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# A more targeted and decentralised EU regional policy

The EU Cohesion policy has been enshrined in the treaties since the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986.

It is built on articles 158-162 of the Treaty establishing the European Communities, laying down the grounds through which 'the Union should promote an overall harmonious development and strengthen economic and social cohesion by reducing development disparities between the regions'.

Jacques Delors, now considered a founding father of the early development of the regional policy, recently recalled the spirit of what regional policy essentially means - namely to balance market liberalisation and competition policies by promoting increased cooperation and redistribution between Member States.

Under these principles the European Union has invested around €480 billion in a number of 'less favoured' regions since 1988.

The current programmes and instruments used to allocate structural funds are coming to an end in December 2006. As a result, a rather broad debate was launched three years ago in order to reform the EU cohesion policy. Since then, the Commission in collaboration with the Member States and the regions have been preparing for a large scale reform due to take place in a context of increase economic globalisation, the development of a knowledge-based economy, and the enlargement of EU on 1 May 2004, which has exacerbated economic and social disparities across the Union. Indeed, in 2003, the levels of per capita GDP in the EU ranged between 41% of the EU average in

Latvia to 215% in Luxembourg. Over a quarter of the population of the EU-25 live in the 64 regions whose per-capita GDP is less than 75% of the Community average. Against this backdrop, the third report on Economic and Social cohesion had called for a redefinition of the solidarity landscape previously defined under the very intricate budgetary debate for the upcoming 2007-2013 period.

Under the 2007-2013 financial perspectives, cohesion policy amounts to 35.7% of the total EU budget (€308 billion), 62% of which should finance projects linked to the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs. Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner depicted the future of the EU's cohesion policy as 'a key instrument', which for the first time 'frames notions of com-

*continued on p.9...*

# A new European Regional Policy for a new Europe

**Danuta Hübner**

Member of the European Commission responsible for Regional Policy

More growth and jobs for all regions and cities of the European Union – this message will be at the heart of cohesion policy and its instruments between 2007 and 2013. During that period, the greatest investment ever made by the EU through cohesion instruments will be worth EUR 308 billion (in 2004 prices) to support regional growth agendas and to stimulate job creation.

82% of the total amount will be concentrated on the "Convergence" regions, in which the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head represents less than 75% of the EU average and which are home to 35% of the Union's population. In the remaining regions, about 16% of the Structural Funds will be concentrated to support innovation, sustainable development, better accessibility and training projects under the "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objective.

Another 2.5% finally are available for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation under the "European Territorial Cooperation" objective.

It is expected that cohesion instruments stimulate additional growth in the in the most affected regions in the order of 10% and that more than 2.5 million new jobs will be created as a result.

Compared to the period 2000-2006, the major policy changes are the following:

- EU regional policy is more clearly focussed on the renewed Growth and Jobs Agenda thus stimulating more ownership of the agenda at regional and local level;
- EU regional policy is modernised through a new architecture, including a more strategic approach and new instruments such as JASPERS, JEREMIE and JESSICA to strengthen cooperation between the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and other financial institutions and to support capacity-building at the level of national and regional institutions;
- EU regional policy will operate in a simpler and more efficient way because, e.g. the number of instruments will be reduced, a new "proportionality" principle will provide for less bureaucracy and because member

states and regions are asked for more responsibility and transparency of the funds' management.

Certain spending targets have been agreed upon to pursue the objectives of the Growth and Jobs Agenda: In case of the "Convergence"



objective, the target is 60%, and in case of the "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objective, the target is 75% of the total available funding, which need to be "earmarked" for interventions supporting, e.g. research and innovation, the information society and sustainable development.

In the months to come, all Member States and regions will prepare about 400 so-called operational programmes emphasising strategies and fields of intervention. They will be the final source to select and fund projects on the ground, a task carried out by national and regional authorities working together with Commission services.

Between 9 and 12 October, the OPEN DAYS - European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels and in more than 60 cities all over Europe will provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about the new funding possibilities.

I invite you to discover these and spread the message to the visitors of your information centres that Europe and its new regional policy are just around the corner.

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## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the European Commission.

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# EUROPE DIRECT News

## Welcoming new members

The EUROPE DIRECT Information Network is pleased to announce the opening of a new EDC in the Library of the Hungarian Parliament under the directorship of Katalin Pinter.

In Austria, four new colleagues have joined the Relays: Erwin Franz Salcher in Klagenfurt/Carinthia,

Thomas Plank in Northern Burgenland, and Andrea Weißmann and Martin Steinwendner in Upper Austria.

Team Europe has also welcomed several new members into its ranks: Andrea Cox of the Office of the National Council, EU researcher Slovák Ľuboš in Slovakia, and Dr. Nuno Filipe Dias Gomes Ferreira in Portugal.

## Braine-l'Alleud: the melting-pot of Belgian-Czech friendship

Not far from Brussels, Braine-l'Alleud provides the information and documentation service EUROPE DIRECT to its inhabitants and to those of the Walloon province of Brabant in Belgium. Braine-l'Alleud hosts and lends support to EUROPE DIRECT but its commitment to Europe does not stop there!

Braine-l'Alleud is twinned with no fewer than four towns across the European Union, with Šlapanice (Czech Republic) becoming the latest addition to the family in April 2005. Twinning is not a formal partnership and many inhabitants of both towns have struck up genuine friendships with each other at meetings organised either in the Czech Republic or in Belgium.

It is in this informal spirit that the idea of a youth exchange programme was born at the beginning of 2006. Cooperation between the different local partners of Braine-l'Alleud (notably the Childhood and Youth Service and the EUROPE DIRECT relay) enabled 13 young Czechs from Šlapanice to spend two weeks in Belgium in order to practise their French and to take part in the production of a video on youth and inter-generational understanding. In addition to the technical assistance it provided for the organisation of the exchange, the EUROPE DIRECT relay of Walloon Brabant prepared a visit to the European Parliament followed by a meeting with MEP Marc Tarabella for the young Czech delegation.

At the end of the exchange, two young girls from the group, Jana and Jitka, decided to stay in Belgium to further improve their knowledge of French and to work as volunteers for the EUROPE DIRECT relay, thus providing us with an excellent opportunity to make the Czech Republic a focal point of our activities! This is what provided the inspiration for the European gastronomic market organised by the EUROPE DIRECT relay, for which Jana and Jitka prepared a delicious variety of Czech cakes (České Buchty, Pernik, Bublanina and Žemlovka). Thanks to the Czech Centre in Brussels, the inhabitants of Braine-l'Alleud were also able to sample some of the liquid delights of a fellow beer-producing country.

Christine BAUQUIS, ED Braine-l'Alleud

## EUROCALL 2006 at the EDC of the University of Granada: Integrating Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) into Study Programmes

This year the European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning held its yearly EUROCALL Conference between 4-7 September at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Granada. Language learning looks to be gravitating more and more towards digital technologies, and the challenge for language educators all over the world appears to fall into one of

shops, plenaries, panels, parallel sessions, and meetings involving regional representatives and Special Interest Groups (SIG). The conference offered a variety of social events such as a reception, guided tours, a flamenco show and a gala dinner. Plenary speakers included distinguished academics such as Prof. Anthony Baldry (University of Pavia, Italy) and Prof. Paul Thibault (University of Agder, Norway) who talked about "Multimodality and multimediality in the e-learning age", Prof. Diana Laurillard (London Knowledge Lab, London, UK) and Prof. Mike Levy (Griffith University, Queensland, Australia).

The novelty of this conference was the "virtual strand" for people who could not come to Granada or who wanted to find out more about the EUROCALL conference. Because the conference was online, they could join the workshops from wherever they were in the world. This enabled them to access exactly the same information, get some practice in their chosen languages and chat with people who were taking part in the face-to-face conference. The virtual strand was an exciting and fun experience for all! As a bonus, this year was the first time that the plenary sessions were recorded on video, thus making it possible to watch them online at any time during the conference. If you want to know more about the conference, please visit: <http://www.eurocall2006.com/index.html> EUROCALL 2006Blog or: <http://eurocall2006blog.blogspot.com/>

The EDC at the University of Granada organised the conference in close cooperation with the Department of English Philology and the research group ADELEX (Assessing and Developing Lexis through the Internet) at the University of Granada. The EDC supplies information about EUROCALL, language learning and technology and the education and culture policy of the EU, promoting the participation of its citizens and providing the materials (documentation and publications) necessary. For more information please visit our website: <http://cde.ugr.es/>

Liliana Wong Cervantes,  
EDC at the University of Granada  
Carmen Pérez Basanta,  
Department of English Philology



two categories: to update and extend their existing methodologies, or create and introduce new technologies into their language delivery systems, very often with little experience and few resources. The challenge, therefore, varies from region to region, but everyone shares the same goal: to integrate computer technology into the language learning process.

Two hundred presenters and over three hundred and fifty guests from 32 countries participated in the 3-day EUROCALL Conference and the 1-day "pre-conference" including work-

## Advisory service for cross-border commuters by Euregio Rhine-Waal, Germany

Commuters crossing an internal European border on a daily basis are often faced with a number of serious problems.

Cross-border commuters find the question "Who is responsible for me?" rather difficult to answer. Whether applying for unemployment benefits, having pension entitlements assessed or filling in a tax declaration, commuters are of-

ten in the dark as to which national authorities are responsible for processing their requests. They frequently find themselves being sent back and forth between officials on both sides of the border, and the national authorities themselves are often unable to define the exact allocation of tasks. Applying two different sets of fiscal, financial and welfare legislation to citizens living and working in separate countries is no easy matter, after all.

The fundamental problem resides in the fact that within the EU, social and fiscal legislation remains under the control of the Member States, with no provision for any kind of overlap with the legal system of neighbouring countries. It is only through bilateral agreements that countries can agree to limited convergence in these areas. The monthly advisory service for cross-border commuters in the "Euregio Rhine Waal" offers key support in this respect by bringing together experts from both the German and the Dutch tax authorities, as well as from health and pensions providers who are responsible for cross border commuters in the area between Arnhem, Nijmegen and Duisburg. The advisory service offers two crucial benefits for citizens:

1. Cross-border commuters receive comprehensive advice on questions relating to pension funds, social security and tax schemes from both German and Dutch experts in a one-stop-shop.
2. The German and Dutch experts regularly exchange information in order to keep each other

tion. It is also an extremely useful instrument for advertising the activities of the Euregio Rhine-Waal in Kleve, which performs the dual function of promoting cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany and, in its capacity as a EUROPE DIRECT relay, informing the public about EU issues in general. For more information, please visit: [www.euregio.org](http://www.euregio.org) and [www.eures.info](http://www.eures.info)

Roland Wolf, EUROPE DIRECT Kleve

### The "EU-Taschenquiz" online

We believe that the "EU-Taschenquiz/EU-pocket quiz" project is a great tool for raising awareness about the European Union among young people and would therefore like to take this opportunity to present it to the wider audience of the EUROPE DIRECT network. The European Academy Vienna (EAV) has been producing a paper version of the "EU-Taschenquiz" since 1999 and 50 000 copies of it have been printed to date. It allows young people to learn about the EU through a quiz with a Q&A about the EU in general, its institutions and its different policies. The pocket quiz is available in three languages: Czech, English and German.

The EAV published the sixth paper edition of the quiz in February 2006 and subsequently launched the first online version in June (<http://www.eu-taschenquiz.at/>). This is currently available in five languages (Bulgarian, Czech, English, German and Slovenian). The European Academy is also working on a Turkish transla-

### Calendar

#### 2 and 6 October 2006

Czech Republic: Within the framework of the Czech "Library Week", the EDC in Usti nad Labem is organising two seminars on online legislation resources. Presentations will be given on the ASPI database for Czech law and the European Union's EUR-Lex portal on 2 and 6 October respectively.

#### 14 October - 19 November 2006

Italy: The EUROPE DIRECT Relay Carrefour Alpi in Pergine Valsugana is hosting an exhibition about the negative impact of the climate change on the glaciers of the Alps, comparing photos that prove how the Alpine glaciers are greatly reducing their size. This itinerant event takes place in the framework of the EU's campaign about climate change and will be hosted in different parts of the Italian province of Trentino.

time are entered into the 'high score table'. The EAV, which works in close cooperation with the EU Representation in Vienna, provides expert know-how, maintains contacts with partner institutes all over Europe, and supports and promotes projects with and for schools. Seminars, conferences and information-sharing events on a variety of European topics are organised on a regular basis, both in Vienna and by the EAV's partners across Europe. The EAV is able to draw on many years of experience in the field of European information-sharing and education as well as on its connections with a network of over one hundred partner institutions in 26 different countries. If you wish to learn more about the project or are interested in becoming involved with the EAV's activities, please contact Mr Erich Wendl at [ewendl@ea-wien.at](mailto:ewendl@ea-wien.at)

Patricia Benda, EU Representation in Austria

### Languages take you further

The European Year of Languages 2001 was successful in involving millions of people across 45 countries in activities to celebrate linguistic diversity and the benefits of being able to speak another language. The Council of Europe has declared 26 September an annual European Day of Languages (EDL). For the last 3 years, I have been an active member of a large working group of national education services and language institutes in Stockholm. Together, they arrange a main event in Central Stockholm every year where passers-by as well as school classes invited for the occasion are introduced to all the languages and cultures represented in the group and given information about language learning opportunities both at home and abroad. The main event is framed by open house activities in the different language in-

constantly updated. This is a particularly important aspect of the service because any change in national legislation has an impact upon the bilateral agreement, thus creating a need for new regulation.

The advisory service is very popular, with around 70 cross-border commuters attending each ses-

sion, which is set to come online in September 2006. One of the features of the quiz is that it includes a number of questions specific to the country or language chosen (e.g. "Name the only Briton who was President of the European Commission: Roy Jenkins, Edward Heath, Chris Patten?"). Participants who guess the highest number of correct answers within the shortest



stitutes all over town. If you are looking for inspiration for an event of your own now or next year, check out [www.sprakdagen.nu](http://www.sprakdagen.nu) (change language in the upper right-hand corner) or <http://www.ecml.at/ed/>.

To promote the EDL events and to show that learning languages is fun, the Stockholm group conceived a Mini Language Guide in the 20 official EU languages (the Swedish version even contains Esperanto, Romany, Icelandic and Russian) depicting some symbols from every country, the numbers 1-10 and a short dialogue between two children. This year's booklet was redesigned by OPOCE and was delivered in time



for the 2006 EDL to all EUROPE DIRECT Centres in Sweden and the UK. I imported the draft of the new booklet when I recently took over new duties in London and produced an English adaptation of it. EUROPE DIRECT Centres in the UK are also actively promoting language learning with a variety of activities on and around the 26th of September <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13591>

Taster lessons are arranged to sample not only the language but also the food of our neighbouring countries. One of these sessions will be hosted by the EUROPE DIRECT Centre in Gloucester. Schools across the UK are also holding special events including classroom language quizzes, displays and other language awareness activities, for which the booklet will hopefully come in handy.

*Judith Schilling  
European Commission,  
Representation in the United Kingdom*

## Ulrich Brückner

Team Europe member, Germany

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** As a member of Team Europe, a vast network of conference speakers located across the EU-25 with expertise covering a broad range of EU policies, could you please tell us when you joined Team Europe in Germany and give us some examples of your various Team Europe-related activities?

**Ulrich Brückner:** In the late 1990s when I taught courses on European integration at the Freie Universität Berlin I thought it would be more interesting for my students to get the perspective of both an academic and an insider. So I asked the Head of the European Commission's Berlin office, Hans-Georg Gerstenlauer, to prepare an EU seminar together with me.

It was a big success and a lot of fun. In the following year we repeated the course and continued to develop projects both inside and outside the world of academia. In 1999 I was asked to join Team Europe. Since then, I have worked with universities, institutions for young people and the media, and taken part in a number of cultural projects, vocational training programmes and eLearning initiatives.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** The Commission chooses the Team Europe members both with regards to their communication skills and to their professional background. Could you tell us a little about your own background and what you are working on at present?

**Ulrich Brückner:** I am a political scientist. European integration was already my field of interest during my studies in Würzburg and Berlin in the 1980s. That was the time of new European ideas, dynamism and strong support for further integration.

I was fascinated by the number of new opportunities opening up in Europe and wanted to find out what integration meant for the people, the Member States, the functioning of the political system and the continent's external relations. When I became Jean Monnet Professor for European Studies I started to work closely with my colleagues within this European network of professors as well as with non-academic institutions such as foundations and NGOs.

I worked in Szczecin in Poland with the Jean Monnet Chair and later with various European programmes inside and outside Europe. I currently travel once a year to Turkey, Slovakia, Slovenia and China for European lecture series and graduate or summer programmes.

At the moment I am working on teaching material for European integration modules as part of two eLearning Master's programmes at the FU Berlin. One is on East European studies with students from all around the world. The other one is a joint project with a partner insti-



tution in the Gulf region and deals with International Relations. It is based in Dubai, where I will teach in-house courses in March 2007.

In Berlin, I am a Member of Faculty of Duke University in Berlin, IES Berlin and LEXIA international. They offer study abroad programmes for students from the US.

I work with the European School of Governance (eug) on training for German civil servants and with the German Federal Foreign Office, which runs a variety of training courses for international diplomats. When I work with civil servants from Afghanistan, from Islamic countries or from the Southern Caucasus, I also learn a lot from their perspectives on European integration.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** Who or what kind of organisations usually contact you to speak as a member of Team Europe? How do these organisations find out about the Team and the network?

**Ulrich Brückner:** In Berlin, the "Europäisches Haus" (European House) receives a lot of requests directly from or via the EU institutions. I also work with the German government, educational institutions, the media, think-tanks and NGOs on a regular basis. I have been living in Berlin for about 20 years now, so I know

people here and people know me.

This offers me the possibility to take my students to political events, panel discussions and lectures. It helps them to get a better understanding of political life in the German capital and it is also helpful for networking purposes. Sometimes people ask the TEAM Europe coordinator in Berlin or the different institutions I am working with for a recommendation. Or they find me on the internet or visit my website [www.uli-brueckner.eu](http://www.uli-brueckner.eu).

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: Mr Brückner, since you are also an EU Jean Monnet Professor teaching in the United States, could you tell us how American students perceive the European Union and what is of particular interest to them when it comes to EU affairs?**

**Ulrich Brückner:** Europe is becoming more and more interesting for students in other parts of the world. In recent years I have taught EU-related courses in California in the spring and at Stanford in Berlin in the autumn and winter. Working on European topics in Germany is much easier, because I can use the city as an additional resource and the American students can also learn from European students, whom I regularly invite to my classes at Stanford in Berlin.

Usually, the Americans do not know much about the EU. To start with, they attach greater importance to the EU's external affairs. But by

the end of the course they have a broader understanding of this special political entity. They get an idea about the "European way of life" and learn that we do things differently here, although we are part of the Western World and have a lot in common with our closest partner on the other side of the pond. Students with a European experience are in a better position to choose what they want to do with their lives. I believe it is important that they do not take everything they find in the USA for granted.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: Do you work with other members of Team Europe? And do you sometimes come into contact or work with the ED Relays and/or EDCs in Germany?**

**Ulrich Brückner:** We invite each other to give talks or to take part in various projects, both inside and outside Germany. An Austrian TEAM member helped me organize a series of study trips to Vienna. In the summer of 2005, I asked French colleagues to explain the French 'No' to the constitutional treaty to German audiences.

I often organize study trips for Stanford University to new or future EU member states, and my TEAM Europe colleagues there help me a lot with contacts and logistics. In Germany, ED Relays invite me to give talks or to take part in panel discussions and I often work with the TEAM Europe members of the European Academy in Berlin, which is a great location for week-end seminars. A lot of these activities depend on personal contacts. Thus the joint TEAM semi-

nars are a very important forum for exchanging ideas and making plans for joint projects.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: Finally, could you tell us what has been the highlight of your TE activities so far, and why?**

**Ulrich Brückner:** It is hard to decide, because there are so many rewarding European activities going on. A course format I really like is the FU Berlin International Summer University (FUBIS), where we work in the morning in classrooms and visit embassies, think-tanks or political institutions in the afternoons to discuss the questions which arise during the morning sessions. Recently, I joined the European cultural festival Cap à l'Est in Slovakia. Every August my friend and colleague Antonia Miklikova organizes an impressive mix of European cultural events of a very high quality which give rise to much fruitful debate on European issues.

European artists, intellectuals and people from the countryside come together and enjoy a special form of intercultural communication which perfectly illustrates what Europe's cultural diversity is about, especially following enlargement to the East.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: Thank you very much for sharing your views and experiences with us in this interview. We wish you the best of luck in communicating Europe on both sides of the Atlantic!**

## News from the Institutions

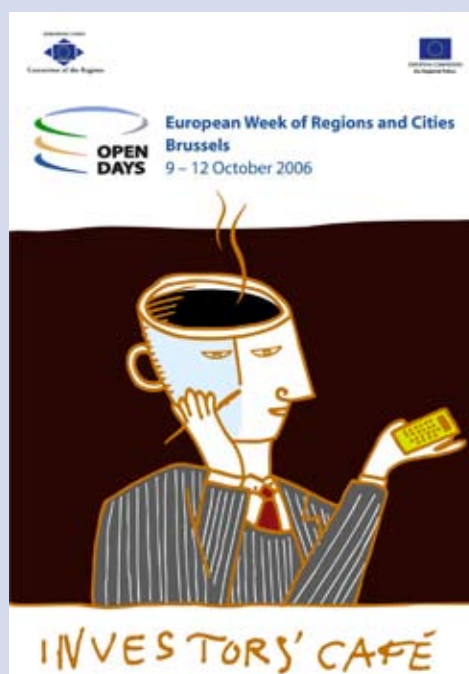
### OPEN DAYS

Cities and regions will be top of the agenda in political Brussels when the fourth OPEN DAYS on "Investing in Europe's Regions and Cities: Public and Private Partners for Growth and Jobs" take place between 9-12 October. Ever since their launch in 2003, the OPEN DAYS, organised jointly by the Committee of the Regions and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy have become one of the most important, if not the major event for local entities.

Bringing together representatives from regions and cities across the Union as well as from EU institutions and business and civil society groups, the week-long programme consists of 115 workshops and seminars in Brussels and a further 70 events at local level across Europe. If you want to find out more about the OPEN DAYS in general, please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2006/index.cfm?nmenu=1](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2006/index.cfm?nmenu=1)

A new concept being developed within the framework of the OPEN DAYS is the Investors' Café. This 'real' café located at the Committee

of the Regions' headquarters will provide a meeting place and networking opportunity for business investors and decision-makers from lo-



cal and regional authorities. It will also be the focal point of a major exhibition village linked to the public and private partnership theme of the OPEN DAYS, thus providing a showcase for regions and cities, as well as for companies and NGOs.

The Investors' Café will feature a programme of 32 workshops and seminars focussing on the scope for investment in Europe's cities and regions. More information about the Investors' Café can be found at: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2006/investorscafe.cfm?nmenu=14](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2006/investorscafe.cfm?nmenu=14)

### European Maritime Safety Agency inaugurated in Lisbon

The new headquarters of the European Maritime Safety Agency were inaugurated in Lisbon on 14 September in the presence of Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates as well as European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Commissioner for Transport Jacques Barrot, who underlined EMSA's role as "an indispensable tool to implement the EU's maritime safety policy".

Created in 2002 in the aftermath of the ecological disasters caused by the Erika and Prestige oil tanker incidents, the Agency's principal aim is to help prevent accidents and pollution at sea. Its main task is therefore to provide technical and scientific advice to the Commission and Member States in the area of maritime safety and security. EMSA is among several newly created Community agencies and was operating from its provisional seat in Brussels until the recent move.

## Intercultural Dialogue – call for ideas

The ever-increasing cultural diversity of our societies makes the need for intercultural dialogue all the more acute. This is why the European Commission proposed to declare 2008 the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue", focussing mainly on young people and on areas where intercultural dialogue is likely to contribute to 'better living' in the EU. As the success of this initiative relies very much on the contribution and participation of every citizen, the Commission has launched a call for ideas with the purpose of defining guidelines for future calls for proposals. Until the end of October you can respond to this call for ideas on the following website: [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/call\\_idea\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/call_idea_en.html)

## First European Job Fair

It is not unlikely that while you are reading this article, the first ever European Job Fair is taking place in over 70 cities across Europe on the 29th and 30th of September. This is without a doubt one of the most important events in the framework of the European Year of Workers Mobility and is intended to raise awareness among EU citizens about the opportunities to find work in another EU Member State. Activities range from job fairs to information stands and mobility workshops. In case you have missed out on this event, have a look at the website for more activities that are yet to come: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/workersmobility\\_2006/index.cfm?id\\_page\\_category=EV](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm?id_page_category=EV)

## 1275

This is how many cities across Europe - and beyond - participated in the Car Free Day on 22 September. The "In town, without my car!"-campaign takes place in the framework of the annual European Mobility Week and allows the inhabitants to rediscover their town and reclaim their streets. The aim of the Mobility Week is to encourage alternative modes of transport such as cycling, walking, public transport and car-pooling.

# Michel Delebarre

President of the Committee of the Regions

*The Committee of the Regions was established in 1994 and is an advisory body that allows local and regional authorities to make their voices heard in the decision-making process of the European Union.*

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: Mister President, you have been closely involved with regional and local politics throughout your professional life. Could you tell us a bit more about your career before you became President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) last February?**

**Michel Delebarre:** Over the course of my career, I have had the good fortune to be involved in regional politics both at national level – as head of French Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy's private office, then, from 1984 onwards, as a minister under each of François Mitterrand's socialist governments, including a job as head of France's first Ministry for Urban Affairs - and at local and regional level not only in my capacity as Mayor of Dunkirk, which I have been since 1989, but also in my role as President of the Urban Community of Dunkirk and as President of the Nord-Pas de Calais Region between 1998 and 2001.

My personal experience has given me an insight into the structural and sociological forces driving the various actors involved in the field of regional politics. It has also strengthened my conviction that both France and Europe need to go further in terms of decentralisation, a conception of political and collective life whose essence is to give more freedom to local authorities in mapping out their own future. I have carried this conviction with me over to my current position as head of the CoR.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: In your experience, how has the relationship between the 'local and regional' level and the European level evolved ?**

**Michel Delebarre:** In my opinion, the level of direct interaction between the regional level and the European level has risen considerably since the mid-1990s. A great many regions have drawn up European development strategies which are based on direct cooperation between regions, notably through INTERREG, and/or on

their physical presence and the existence of a dedicated lobbying capacity near to the EU institutions in Brussels.

To date, almost 300 regions and cities have representations in Brussels. The CoR has also contributed a great deal to encouraging interaction by ensuring that regional entities have a genuine role to play in the European legislative



process. Conversely, I think that the European Union itself is more and more present, tangible and accessible 'on the ground', thanks, in particular, to the development of information-sharing structures such as EUROPE DIRECT.

Having said all this, it pains me to see, in France in any case, the national level acting as a kind of intermediary or 'filter' in the implementation of Community policies. In many cases, actors at the national level continue to demonstrate a tendency to over-centralise and restrict local authorities' involvement in the process from beginning, i.e. the consultation phase, to end, i.e. implementation.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter: At the beginning of your term as President of the CoR, you identified the main challenges facing the institu-**

tion. Among these, you mentioned the political challenge of strengthening the identity of the CoR. Could you explain in concrete terms what you mean by that?

**Michel Delebarre:** First of all, we want the role of the CoR as a political body to be acknowledged. It is laid down in the Treaties that the CoR is an assembly of elected representatives and not a body of administrative experts. It is this political status which gives us our power of influence, which is more important than our institutional status as a consultative body.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** You also want the CoR to become more involved in a number of important political issues which the European Union is currently facing. In particular, you have highlighted the need to embed the Lisbon Strategy more deeply at the regional and local level. What role can cities and regions expect to play in this process?

**Michel Delebarre:** Local and regional ownership of the Lisbon Strategy is indeed one of our priorities because we are convinced that regional authorities are key actors in generating

No fewer than 135 regions and cities across Europe are taking part in the organisation of the 2006 edition, which has also received the backing of the European Parliament, the Finnish Presidency, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and some of the biggest companies in the world.

The OPEN DAYS provide regions and cities with a unique opportunity to exchange know-how and to find out about new methods of financing and investment. The Lisbon Strategy is



The progress that we have accomplished over the past few years, notably on the draft constitutional treaty, has come about as a result of the political process. Each and every member of the CoR has been elected by European citizens.

Especially in the area of communication, the CoR must do more to simplify and target its message. In its recent White Paper on Communication, the Commission acknowledged the potential of the 317 members of the CoR in terms of informing and communicating 'on the ground'.

This is why we pressed the Commission to add a fourth 'D' – decentralisation – to the three 'D's' (democracy – dialogue – debate), a proposal which the Commission has agreed to take on board.

The CoR should not just issue opinions and then take a back seat. We must also provide an 'after-sales service' both for the other European institutions and for our own network of regional representatives.

We must not hesitate to draw attention to the CoR's long-established positions. Just because the European Parliament takes eight months longer than the CoR to issue a decision on the European Services Directive doesn't mean, for example, that we can't remind people, when the MEPs finally get round to voting, of the position that we adopted eight months previously.

growth and employment and therefore have a vital role to play in the success of the Strategy as a whole.

Unfortunately, according to our observations, this 'local potential' has yet to be unlocked in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

A study carried out by the CoR in autumn 2005 showed that only 17% of regional authorities considered that they had been allowed to play a proper role in the preparation of the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) drawn up by the member states for 2005-2008.

This is why we decided to set up a network of 50 regional authorities in order to closely monitor the month-by-month progress made in terms of consultation and implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The result of this exercise should be a 'regional barometer' comparing progress made, difficulties encountered and the individual needs of each region in connection with the Lisbon Strategy.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** This October, in partnership with the Commission, the CoR is organising the fourth annual "OPEN DAYS" event. In your opinion, why is this event so important and what are the reasons behind its success?

**Michel Delebarre:** The OPEN DAYS are quite simply the most important event on the European Union's regional calendar.

often accused of being abstract: at the OPEN DAYS, we demonstrate its practical benefits for regional authorities. The OPEN DAYS are fast becoming an unmissable showcase demonstrating that Europe really is on the move.

**EUROPE DIRECT Newsletter:** Aside from the "OPEN DAYS", in which a number of EUROPE DIRECT relays also take part, the CoR regularly organises forums, conferences and other events which are announced on your website. Could you suggest some upcoming events which network members could participate in or help organise at the local level?

**Michel Delebarre:** It's true that most CoR events do take place in Brussels, but I would like to point out that we also organise a number of decentralised activities.

For example, the Commission for Constitutional Affairs is holding a conference-debate in Vilnius on 17-18 October in the context of Plan D, which will focus on decentralisation and the euro.

I would like to invite members who are not able to check the CoR's website (<http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/activities/index.htm>) on a regular basis to contact our conference services department ([anne.blondel@cor.europa.eu](mailto:anne.blondel@cor.europa.eu)) where they can request regular email updates concerning the events we organise.



# EU Policies

*continued from p.1*

petitiveness and cohesion in the same context'. She insisted on the objectives of Lisbon such as innovation, of which many factors are rooted at regional level.

The 'lisbonisation' of the cohesion policy is indeed a major feature of the new programme. More growth and jobs for all regions and cities of the European Union – this message is now at the heart of the cohesion policy and its new instruments for the 2007-2013 period. It illustrates the Commission's willingness to concentrate on the instruments of such priority themes stemming from the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs.

One of the resulting features of the reform is the concentration of the funding from the new EU cohesion policy on a reduced number of priorities and on single-funded programmes. During that period, 82% of the total amount allocated will focus on the 'Convergence' objective (formerly objective 1), under which the least favoured Member States and regions are eligible. In the remaining regions, about 16% of the Structural Funds will be allocated to support a number of objectives such as innovation, sustainable development, better accessibility as well as a number of training projects that will fall under the "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" objective (formerly objective 2). Lastly, another 2.5% will be available for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation under the "European Territorial Cooperation" objective.

The instruments to pursue these objectives have their legal basis in a *package of five regulations* adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in July 2006. A *General Regulation* defines common principles, rules and standards for the implementation of the three cohesion instruments. Three of these specific regulations are dedicated to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund.

Another regulation however introduces a new legal entity named 'European Grouping of territorial co-operation (EGTC), aiming at facilitating cross-border, transnational and/or inter-regional co-operation between regional and local authorities.

Complementing the package of regulations, the *Community strategic guidelines* were issued as a single strategic document setting out the political priorities for investments to be made at national and regional level, emphasising investments in the knowledge and information society, innovation, entrepreneurship, the environment and the creation of "more and better jobs". The main underlying principles of EU cohesion policy are based on a more flexible

financial management, greater decentralisation and a more important "ownership" of cohesion policy on the ground. These are all key components of the reform. National eligibility rules will however apply instead of Community rules, implying a wider delegation of responsibilities to the Member States and regions, while maintaining financial rigour. Regional and local players should also have a stronger involvement at a later stage in the preparation of the programmes.

The new EU cohesion policy should also benefit from an enhanced cooperation between the European Commission, the European Investment Bank Group and other International Financial Institutions. Indeed, these are currently preparing three initiatives aiming at strengthening capacity-building at the level of national and regional institutions - namely JASPERS: Joint Assistance in Supporting Projects in European Regions; JEREMIE: Joint European Resources for Micro to medium Enterprises; and JESSICA: Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas (cf. Newsletter 5, "News from the Institutions").

Within this revisited political framework of EU cohesion policy, Member States and regions are now expected to propose 'national strategic reference frameworks' and operational programmes during the third and fourth quarter 2006. These are to be accepted by the Commission before the start of their implementation, as of 1 January 2007.

At the end of the period of the current programme, some publications will be produced highlighting successful completed projects. Various events are now being organised in order to exchange best practices and examine the different ways in which European regional policy can contribute to the growth and jobs agenda.

The INTERREG III C East secretariat produced a series of country-specific brochures featuring a selection of success stories for each of EU-Member Countries of programme zone East; the brochures are in English and the national language and feature distinct INTERREG IIIC project experiences in these countries.

The Best practice conference 'new horizons' in Graz, on November 15th - 17th 2006, with the participation of Commissioner DG Regio Ms. Danuta HÜBNER, will examine successful approaches, tools and techniques for project generation. Finally, the Directorate-General for Regional Policy is organising a series of conferences under the heading 'Regions for Economic Change' which are designed for experts and practitioners in national, regional and local authorities managing Structural Funds as well as other interested organisations.

The series consists of three conferences focused on such topics as innovation, regional policy responses to demographic challenges and finally questions related to technology transfer, eco-innovation and accessibility. The three events will lead up to the Fourth Cohesion Forum, which will take place on 21/22 June 2007 in Brussels.

More details about the reform are available on the website [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

## "Gymnich" meeting in Lappeenranta

The Middle East, Iran and Russia were the main topics on the agenda at the biannual informal gathering of EU Foreign Ministers, the so-called "Gymnich" meeting (cf. ABC section). On 1 and 2 September, EU Foreign Ministers, as well as the EU's High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, and External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner met in Lappeenranta, Finland, in order to discuss a number of important foreign policy issues.

Regarding the Middle East, Ministers were unanimous in calling for a revival of the peace process.

They agreed that the united action taken by the EU over the summer had made a positive impact on efforts to stabilise the situation. High Representative Solana also welcomed the Member States' commitments to contribute troops to the United Nations forces in Lebanon.

On the question of Iran's nuclear policy, Ministers reiterated their full support for the High Representative's diplomatic activities, which are in line with the international community's efforts to stop Iran from enriching and reprocessing uranium.

Ministers also discussed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia, which is set to expire next year and which is an important issue in view of the upcoming EU-Russia summit in November. Because of the informal nature of the meeting, no official declaration was adopted.

## ASEM Summit in Helsinki

The Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting, the 'ASEM 6 Summit', took place in Helsinki on 10/11 September under the Chairmanship of the Finnish EU Presidency. Established ten years ago, ASEM is a cooperation forum comprising 38 European and Asian countries plus the European Commission. It includes all member states of the Euro-

pean Union, of ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) as well as China, Japan and South Korea. Under the theme "Global Challenges – Joint Responses" Heads of State or Government discussed future cooperation between the two continents, covering matters

tions in the atmosphere.

The other document, the 'Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM' is a decision to enlarge the forum. Six new partners (Bulgaria, Romania, India, Mongolia, Pakistan and the ASEAN Secretariat) will join before the next summit, which will take place in China in 2008. If you want to read more about this event, please visit <http://www.asem6.fi/>

### On the road again: EU Diversity Truck Tour brings new drive to anti-discrimination

"For Diversity. Against Discrimination." - This is it the motto of this year's Diversity Truck Tour organised by the European Union.

With its special focus on young people, the information and entertainment programme has been developed together with local partners in each country and offers, among other things, a song contest, an interactive mobility park and a poster exhibition. For more information on the route and activities of the EU Diversity truck, which will tour European cities until 21 November, please visit: <http://tt06.stop-discrimination.info/1376.0.html>

In addition, there is more to come in the fight against discrimination! In order to give its efforts in this area a further boost, the EU has decided to make 2007 the "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All".

The three main aims of this initiative are to make EU citizens better aware of their rights, to promote equal opportunities for all – for example when it comes to equal access to employment, education or healthcare – and finally to promote the benefits of diversity.

If you want to participate in the "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All" or if you want to simply inform yourself about upcoming activities, please visit [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equality2007/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equality2007/index_en.htm)



of common concern such as terrorism, global health risks or the state of negotiations in the framework of the World Trade Organisation.

At the end of the meeting, two declarations were adopted. One of them is the "Declaration on Climate Change" which should give new impetus to international climate negotiations aiming at reducing greenhouse gas concentra-

For the third time so far, a 30-ton truck has set off on a four-month tour to inform citizens across Europe about their rights under EU and national anti-discrimination legislation. In line with the Union's 'drive' to combat discrimination at the workplace, the aim is to raise awareness over the social and economic benefits of diversity and how it can contribute to our everyday lives.

## What to keep a look out for this autumn

With the summer now behind us, European policy makers in Brussels are preparing for a 'hot' autumn with a number of important topics coming up for discussion and decision. In order to help you keep track of what's top of the agenda, this info box will give you a short overview of some policy issues that are likely to attract a lot of attention from insiders and from the general public alike.

### REACH

In 2003, the Commission proposed a new EU regulatory framework for the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) which has been the subject of controversy ever since.

Triggered by the general lack of information about the dangerous properties of chemicals on the market, its aim is, among other things, to improve the protection of human health and the environment through earlier and improved identification of the properties of chemical substances.

Following an initial round of decision-making which saw the document approved by a narrow margin, it will now go into second readings and the final adoption of the proposal is expected by the end of the year. After that,

entry into force of the REACH legislation is expected for around April 2007.

### Services Directive

After fierce debates earlier this year and a compromise agreement in the Council of Ministers in July, the Services Directive is now going into second reading in the European Parliament. While renewed debates about the "European social model" are to be expected on this occasion, it is nonetheless possible that the directive will be adopted before the end of the year.

### Health Services

Originally part of the aforementioned Services Directive, health services were removed from the proposal in April in order to facilitate a compromise, but with the situation regarding cross-border healthcare remaining far from satisfactory, the Commission is now trying to explore alternative ways to tackle this issue.

Due to the conflicting interests of the Member States – some of them fearing "healthcare tourism" – and the general level of public attention directed towards health systems, this is unlikely to be an easy task.

### 2007 Budget

Finalising the European Union's 2007 budget by the end of the year promises to be a lot of work for decision-makers. With over 1,500 different budget lines, agreement between the two main budgetary authorities – the Council of Ministers and the Parliament – will certainly not always be easy to find.

### Enlargement

Both the Commission's Final Monitoring Report on Acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania as well as a number of other documents and decisions on the subject of EU enlargement will attract a lot of attention from policy-makers and the general public alike.

On 8 November, the progress reports on Candidate Countries and potential candidates are on the agenda of the Commission. These reports are important benchmarks that can have a strong influence on the "roadmap" towards accession.

Currently, there are three Candidate Countries (Turkey, Croatia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia); potential candidates are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

# ABC

## Gymnich

In EU jargon, "Gymnich" is the name for the informal meeting of the EU's Foreign Ministers that takes place once every Presidency. It is named after the German town where the first meeting of this kind was held in 1974.

Ever since then, Gymnich meetings have provided ministers with the opportunity to discuss a number of broad foreign policy themes in an informal setting. In recent years, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, as well as the EU Commissioners involved in EU foreign affairs have also participated in these meetings.

The informal nature of the "Gymnich" implies that there is neither a formal agenda, nor any official outcome at the end of it, only discussions.

## Cohesion Fund

As indicated by its name, this fund is one of the financial instruments which fall under the umbrella of the European Union's cohesion policy. This policy aims at reducing economic disparities among the different regions of the EU. Created in 1994, the Cohesion Fund grants financial aid to those Member States whose per capita gross national product (GNP) is less than 90% of the Community average.

This currently applies to all of the new Member States as well as Spain, Portugal and Greece. European funding is always conditional on

the parallel existence of national funding programmes. A recent legislative package creating the legal basis for cohesion policy in the years to come, leaves the current eligibility criteria for funding in place, but stipulates that support will be switched from a project-based approach to assistance for multi-annual investment programmes.

## Structural Funds

Like the Cohesion Fund, the Structural Funds are based on the idea of solidarity among EU Member States. They aim at helping regions whose economies are lagging behind to catch up. In an effort to make the system simpler and more effective, a series of changes are planned from 2007 onwards.

The number of Structural Funds will thus be reduced from four to two, with financial assistance being channelled either through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the European Social Fund (ESF).

## NUTS

The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) was established by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Eurostat, in order to provide a single uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of regional statistics in the EU. Regional statistics are an important element of the Community statistical system. It is therefore crucial to obtain data that are comparable across the whole of the Union.

The NUTS classification is hierarchical and subdivides the economic territory of each Member State into three levels: NUTS levels 1, 2 and 3.

# Quote



*The trial of strength that really matters is between fanaticism and tolerance.*

Margot Wallström, Vice president of the European Commission responsible for Institutional relations and Communication strategy, on the occasion of the Anna Lindh Award Ceremony for European Foreign and Security Policy Studies.

# Young Europeans

## Council of Europe Award "Young Active Citizens"

"Diversity, human rights and participation" often appear like abstract terms, but now you can get involved in translating them into reality! In the framework of the European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation, under the catch phrase "All Different – All Equal", the Council of Europe is looking for contributions to the 2006-2007 "Young Active Citizens" Award.

This award aims to promote the active participation of young people in society and will be given to outstanding and innovative projects, which actively contribute to the objectives and the visibility of the meaning of the "All Different – All Equal" campaign. The four main topics of the initiative are related to the following

aspects of the campaign:

- Overcoming discrimination and the promotion of diversity;
- Inter-religious and intercultural dialogue;
- Participation, democracy and good governance;
- Human rights

For further information about the campaign please visit the Council of Europe's website at [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/youth/1\\_news/news/060\\_youth\\_campaign.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/1_news/news/060_youth_campaign.asp).

In general, participation in the competition is open to all non-governmental youth organisations or networks that want to contribute to the aims of the campaign. Projects eligible for the award have to be carried out between

June/July 2006 and July 2007 and be submitted to the Jury by 15 July 2007. If you want to find out more about the award, you can obtain detailed information about the eligibility criteria,



the application procedure, the prizes, as well as links to previous years' winning projects at [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/youth/2\\_Priorities/award.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/2_Priorities/award.asp)