government has been involved in the preparation of the UK national reform programme together with the other devolved administrations.

I would encourage regions and cities to use the information available from the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform to inform their engagement with their own national authorities — taking account of their own particular constitutional arrangements — as I think the monitoring platform has a role to play in making available information on best practice in multilevel governance approaches across Europe. ■

What is the CoR's Europe 2020 platform?



Economic growth, supporting employment, and social cohesion — because applying EU laws and recommendations is part of their daily work, Committee of the Regions members bring practical expertise to the European debate. However, they can also base their analyses on consultation of a network of over 150 partner regions and cities, known as the Europe 2020 platform.

The CoR forwards initial proposals for negotiation by the European institutions to the network. The aim is to gather the maximum number of responses and innovative approaches from the regions at an early stage of discussions. This provides input for the work of the CoR, especially in its discussions with representatives of other institutions, thus ensuring that the ideas of local and regional decision-makers are taken into account in the debate.



On the banks of the Aegean — Europe seen from Thessaloniki, Greece

Identity card

Name: Thessaloniki

Region: Central Macedonia

Country: Greece

Mayor: Ioannis Boutaris

Population: 363 987

Twinned with: Bologna (Italy), Bratislava (Slovakia), Cologne (Germany), Nice (France), Constanta (Romania), Limassol (Cyprus), Plovdiv (Bulgaria), and others.

Thessaloniki is Greece's second city after Athens, the capital. Its geographical situation at the northern apex of the Aegean Sea, in the region of Central Macedonia, and its port and airport facilities make it one of south-eastern Europe's main commercial and tourist centres.

However, the debt crisis has hit Thessaloniki, just like the rest of Greece. Unemployment, which has jumped over the last two years to 15–18 %, is higher in the north of the country than the south, affecting younger people and women in particular. The population's purchasing power has fallen accordingly and many more highly qualified youngsters and entrepreneurs are migrating abroad. 'There's less business, and many shops are closing down,' notes the Mayor, **Ioannis Boutaris**, a member of the CoR.

'The main hope for a solution is in the tourist sector and the forecasts for this year are rather optimistic, with a possible rise in numbers of 10–15 %,' affirms Mr Boutaris. Falling prices have the unintended advantage of lowering costs for foreign visitors. The Mayor has moved to capitalise on this opportunity, promoting tourism through personal visits to countries like Israel and Turkey, highlighting the multicultural history of the city, where Ottoman, Jewish and Christian orthodox communities have coexisted for five centuries.

The city is a gateway for cruising in the eastern Mediterranean, served by a modern passenger terminal less than 1 km from the city centre, as well as an important trade and transport hub for the whole of south-eastern Europe. The EU is making a substantial contribution to upgrade transport infrastructures. It is investing some EUR 380 million in the new Thessaloniki metro, with 9.6 km of lines and 13 stations. A further EUR 86 million is available for transport infrastructure, developing the Athens–Patras–Thessaloniki rail network and road

links, and EUR 58 million for urban regeneration. With Greece's current socio-economic problems, EU support is even more urgent than ever.

Greece's economic adjustment programme has brought sweeping changes in public administration. The Kallikrates reform, which came into force in January 2011, is designed to save money and rationalise local government by cutting the number of authorities. Since the beginning of the year, Thessaloniki has halved the municipalities in the urban area to six. The Mayor hopes that by devolving decision-making, the Kallikratis reform will enable Central Macedonia to set its own investment priorities, too.

Nonetheless, in 2012, Thessaloniki will celebrate 100 years as part of Greece. Plans to mark the centenary include an ambitious regeneration programme with a new metropolitan park, redevelopment of the waterfront, and pedestrian zones in the city centre, taking 15 years to complete. The EU is contributing EUR 36.5 million from the ERDF. 'The new seafront has become the symbol of Thessaloniki,' explains Antonios Krystallidis from the local 'Absorption of National Strategic Reform Framework' (NRSF) managing authority. 'The project strengthens the intensely local character of the area and its role as a 'pull' factor for locals and visitors alike. This is a project that breathes life into the city.'

But in the current economic environment, celebrations will keep within a strict budget, and focus on the city's youthful profile. In September, Thessaloniki will find out whether it has been chosen as European Youth Capital for 2014. 'If we are selected, it will boost the image of the city and the morale of its inhabitants,' adds the Mayor hopefully. ■



Thessaloniki City:
church

Ioannis Boutaris,
Mayor of Thessaloniki





Nichi Vendola, President of the Puglia Region (IT/PES), was authorised by the CoR to respond to the referral from the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the plenary session of 30 June to 1 July, he presented his work on sustainable water management.

CoR document

CdR 5/2011:

Opinion entitled 'The role of regional and local authorities in promoting sustainable water management'



The Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** (BE/PES), has coordinated the CoR's position on the reform presented by the European Commission on state aid for services of general economic interest. He describes his work.

CoR document

CdR 516/2011:

Opinion entitled 'Reform of the EU state aid rules on services of general economic interest'

'Water is a public asset which encompasses the right to life'

What was your main objective in drawing up this opinion?

Water is a public asset and as such cannot be subject to market forces and competition rules. Furthermore, it encompasses the right to life. Without plunging into the details of public or private water management, which vary between Member States, it should be pointed out that all assets relating to water services are public and that the guiding principles for all management must be protection and efficiency. These principles must be reaffirmed at European level, particularly now when the European Commissioner is about to launch the action plan for water, followed by a comprehensive assessment of European water policies.

What are the key proposals in your opinion?

Water is an immense environmental problem, which embraces our ability to conserve, capture, process and recover it. Discussions about water involve many issues and raise many questions about drought and flood cycles and flood prevention. A new water policy needs a new development model and stronger links between water, waste and energy. These three issues can be combined to form just one: building a sustainable environment and developing the global economy.

How can local authorities act to protect this public asset?

The EU must act to support concerted planning and negotiations between institutions, regional administrations, local authorities and the social partners. These negotiations can yield a broad consensus on a project based on an abstract concept such as sustainable development which is now universally accepted. Local and regional authorities can run initiatives and campaigns and implement agreements and arrangements, and they have a duty to use water as a lever to secure a new development model. I believe that local and regional authorities are the key tier of government, and this tier is championing the adoption of a water pricing policy which, with due regard for national and local prerogatives, is based not only on the 'polluter pays' principle which already features in the WFD (2000/60) but also on the 'user pays' principle. It must also be pointed out that, above and beyond the short- and medium-term profit, water must benefit all users. We all have responsibilities in terms of reducing water consumption and improving wastewater, use of water resources and innovative recovery methods and reuse and recycling of water, as well as in terms of introducing land management models whereby crops and irrigation techniques are in harmony with water availability. ■

State aid and public service: 'The reform must simplify matters where necessary'

What are the potential consequences at local and regional level of the proposed reform presented by the European Commission? What recommendations would you make?

Local and regional authorities are involved on a day-to-day basis in planning, organising, funding and delivering public services. These services must meet the increasingly fluid and diverse basic needs of local residents in the areas of employment, housing, transport, education, health, childcare and care for the elderly, culture, sport and leisure activities.

The reform must simplify matters where necessary, especially for social or highly localised public services, and bring clarity to community issues which are not always easy to implement at grassroots level.

The opinion therefore sets out practical recommendations such as decoupling monitoring of over-compensation from conditions for contracts and selection by companies given responsibility for managing the public service.

Systematic or even mandatory recourse to a call-for-tender system would overburden local and regional authorities. Thanks to a higher *de minimis* threshold, some local public services in the fields of social inclu-

sion, the fight against exclusion, and the development of cultural, sports or social and educational activities could be excluded from the realm of controls on state aid as they have no influence on competition.

What is your view of the Commission's approach?

The reform launched by the Commission was accompanied by a broad public consultation exercise, important for a complex subject which is extremely relevant to local and regional authorities. Simplification and clarification of rules is a key aspect of the reform, and was shown to be necessary during the consultation exercise.

As regards the Commission's drive to make services more efficient, this is an issue very much at the heart of the political concerns and responsibilities of local and regional authorities, but it does not fall within the Commission's remit which is restricted to monitoring competition.

It is also unfortunate that the legal basis for the revision of the legislative package is limited to monitoring state aid and competition: it does not take account of changes made by the Lisbon Treaty, particularly Article 14 which stipulates the use of the co-decision procedure with regard to public services. ■

‘I hope that accession negotiations with Croatia can be concluded in June or July’

What was the starting point for your work?

The Commission’s report on the enlargement strategy and main challenges 2010–11 covers Iceland and the countries of the western Balkans. As Chair of the Committee of the Regions’ working group on the western Balkans, I try to visit these countries as often as possible in order to meet people face to face to find out what they think and to tell them about EU policy. When I started drafting my opinion, I went to see the ambassadors of Iceland and most of the western Balkan countries in Brussels, and had detailed discussions with them on the position of local and regional authorities in their countries. I also made contact with the local and regional government associations in those countries. I think it is always important when drafting an opinion to get as much information as possible from the people directly affected. I gained a lot of experience from my trips to the western Balkans and from events I attended there that I have incorporated into the opinion. My motto is ‘Listen and take action’.

What are the key messages you’ll be defending with this opinion?

For me, the key thing is to convince people in the enlargement countries that local and regional authorities are very important to European integration: a unified Europe can only be built from the bottom up, not

from the top down. Politicians in these countries need to recognise that the European Union wants to help, in a spirit of solidarity, to rectify the differences — which in some cases are considerable — in people’s living standards between regions. In Serbia, for example, the standard of living in the poorer border regions is just one tenth of that in the region around the capital, Belgrade. Local and regional policy-makers and administrations therefore need to be properly trained so that they can design appropriate projects for the EU regional funds. Many young people in the western Balkans migrate from the poor regions to urban centres, or even abroad, because they do not see a future for themselves at home. Creating jobs and decent training opportunities in these areas should reduce out-migration, but local and regional authorities will need more powers and more funding for this to be possible. That is why decentralisation is so important in the enlargement countries’ efforts to align with the EU. Croatia’s development at local and regional level is very much on the agenda in view of its future accession to the EU. It has managed to implement the EU’s requirements in this area, and I therefore very much hope that accession negotiations can be concluded in June or July. Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there is unfortunately still no sign of progress on reform, presents a much greater problem. ■

‘A European policy for more efficient transport’

What was your main aim in drawing up this opinion?

I would like to explain the two main objectives of my involvement as Committee of the Regions rapporteur of the opinion on the European Commission’s ‘White Paper on the roadmap to a single European transport area’. The first of these objectives was to welcome the efforts made in drawing up a strategic document of considerable value defining the main objectives and steps needed to ensure that the European transport sector becomes more efficient and stronger in terms of balance, sustainability and social cohesion.

In these terms, the White Paper addresses the main questions on the future of European transport policy. The second objective was to emphasise the need to ensure that the White Paper clearly and fairly meets mobility challenges of direct concern to the various European regions and urban centres. In particular, my concern was to evaluate the way in which major issues are linked to the most remote and outlying regions and to connections between the continent and border regions.

What are your main proposals?

I feel that the objectives set out in the White Paper are very ambitious. I would therefore also like to see steps and stages defined, taking into account the additional strategic objectives which have already been defined by the European Commission. These stages could become part of a monitoring process to ensure successful implementation of the vision set out in the White Paper. I also believe that while transport has to do with individuals, the White Paper fails to discuss some key accessibility and mobility issues.

This document should also include measures to promote more sustainable green travelling habits, to encourage the use of new transport modes and technologies, and to secure wider acceptance of full internalisation of external factors in the total costs of mobility. Finally, if these objectives are to be successfully achieved, it is essential to have a clear funding model. This issue is practically overlooked by the White Paper, despite being a subject of vital importance for European cities and regions, especially in the outermost regions. ■



Franz Schausberger is a former President of the Salzburg region (AT/EPP) and current Chair of the CoR’s working group on the western Balkans. He drew on this experience when drafting the Committee’s opinion on progress made by the candidate and potential candidate countries towards accession.

CoR document

CdR 5405/2010:
Opinion entitled ‘Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2010–11’



Following a statement by European Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas, **António Costa** (PT/PES), Mayor of Lisbon, defends the CoR’s position on the single European transport area, and tells us about his priorities.

CoR document

CdR 101/2011:
Opinion entitled ‘White Paper: Roadmap to a single European transport area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system on transport’



Roberto Pella,
conseiller municipal
de Valdengo (IT/PPE)

‘Sport is a tool for regional and local development’

Following the recent publication by the European Commission of its communication on developing the European dimension in sport, the CoR is drawing up an opinion on sport and regional development, to be submitted for adoption by the CoR plenary session next October.

Roberto Pella (IT/EPP) is a local councillor from Valdengo and advisor on youth for the National Association of Italian Municipalities. Assisted by Demetrio Albertini, Vice-President of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), he is responsible for coordinating the institution’s position on this subject. European Parliament Vice-President Mario Mauro (IT/EPP) is also participating in the debate on sport and regional development. ‘Sport can be seen as a tool for local and regional development, urban renewal and rural

development’, comments Roberto Pella, who has already submitted his initial recommendations to members of the EDUC commission.

To feed into this debate, the CoR and the European office of the Olympic Committee held a conference on 24 May on ‘Regional policy and sport’. CoR President **Mercedes Bresso** was a speaker at the conference together with MEP **Sophie Auconie (FR/EPP)** and **Gian Francesco Lupattelli**, President of the European Capitals of Sport Association (ACES). Mercedes Bresso emphasised the role of sport in promoting social and regional cohesion. She felt there were synergies between sport and tourism, especially alpine winter sports, watersports and golf tourism. Sport, together with transport networks, could also help to improve public infrastructure. ■

Have your say...

Because you don’t always agree with us, or because sometimes you have your own concerns, or because you’d just like to share your vision of Europe, the *Regions & Cities of Europe* team would like to let you have your say. So, if you agree, in future issues this page will be yours. We will publish your letters, comments, points of view and personal experiences of Europe.

‘Local governments have the power to change the world’

‘Little is known about how far local governments are engaged in the fight against climate change. Local climate and energy action is in particular linked to local challenges as the impact of climate change is already a reality at local level — through extreme weather conditions, floods and droughts impacting people and property. Local governments are motivated to act.

I believe that this is due to growing recognition among the whole spectrum of local political parties that it is a good idea to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions — thereby shaping city council opinion. Some leaders actively support pooling mitigation efforts for the global good, while many recognise potential local benefits, such as energy independence and more stable energy prices, local job creation for smaller companies, more efficient use of resources leading to reduced costs, and sustainable urban development — all help to ensure a decent quality of life for the citizens.

However, local governments also need to be empowered to act — at many different levels. This ranges from framework conditions developed by national and other government levels, with legislation needed to support actions. Yet financing remains the key concern. Financing actions, from planning to implementing measures, and to monitor developments — this is the main issue you will hear when speaking to

mayors and councillors. Funds are also needed to get and keep capable staff who can deal with these processes.

The EU has a huge responsibility in this field, and if we want to maintain our global leadership in climate and energy matters we need to pick up the pace and get all level of government on board, as well as citizens, business and industry. The potential is there, the money is there. To optimise impact, redirect it to work in partnership with local governments that have the power to change the world. ■



Henning Jensen,
Municipal Councillor
of Næstved Municipality
(DK/PES)

CoR document

CdR 104/2011:
Opinion entitled ‘Climate change mainstreaming and the future EU budget’



How does it work?
Send us your texts by e-mail to regionsandcities@cor.europa.eu or by post.

We accept texts in every official EU language. If published, they will be translated. Make sure you include your full name, address and telephone number. Note that the space available is limited so we reserve the right to select which texts are published, and to edit them for the purposes of length and clarity.

We look forward to hearing from you!

EPP

In the eyes of the EPP Group, the involvement of young people in the Europe 2020 strategy and in the wider debate on the European project is crucial, for they are tomorrow's Europe. It is within this context that the EPP-CoR Group launched the study visit for Masters students, which recently celebrated its fourth annual edition. The 30 selected students from 25 Member States were given the opportunity to witness first hand the exciting activities and debates which develop during the EPP Group meeting and CoR plenary session, thus gaining an insight into the importance of local and regional authorities throughout

Europe. Indeed, many of the participants over the years have expressed an interest in dedicating their Master thesis to subjects relating to local and regional authorities and their role in the EU.

Furthermore, with Europe's strategy for the coming decade at the heart of the group's activities, the EPP has continued to pursue its political commitment to create ownership at all levels in order to ensure its success. To this effect, the brochure on 'Building Europe 2020 in partnership — Regions and cities implementing the flagship initiatives', which results from the recent work of the EPP-CoR Task Force on Europe 2020, is being widely disseminated and was handed to **Herman Van**



Rompuy, President of the European Council, upon his visit to the CoR. Subsequent issues with best practices and a DVD are due in the autumn for the group's seminar on 'European regions' industrial policy in the globalisation era' on 12 October. ■

PES

In cooperation with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), the PES Group launched in April a series of lunch-time debates on 'Sustainable Europe', bringing together high-level speakers from the CoR and beyond, in front of an audience of Brussels-based stakeholders. The first debate focused on 'Challenges for EU cohesion policy', with key interventions from COTER President **Michel Delebarre**, CoR rapporteur on the fifth cohesion report, and **Peter Balász**, former EU Commissioner for Regional Policy. The theme of the second debate, held on 16 June, was 'Europe's coming energy revo-

lution', with contributions from PES member **Neil Swannick** and experts in the field.

On 31 May, the PES Group organised its extraordinary annual conference with the Party of European Socialists (PES) on 'A fair growth model for Europe'. Discussions focused on the definition of fair growth beyond GDP and relevant policies on the ground. Participants agreed on five concrete dimensions of 'fair growth': new and better jobs, a stronger industry, equality, an intact environment and stakeholders rather than shareholders. Key speakers were **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, acting PES Group President, **Vicente Alvarez Areces**, CoR rapporteur on 'Beyond GDP', **Poul Nyrup Rasmussen**, PES President, **Michel Delebarre**, CoR



Michel Delebarre,
CoR rapporteur
on the 5th Cohesion Report

rapporteur on the fifth cohesion report and **Catuscia Marini**, CoR rapporteur on the 'EU Social Fund after 2013'.

For more information on both initiatives, please visit the website of the PES Group in the CoR at <http://www.pes.cor.europa.eu/> ■

EA

For the sixth year running the EA group will welcome winners of its Secondary Schools Competition to Brussels for the 30 June and 1 July 2011 CoR plenary session. The competition's aim is to encourage young people to learn more about the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, and other EU institutions as well as each other's regions. This year's competition was for pupils aged between 14 and 18 years.

The two-stage competition has consisted of a multiple choice quiz on the European Union and an essay competition on 'How would I increase participation in volunteering in my region?' Two winners from each participating school will participate in a two-day

trip to Brussels in June, to meet members of the CoR, representatives of the European institutions, have the chance to discover Brussels, the capital city, its history and



nowadays. More information is available on <http://www.ea.cor.europa.eu> ■

ALDE

On 23 May, ALDE Second Vice President and President of the Italian Marche Region, **Gian Mario Spacca**, hosted a stakeholder meeting in the Committee of the Regions in preparation for his draft opinion on the territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion.

Following on from an ALDE seminar on the same topic last autumn in Ancona, this event was very well attended with representatives from the European Commission, the concerned Member States/regions and MEPs.

Mr Spacca emphasised that an Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion would be a complement both to the Union for the Mediterranean and the Danube Macroregion. The two present MEPs praised the initiative taken by Mr Spacca. ■



Gian Mario Spacca, President
of the Italian
Marche Region
(IT/ALDE)

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In short and in pictures

Herman Van Rompuy: 'Working with the CoR is part of my role'



For the first time since his appointment, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, met the members of the Committee of the Regions on Wednesday 11 May at their plenary session in Brussels. Giving

due regard to the expectations of regions and cities, he supported their idea of using 'territorial pacts' to achieve the Europe 2020 goals. He suggested meeting CoR Bureau members before each meeting of the European Council.

'I see my role as a unifying role. Working with the CoR is part of that role', stated **Herman Van Rompuy**. Responding to a suggestion from Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP), he offered to discuss the Council's agenda with the CoR Bureau, explaining that 'it would be an opportunity to hear and reflect your views in the conclusions that I will present to the Heads of State or Government.' This invitation comes at a time when the President of the European Council has shown himself to be particularly receptive to the CoR's expectations. He immediately stated, 'We hope that, with your assistance, the Europe 2020 strategy will be more successful than its predecessor, the Lisbon strategy.'

Mercedes Bresso discussed EU enlargement with Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor

With Croatia progressing along the road to reform, the CoR President, **Mercedes Bresso**, was invited to go and see for herself. At numerous meetings with the Croatian authorities and representatives of Croatian local and regional authorities, she restated the CoR's commitment to support devolution in candidate countries.

'We are drawing on our experience of previous enlargements to encourage the Croatian authorities in their efforts to involve local and regional authorities in the enlargement process. EU accession cannot be successful unless it is anchored at local level,' said **Mercedes Bresso** at a meeting with Croatian Prime Minister **Jadranka Kosor**.



TELEX — TELEX — TELEX

- On 8 and 9 September, members of the Committee of the Regions Bureau will be holding an extraordinary meeting in Poznan (Poland) to mark the new Council of the European Union Presidency.
- From July, enrolment for the 2011 Open Days to be held from 10 to 13 October will be open on the <http://www.opendays.europa.eu> website.



- On 19 and 20 October 2011, the Committee of the Regions will be holding the second EuroPCom conference in cooperation with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the Polish Presidency. Over 500 communication managers and experts at local, regional, national and European levels have been invited to Brussels to share their strategic visions and practical experiences in relation to topical communication issues. Conference website: <http://www.cor.europa.eu/europcom>



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