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III

(Preparatory Acts)

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

71st PLENARY SESSION 10 AND 11 OCTOBER 2007

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The energy package’

(2007/C 305/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- points out that local and regional authorities make a decisive contribution to the success of European initiatives. European law is implemented at local and regional level; it is down to leaders on the ground and to the public to act in such a way as to influence energy consumption tangibly and sustainably;
- believes that energy policy and climate protection policy are closely interrelated and must be coordinated, given that 80 % of CO₂ emissions in Europe come from the production of energy. It is therefore important that measures proposed for climate policy are taken on board in the field of energy and vice versa. At the same time, energy policy focused on the environment and on efficiency also forms part of climate policy;
- supports the Commission's efforts to remove forthwith administrative obstacles, unfair network access conditions (e.g. discrimination against suppliers of renewable energy) and complicated procedures;
- calls on the Commission to take appropriate measures to prevent market concentration and to encourage the diversity of market participants;
- supports the aim of achieving an energy saving of 20 % in the EU by 2020 through increased energy efficiency. The Committee would like this target to be binding;
- stresses that energy efficiency should be the centrepiece of European energy policy and be given the highest priority in the debate;
- doubts that CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage) technologies can be considered as a long-term solution, as they significantly reduce the efficiency of the plant in question and, moreover, are not especially economically efficient from today's perspective. From a global viewpoint, however, a CCS strategy could be an interim solution.

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament: *An Energy Policy for Europe*

COM(2007) 1 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Prospects for the internal gas and electricity market*

COM(2006) 841 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Sustainable power generation from fossil fuels: aiming for near-zero emissions from coal after 2020*

COM(2006) 843 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Biofuels Progress Report — Report on the progress made in the use of biofuels and other renewable fuels in the Member States of the European Union*

COM(2006) 845 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Priority Interconnection Plan*

COM(2006) 846 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Towards a European Strategic Energy Technology Plan*

COM(2006) 847 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Renewable Energy Road Map — Renewable energies in the 21st century: building a more sustainable future*

COM(2006) 848 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: *Green Paper follow-up action — Report on progress in renewable electricity*

COM(2006) 849 final

Rapporteur: Mr Bernd VÖGERLE, Mayor of Gerasdorf bei Wien (AT/PES)

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

significant role of local and regional authorities in European energy policy when implementing the energy package in practice;

Introduction

1. stresses the importance of energy in underpinning modern life. Interruptions to and bottlenecks in supply therefore have wide-ranging effects and cause major economic damage. The common European energy policy, and its goals of security of supply, sustainability and competitiveness, is therefore very important to local and regional authorities. Meeting these goals requires a balanced energy mix;

2. points out that local and regional authorities make a decisive contribution to the success of European initiatives. European law is implemented at local and regional level; it is down to leaders on the ground and to the public to act in such a way as to influence energy consumption tangibly and sustainably;

3. therefore calls on the responsible European institutions, in particular the Commission, to take proper account of the

4. believes that energy policy and climate protection policy are closely interrelated and must be coordinated, given that 80 % of CO₂ emissions in Europe come from the production of energy. It is therefore important that measures proposed for climate policy are taken on board in the field of energy and vice versa. At the same time, energy policy focused on the environment and on efficiency also forms part of climate policy;

5. points out that consumers making informed choices play a key role in implementing European goals. Consumers should therefore be at the heart of the debate. Socially disadvantaged sections of the population are hit especially hard by any increase in energy prices. Publicly-funded assistance should therefore be invested, with sustainability and a coherent climate policy in mind, in energy efficiency and awareness-raising measures rather than in purely financial support;

Internal market

6. points out that the expectation that liberalised electricity and gas markets would lead to lower prices for consumers and the dissolution of energy supply monopolies has not been fulfilled in all Member States. Furthermore, believes that under-investment in power stations and networks, in particular an under-investment in renewable and local supplies and networks, is jeopardising security of supply. If current trends continue, supply bottlenecks are expected in the future;

7. therefore calls on the Commission to create incentives for producers and network operators to invest in the construction of power plants and upgrading network infrastructure (as was the case before liberalisation). A possible way into this direction could be the establishment of local and regional energy production plans, drawing on data available at local and regional level;

8. supports the Commission's efforts to remove forthwith administrative obstacles, unfair network access conditions (e.g. discrimination against suppliers of renewable energy) and complicated procedures;

9. favours unbundling, where a separation under company law, supported by a strong regulator is seen as sufficient;

10. calls on the Commission to take appropriate measures to prevent market concentration and to encourage the diversity of market participants (including municipal services);

11. considers that the upgrading of transnational networks strengthens the hand of local and regional authorities, for example when purchasing energy;

12. rejects the idea of setting up new administrative structures such as a European 'energy regulator', as national regulators are capable of achieving the objectives proposed by the Commission and confirmed by the European Council;

13. calls on the Commission to structure the emissions trading mechanism in such a way that power stations would receive only as many certificates under the allocation plan as correspond to the production of the planned amount of power and heat in a gas turbine CHP power station. This would be a clear signal in favour of the objective of boosting the energy-efficiency of electricity generation;

Energy efficiency

14. supports the aim of achieving an energy saving of 20 % in the EU by 2020 through increased energy efficiency. The Committee would like this target to be binding;

15. stresses that energy efficiency should be the centrepiece of European energy policy and be given the highest priority in the debate;

16. calls on the relevant European institutions, and above all the Commission, to ensure that an appropriate framework is provided in areas such as the following:

- fuel-efficient vehicles;
- high standards (in particular a stand-by setting that can be switched off) and better labelling for (household) appliances;
- the lowest possible total energy consumption or the passive house standard in new buildings;
- the internalisation of external costs by means of consistent cost calculations across the whole life cycle/supply chain of products and services for public procurement;
- EIB loans for local and regional authorities' energy efficiency programmes;
- aid for energy efficiency under the block exemption regulation.

17. points out that many measures are implemented at regional and local level and contribute to the success of the European initiative:

- regional development taking into account energy aspects;
- incentive programmes for energy efficiency measures (e.g. building renovation, replacement of obsolete lighting, replacement of household appliances);
- incentive programmes for renewable energy sources;
- establishing building standards that go above and beyond the buildings directive;
- spatial planning;
- traffic management (local public passenger transport, cycle paths);
- parking management, in order to reduce car journeys in towns and encourage carpooling and more environmentally-friendly cars;
- energy advice for businesses;
- publicity, campaigns, awareness raising (e.g. specific information on how to save energy at home, in vehicle usage, etc.);
- leading by example (energy saving by public bodies) and training of in-house staff;
- public procurement to improve the energy efficiency of goods and services.

18. calls for more EU resources, for example under the Intelligent Energy for Europe (IEE) programme, to be made available for the exchange of best practice at regional and local level;

19. requests the Commission to set the target for energy efficiency on an aggregate level (i.e. energy intensity of the whole economy). This would give Member States and regions the flexibility to achieve the target using a wider range of measures, including measures aimed at the energy consumption of apparatuses and the industrial structure of the (regional) economy;

Renewable energy sources

20. supports the binding target of 20 % of total energy consumption coming from renewable sources by 2020;

21. highlights the socio-economic importance of local energy sources and their importance to security of supply and efficiency of transmission and suggests that promotion of renewable energy sources should be appropriate to the respective geographical, climatic and economic conditions; emphasises in this respect the key role local and regional authorities can play in promoting and procuring local renewable energy sources;

22. advocates renewable energy targets including the heating and cooling sector. Combined production of electricity and heat/cooling has a key role to play here;

23. observes that sustainability must be at the forefront of every measure. Countries that invested in biomass at an early stage are already meeting a significant proportion of their energy needs through this source. However, the problem often arises that the demand can no longer be met exclusively by locally available energy (usually wood) and that biofuels need to be transported long distances to their destination. When this is the case, the alternative clearly becomes less sustainable. Thus there is a need to consider other modes of transport which are less energy-consuming;

24. takes the view that Member States which have only limited possibilities to produce energy from renewable sources should be given the option of achieving their target on renewable energy through trade, either within a EU-wide green-energy certificate system, or through bilateral contracts with other States which have a more abundant supply of renewable energy. The aim here is to reduce the overall costs of meeting the targets on renewable energy;

25. requests the Commission and the Member States to make it compulsory to hear the views of local and regional authorities when drawing up national action plans to promote renewable energy sources;

Biofuels

26. supports the binding target of 10 % of total EU fuel consumption coming from biofuels by 2020, provided that production is sustainable;

27. stresses how important the diversity of energy sources and types of biomass will be;

28. considers it especially important that climate policy should be seen in an international perspective, and that different biofuels should be promoted on the basis of their environmental and climate performance, using a lifecycle approach that takes account of production methods, transport, etc. In addition to promoting efficient European production, imports from non-EU countries could be considered of secondary importance. Environment-friendly and energy efficient production of biofuels should be promoted, regardless of the type of biofuel and that of the plants being processed;

29. suggests that promoting the production of biofuels in third countries runs counter to the aim of reducing dependency on energy imports and creates new kinds of dependency, and therefore stresses that imports from non-EU countries must be of secondary importance. When importing energy, sustainability and energy efficiency must be taken into account from a life-cycle perspective for different biofuels;

30. points out the importance of producing biofuels in a sustainable manner in order to avoid a loss of biodiversity. It must be avoided that large energy crop 'monocultures' (concentrated growth of a single crop over wide areas) excessively disrupt the local ecosystem;

31. stresses that a sustainability code must be observed when importing raw materials for biofuels. By imposing relevant requirements on its trading partners, the EU could help support ecologically and socially just business practices that avoid loss of important habitat. The process of international negotiations and the development of an appropriate regulatory framework should commence immediately;

The use of coal

32. doubts that CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage) technologies can be considered as a long-term solution, as they significantly reduce the efficiency of the plant in question and, moreover, are not especially economically efficient from today's perspective. From a global viewpoint, however, a CCS strategy could be an interim solution;

33. Research into and the development of CCS technology should be stepped up;

34. calls for CCS technology, as soon as it is commercially available, to be taken into account when approving new coal-fired power stations;

Energy technology

35. notes that current efforts in the energy technology sector are not sufficient. Furthermore, the system is very sluggish, which means that it often takes decades to implement new technologies;

36. calls for more resources to be devoted to energy technology under the Research, Technology and Demonstration Framework Programme and under Intelligent Energy Europe. The demonstration of new technologies at regional and local level has a particular contribution to make towards raising public awareness, as well as raising the appropriate level of skills in the workforce. It is important that support for R & D should be available to smaller private commercial players as well as to the public sector;

37. emphasises that the development of cutting-edge technology also creates export opportunities. This may lead to the creation of many new jobs;

International cooperation

38. feels that only wide-ranging and comprehensive cross-border cooperation together with energy policy and climate protection agreements to achieve a sustainable environment, increased energy efficiency and economical use of energy will succeed in both the short and long term, and benefit present and future generations living in and outside of the EU;

39. demands that under no circumstances should technical assistance to third countries be provided in such a way that products and production methods that are outdated or banned in the EU are exported to non-member countries, whether for payment or not. It is therefore important to ensure that such criteria apply at all levels (EU, national, regional, local) and to all institutions (including the EIB);

The social dimension

40. calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to ensure that best international energy efficiency practices are used in the EU and that European initiatives, together with EU efforts and best practices are disseminated, including outside the EU;

41. stresses that the ability of local and regional authorities to influence the pricing structure of energy is very limited and only exists in a few areas. Opportunities arise where they are able to use their own energy resources on a large scale, provided that the costs of these are competitive with other energy sources in a liberalised market. In addition to this, attempts can be made, through awareness-raising measures, to increase public acceptance of the higher costs resulting from the use of renewable energy. Ongoing benefit payments (fuel and heating benefits) are to be questioned, as these do not generally encourage consumer to change their behaviour. Instead, the Committee advocates support for energy efficiency measures, which lead both to lower costs and to an improved quality of life. This support should include access to energy use information for consumers (smart meters) and information on area energy use for local and regional authorities to target efficiency measures and support in order to avoid hardship for those on limited incomes (fuel poverty);

42. notes with concern the impact of increased demand for energy-producing raw materials, which is causing disproportionate increases in the price of food. A comprehensive study of the energy market and of the expected demand for raw materials for biofuels is therefore necessary, not least with a view to forecasting the impact on food markets right down to the small regional level.

Brussels, 10 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the

- ‘Annual report of the six European TEN-T coordinators’ and
- ‘Trans-European Networks: Towards an Integrated Approach’
- ‘Extension of the major trans-European transport axes’

(2007/C 305/02)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- first of all recalls the importance of TEN-T, which make a significant contribution to the Lisbon goals;
- also emphasises that the coordinators can play a key role in securing agreement among Member States on consistent parameters for the various national sections of each TEN-T axis; with this aim in mind, the Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to make such an agreement a precondition for EU financial support;
- believes that the European Commission could also encourage the networking of the various local and regional stakeholders affected by TEN-T priority projects, *inter alia* by means of an annual forum. The Committee of the Regions would, moreover, be interested in working together with the Commission in this area;
- yet again regrets the blatant inconsistency between, on the one hand, the crucial importance of TEN networks for the EU, once again highlighted in this communication, and the key role that can be played by financial incentives from the EU, and, on the other, the very small budget allocated, even if this is concentrated on the cross-border sections and bottlenecks, and therefore stresses the need for synergy among all the funding sources available at EU level;
- stresses the importance of extending the transport axes beyond the Union so as to expand trade in goods and movement of people, not only to and from neighbouring countries, but also with the rest of the world;

Reference documents

Annual report of the six European TEN-T coordinators

COM(2006) 490 final

Trans-European Networks: Towards an Integrated Approach

COM(2007) 135 final

Extension of the major trans-European transport axes

COM(2007) 32 final

Rapporteur: Bernard SOULAGE, First Vice-President of the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council (FR/PES)

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A. *TEN networks*

General points

1. first of all recalls the importance of TEN-T, which make a significant contribution to the Lisbon goals. They are conducive to strengthening regions' territorial cohesion and competitiveness by facilitating the movement of goods and people. European citizens living in the regions will notice the difference that TEN-T make to their daily lives, which can only be a plus for the legitimacy of the European Union;

On the coordinators' reports

2. would particularly like to thank the coordinators for their effective work in moving forward the implementation of priority TEN-T projects, thereby demonstrating just how useful their role is;

3. welcomes the fact that this work and the information provided on it by the Commission do much to enhance transparency of the projects concerned and their implementation, and would thus like to see an active continuation of this dialogue between the Committee of the Regions and the Commission, as many regions are directly affected by these investments being made on their territory;

4. draws particular attention to the strong points of the coordinators' work, which have made for:

- better awareness of the projects and their actual stage of advancement, which should enable informed choices to be made when allocating the TEN-T budget;
- a real improvement in the coordination between stakeholders, in particular as regards cross-border sections, which are recognised as the most delicate; this has in turn led to greater efficiency in the processes of studying and planning projects, especially where no formal international structure existed (for example between Slovenia and Italy);
- the identification of each project with one person, which, for cross-border projects, can smooth the often complex

workings of IGCs and lend the EU's weight and independence to promoting or defending a project (for example, the case of Ms de Palacio in relation to the Lyon-Turin route);

5. notes that these missions have also facilitated coordination among ministries within a given country, which have been subjected to the scrutiny of an outside observer;

6. agrees with the Commission about the need to make an adequate contribution (critical mass, often estimated by the coordinators as the maximum permitted by the regulation) to cross-border projects to get them moving and thus create the greatest possible leverage effect, with a knock-on impact on national networks;

7. highlights the key issue of interoperability, which is a major factor in getting an economic return on investments, and draws particular attention to the decision made when deploying ERTMS to focus on six priority freight corridors, which will encourage the effective use of investments in new infrastructure these axes and make such investments more attractive;

8. also emphasises that the coordinators can play a key role in securing agreement among Member States on consistent parameters for the various national sections of each TEN-T axis; with this aim in mind, the Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to make such an agreement a precondition for EU financial support;

9. emphasises, as most of the rapporteurs have done, the need for countries themselves to take steps to make best use of these investments: modal shift, good management of priorities for infrastructure use, optimisation of the timing of investments in a particular axis;

10. proposes that coordinators also intervene in discussions regarding various different projects with a view to ensuring, if not consistency of approach, then at least an exchange of views and good practice in the area of studying, setting up and financing projects. The European Commission could also encourage the networking of the various local and regional stakeholders affected by TEN-T priority projects, *inter alia* by means of an annual forum. The Committee of the Regions would, moreover, be interested in working together with the Commission in this area;

11. in the light of positive experiences to date and in parallel with this expansion of the role of the existing coordinators, would like to see, where appropriate, the appointment of other coordinators for priority projects funded by the Union, in particular for those areas which require a strong, often political incentive in order to overcome difficulties in the planning and construction phase, and for priority projects; the Committee of the Regions anyway points out that so far the coordinators have been appointed only for six projects that are in their advanced stages while other priority axes are in need of such support since they involve more Member States (e.g. project No 22, which covers 8 Member States);

12. notes that the various coordinators' reports, which date from July 2006, identify the stages of advancement that are urgently needed to make the projects credible, and the commitments that Member States need to make to optimise the main investment; and therefore

13. would like an assessment to be made of the extent to which these stages have actually been reached — and the commitments met — in order to secure a better basis for decision-making on the allocation of TEN-T appropriations for 2007-2013. Proper account should be taken of the coordinators' analyses and recommendations when making decisions on the awarding of grants, particularly from the multiannual TEN programme;

14. notes that the uncertainty over Community financing beyond 2013 may be a hindrance to projects that would involve little expenditure during the current budget period, and therefore calls for mechanisms to reduce this handicap;

15. the Commission has more precise, detailed and complex information about the state of the preparation of the priority projects supported by the coordinators. This must not compromise the equal treatment of the projects;

16. nonetheless regrets that no comparative analysis of these projects, their state of progress, or of their mutual synergies was carried out, and recommends that the Commission conduct future analysis on the basis of current and relevant statistical information gathered in appropriate form from the Member States concerned. Although the communication highlights the need for the best possible coordination between projects with a view to optimising the timeframe for implementing the TEN-T network, no such analysis has yet been carried out. This could be done by the TEN steering group. Such an analysis could provide additional information useful in relation to the — very restricted — allocation of European support for the period 2007-2013;

On the work of the TEN steering group:

17. agrees with the Commission about the importance of ensuring synergy between TEN projects along a given axis and about the potential benefits involved in terms both of invest-

ment (lower costs, less impact on the territory) and in terms of the effectiveness of the projects themselves;

18. given the difficulties of combining projects that are very different in nature (railway tunnel and high-voltage connection, for example), would like to see this objective of synergy brought within the coordinators' remit, above and beyond the planned handbook of good practice;

19. yet again regrets the blatant inconsistency between, on the one hand, the crucial importance of TEN networks for the EU, once again highlighted in this communication, and the key role that can be played by financial incentives from the EU, and, on the other, the very small budget allocated, even if this is concentrated on the cross-border sections and bottlenecks, and therefore stresses the need for synergy among all the funding sources available at EU level. The European Commission should also explore new sources of funding that might be possible in the future. With this in mind, a medium-term review of the Eurovignette directive seems necessary in order to factor in external costs;

20. notes that the completion of the thirty priority axes will slow the rise in transport-related CO₂ emissions by just 4 %, a very modest result, and would therefore like to see appropriate consideration being given to external costs during a review of the Eurovignette directive so that measures can be taken to encourage modal shift, specifically but not exclusively in sensitive regions and areas, for which more direct, more targeted measures should also be planned. The use of new information technologies, suggested in the communication, could play a part here, as could the development of intelligent transport systems, an area in which Asian countries, for example, are far more advanced than Europe;

21. supports the proposed development of PPPs, in particular by ensuring greater legal certainty and by developing innovative financial instruments at the EIB. However, the undeniable advantages of these arrangements should always set against the extra costs that they may generate initially, and it is also important to spell out clearly the transfer of risks that will be entailed;

22. stresses that since the advantages of opening markets to competition are well recognised in the telecommunications sector, it should also be possible to reap these beneficial effects in the rail transport sector as well. Whilst it is unrealistic to expect that private financing of railway investment will be at the same level as for telecommunications, one should at least be able to expect that opening the railways to competition might lead to better use being made of the investments provided by the public sector;

23. requests that the rules on deconsolidation (within the meaning of the Maastricht convergence criteria) be clarified, and possibly made more flexible, for loans taken out for investments in TEN projects. This issue should certainly be looked at in relation to every strategic investment for the development of the Union;

B. Extension of the major trans-European transport axes

General points

24. stresses the importance of extending the transport axes beyond the Union so as to expand trade in goods and movement of people, not only to and from neighbouring countries, but also with the rest of the world;

25. adds that improving links with countries neighbouring the Union will also make the significant investments made in the TEN-T network more effective;

26. recognises that the managed development and integration of the transport sector between the EU and its neighbours make a major contribution to the implementation of the Lisbon agenda by encouraging trade, sustainable growth and social cohesion;

27. notes that such extensions are significant factors for stabilising democracy and the economy in the neighbouring countries and also contribute to the European neighbourhood policy and help share the Community's achievements, thus facilitating cooperation on all levels with the EU's neighbours, in some cases preparing them for possible future membership;

Concerning the report of the high-level group

28. first of all stresses the very high quality of the report of the high-level group chaired by Ms Loyola de Palacio, to whose memory it pays tribute;

29. highly valued the consultation process, which gave credibility and added value to the high-level group's work;

30. would like this very comprehensive and detailed report to serve as a basis for determining the precise action to be taken in the short and medium term;

31. highlights the relevance of the transnational axes identified:

- the five 'transnational axes' fully meet transport link requirements by extending the priority TEN-T axes and grouping them into large sectors;
- the motorways of the sea, a key part of current developments in world trade, are properly taken into account as an axis in their own right;
- notes that the avenues for possible improvement are very similar to those identified within the Union for implementing TEN-T:
 - better coordination between countries along a given axis;
 - removal of bottlenecks of all kinds;

— improved interoperability;

— exchange of good practice;

32. in this context, welcomes the Commission's initiative in launching 'an exercise to identify bottlenecks and their solutions in Freight Transport Logistics';

33. notes that the report proposes firm deadlines that are not taken up in the communication: examining and updating the main axes, projects and horizontal measures by 2010, with a mid-term review in 2008;

Regarding the communication from the Commission itself:

34. endorses the recommendation made to the Council and the Parliament to accept the proposal to revise the concept of the Pan-European Corridors/Areas in line with the guidelines contained in the report;

35. nonetheless regrets that, although the axes are described as concerning all transport modes, no general guidance is given regarding which modes of transport are to be promoted, except for the motorways of the sea, whose importance the Committee of the Regions stresses; such general guidance would in particular provide an opportunity to promote the shift towards environmentally friendly transport modes;

36. recalls on this occasion the key points of its opinion of 14 February 2007 on the mid-term review of the Transport White Paper:

- the extension of the TEN-T network into neighbouring countries is one of the most important goals of the European transport policy, nevertheless finishing off the TEN-T in the EU27 must remain of higher priority for the EU;
- one of the aims of European transport policy must be to soften the impact that transport has on the natural environment, e.g. by honouring commitments made under the Kyoto protocol on CO₂ emissions (point 1.4);
- it is a matter of priority to rebalance the modal distribution of land transport, and it is necessary to deploy strategies to promote intermodality and multimodality (point 2.1);

37. therefore, in line with the concern expressed during public consultations, would like to see a firm emphasis placed on environmental aspects, and the establishment of the principle of modal choices consistent with Kyoto commitments and sustainable development goals;

38. stresses the importance and urgency of horizontal measures to promote interoperability; such measures are indeed included in the communication, which also sets out the principles for establishing action plans;

39. endorses the proposed institutional structure, consisting of three levels:

- regional steering groups, coordinated amongst themselves;
- ministerial meetings to take strategic decisions; and
- a secretariat providing administrative and technical support,

and furthermore urges in the future that:

- firstly, the secretariat be funded jointly by the countries involved and the European Commission so as to guarantee the quality and continuity of its work and;
- secondly, the secretariat be involved prior to the award of grants for projects;

40. regrets a certain reticence in the communication as regards action to be taken, in terms both of investment and of implementing the institutional proposals;

41. would therefore like exploratory discussions to be held very soon with neighbouring countries, in parallel with the establishment of the regional steering groups, with a view to laying down the measures to be implemented in the short and medium term;

42. asks for confirmation, from the earliest stages of this process, of the financial implications, which are set out in the high-level group's report but not mentioned in the communication;

43. also asks that the regional and local governments concerned be widely involved in planning and implementing actions so as to achieve effective synergy with local developments in terms both of the economy and of spatial planning.

Brussels, 10 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The future of European airports’

(2007/C 305/03)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Puts forward the following recommendations:

- Some regulation is necessary but it should be light, to intervene where national regulations are seen not to be working (subsidiarity principle). The key features should be transparency in the consultation process and a European appeals process.
- The threshold of 1 million passengers seems arbitrary and possibly unnecessary as it will bring over 150 airports under regulation, many of them small regional airports unable to cope with the bureaucracy. The Directive should therefore only apply to those airports that have over 1 % of the total EU wide air passenger market.
- The national independent regulatory authority should also have the power to grant exemptions, to include airports which fall below the threshold, if it is felt that they possess significant market power. Any market tests to be carried out by national aviation regulators are subject to scrutiny by the European Commission to ensure uniformity of treatment across Europe (Article 1.2 of COM(2006) 820 should therefore be amended).
- The Directive should be neutral regarding the single-till principle.
- Access to airports by various means of transport is an essential component of ‘capacity’ and to more fully exploit existing capacity at regional airports.
- Regional airports are vital to the prosperity of regions and can play an important role in alleviating congestion at major hub airports. Moreover, they can service the general aviation sector and offer a number of potential services that major airports will have less room for in future, given the increase in commercial traffic.

Reference documents

Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on common rules for the operation of air transport services in the Community

COM(2006) 396 final

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on An action plan for airport capacity, efficiency and safety in Europe

COM(2006) 819 final

Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on airport charges

COM(2006) 820 final

Report from the Commission on the application of Council Directive 96/67/EC of 15 October 1996

COM(2006) 821 final

Rapporteur: Councillor Gordon KEYMER, Tandridge District Council, (UK/EPP)

I. Policy recommendations**I. Need for regulation**

1. Some regulation is necessary but it should be light, to intervene where national regulations are seen not to be working (subsidiarity principle). The key features should be transparency in the consultation process and a European appeals process.

II. Airport charges

2. The threshold of 1 million passengers seems arbitrary and possibly unnecessary as it will bring over 150 airports under regulation, many of them small regional airports unable to cope with the bureaucracy. It is recommended that national aviation regulators carry out market tests which could be subject to scrutiny by the EU to ensure uniformity of treatment across Europe.

3. The Directive only applies to those airports that have over 1 % of the total EU wide air passenger market.

4. The national independent regulatory authority has the power to grant exemptions, either on the basis of a market contestability test, or in the case of those airports which possess less than 20 % of their national market share. It also has the power to include airports which fall below the threshold, if it is felt that they possess significant market power.

5. Any market tests to be carried out by national aviation regulators are subject to scrutiny by the European Commission to ensure uniformity of treatment across Europe.

6. The Directive should be neutral regarding the single-till principle (a dual-till can function well).

7. Airports need to be able to operate differentiated charges, both to encourage 'anchor airlines' and to allow development of low-cost terminals within an airport.

III. Regulator

8. The national regulatory authorities need to be truly independent, both operationally and financially.

IV. Capacity

9. Europe needs to both improve use of existing capacity and invest in new capacity.

10. Unrestricted access to airports by various new means of transport is an essential component of 'capacity' and to more fully exploit existing capacity at regional airports. In particular, the linking of airports with urban centres and high-speed rail networks, and a denser network of high-speed rail links in order to reduce short-haul traffic and free-up capacity.

11. General aviation plays an important role in an enlarged Europe in allowing rapid and flexible travel from regional airport to regional airport. Therefore provision for general aviation movements should be maintained.

V. Groundhandling

12. The 1996 Directive has delivered benefits in terms of raised efficiency, lower costs and jobs created. Better implementation of the existing Directive would be possible, but new legislation is not needed.

VI. Planning implications

13. Recognising the correlation between regional connectivity and growth, the CoR believes that regional airports are vital to the prosperity of regions and can play an important role in alleviating congestion at major hub airports. Moreover, they can service the general aviation sector and offer a number of potential services that major airports will have less room for in future, given the increase in commercial traffic.

14. Regional and local authorities must engage with the aviation sector in a different way, notably on shorter-time horizons and in a more dynamic fashion.

15. Future growth of airports must be better taken into account in long-term local and regional land-use planning (housing, transport networks, retail planning etc).

II. Recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

Recommendation 1

Commission's proposal for a directive on airport charges [COM(2006)0820]

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
Recital (1) The main task and commercial activity of airports is to ensure the handling of aircraft, from landing to take-off, and of passengers and cargo, so as to enable air carriers to provide their air transport services. For this purpose, airports offer a number of facilities and services related to the operation of aircraft and the processing of passengers and cargo, the cost of which they generally recover through airport charges.	Recital (1) The main task and commercial activity of airports is to ensure the handling of aircraft, from landing to take-off, and of passengers and cargo, so as to enable air carriers to provide their air transport services. For this purpose, airports offer a number of facilities and services related to the operation of aircraft and the processing of passengers and cargo, the cost of which they generally, but not necessarily exclusively, recover through airport charges.

Reason

The Directive should be neutral regarding the single-till principle (a dual-till can function well).

Recommendation 2

Commission's proposal for a directive on airport charges [COM(2006)0820]

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR Amendment
Article 1.2 This Directive applies to any airport located in a territory subject to the provisions of the Treaty and open to commercial traffic whose annual traffic is over 1 million passenger movements or 25 000 tonnes of cargo.	Article 1.2 This Directive applies to any the twenty largest airports located in the EU a territory subject to the provisions of the Treaty and open to commercial traffic whose annual traffic is over 1 million passenger movements or 25 000 tonnes of cargo. <u>This Directive applies to any airport located in a territory subject to the provisions of the Treaty and open to commercial traffic whose annual traffic is over 1 % of the total EU wide air passenger market.</u> <u>The national independent regulatory authority has the power to grant exemptions, either on the basis of a market contestability test, or in the case of those airports which possess less than 20 % of their national market share. It also has the power to include airports which fall below the threshold, if it is felt that they possess significant market power.</u> <u>Any market tests to be carried out by national aviation regulators are subject to scrutiny by the European Commission to ensure uniformity of treatment across Europe.</u>

Reason

The Directive as currently drafted will regulate over 150 airports, many of whom are not equipped for the bureaucratic burden implied by the Directive and whose market share does not warrant their inclusion. As a guideline, an airport in the EU top twenty will have in excess of 10 million passengers.

Brussels, 10 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

**Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius'
and 'The inclusion of aviation in the emission trading system'**

(2007/C 305/04)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- urges the Commission to increase its efforts at the highest political level to boost the international coalition against climate change since climate change can only be tackled if all (major) countries contribute;
- takes the view that Member States which have only limited possibilities to produce energy from renewable sources should be given the option of achieving their target on renewable energy through trade, either within an EU-wide green-energy certificate system, or through bilateral contracts with other States which have a more abundant supply of renewable energy. The aim here is to reduce the overall costs of meeting the targets on renewable energy;
- recommends the provision of further resources and measures, in addition to the use of European Structural Funds, as useful means to assist with adaptation policy and with measures directed at mitigation, such as energy saving and renewable energy, to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases;
- stresses the importance of regional flexibility in achieving the efficiency and renewable energy targets, given that regional flexibility reduces the overall cost of climate policy. However, these targets should be obligatory at EU level;
- agrees with the Commission that aviation should be included in the ETS because this industry is a rapidly growing source of greenhouse gases, and urges the Commission to take all the effects that this industry has on climate change into account;
- will encourage the development of a permanent network of ambitious local and regional authorities that are keen to enhance information exchange and create a platform for the development of new ideas to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively.

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius — The way ahead for 2020 and beyond'

COM(2007) 2

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC so as to include aviation activities in the scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community

COM(2006) 818 final — 2006/0304 (COD)

Rapporteur: Ms Lenie DWARSHUIS-VAN DE BEEK, Member of the Executive Council of the Province of South Holland (NL/ALDE)

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. considers a sound environment to be a basic pre-condition for human activity and believes, therefore, that protecting the environment is of vital importance to human wellbeing;

2. believes that a well-conceived environmental and climate policy certainly contributes to economic development;

Regarding the assessment of the threat posed by climate change

3. takes the view that the threat of advanced climate change, which is caused by greenhouse gas emissions, is a pressing problem which should be tackled with the utmost determination, first and foremost by the current generation;

4. agrees with the assessment that climate change will have a significant impact on human wellbeing, for example victims of heat stress, health problems, damage to biodiversity, reduced agricultural productivity in several regions, reduced tourism opportunities, as well as damage caused by higher sea levels and extreme weather conditions, which could cause massive environmental migrations towards the closest developed regions;

5. believes that climate policy will also have numerous positive side effects, since it will also improve air quality (due to lower emissions from SO₂, PM and NO_x), security of energy supply (due to reduced dependence on imports of fossil fuels) and soil fertility (due to lower loss of organic matter);

6. fully agrees with the Commission that the cost of policy measures to reduce climate change will be significantly lower than the estimated costs of climate change and that, therefore, climate policy is a very efficient policy;

7. supports the statements in the Kyoto Protocol on the significance of agricultural soils as carbon pools. Increasing the organic carbon content and storing organic substances in the soil thus makes a significant contribution to countries' CO₂ balance. Land management aimed at protecting the soil can also

reduce the release of other gases that impact on the climate, such as nitrous oxide, methane, etc. This is not just a matter of maintaining storage capacity, but above all of using it. If it is to have a positive impact on the CO₂ balance, as well as bringing other advantages such as increasing soil fertility and water retention, the soil must fulfil its current role as a carbon pool. The use of compost as part of land management and the regional recovery of organic matter via compost and crop residues are important aims for improving the CO₂ balance;

Regarding the international dimension of climate policy

8. urges the Commission to increase its efforts at the highest political level to boost the international coalition against climate change since climate change can only be tackled if all (major) countries contribute;

9. calls on the Commission to submit a road map for relevant climate-change initiatives and a clear strategy for local and regional authority involvement, to be implemented in the run-up to the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009;

Regarding the regional dimension of climate change as well as climate policy

10. acknowledges that European regions' vulnerability to climate change varies greatly, mainly because of differences in natural conditions and population density;

11. also acknowledges that the availability of cost-effective options to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions varies greatly from region to region, mainly because of differences in natural conditions and economic structure;

12. regrets, therefore, that the Commission is not paying more attention to the regional distribution of both the costs of inaction and the benefits of action, and urges the Commission to conduct an in-depth analysis of the regional dimension of the costs and benefits of climate change and climate policy;

13. recommends the provision of further resources and measures, in addition to the use of European Structural Funds, as useful means to assist with adaptation policy and with measures directed at mitigation, such as energy saving and renewable energy, to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. This would increase support for European climate policy;

14. requests the Commission to allocate more financial means towards mitigation measures in the 2008 Budget Midterm Review since the ambitious climate targets which have been set can only be achieved if more public money is made available;

Regarding the targets of climate policy

15. agrees with the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament that the European Union should pursue high unilateral targets given that leadership is needed to create a global coalition against climate change. It welcomes, therefore, the target to reduce GHG emissions in the European Union, independent of policies in other regions, by at least 20 % by 2020 compared to 1990 levels;

16. urges the Commission to also formulate intermediate targets for CO₂ emissions, for example for the years 2013 or 2015, in order to advance the implementation of mitigation measures, and facilitate analysis and monitoring;

17. supports the targets of improving energy efficiency by at least 20 % by 2020, and raising the share of renewable energy to at least 20 % by 2020. These targets could prove to be effective tools in efforts to reach the overall target on emissions reduction. These aims cannot be achieved through new technological developments alone, but also need ongoing changes in mentality both among producers (for example through designs that are both energy efficient and attractive to consumers) and among consumers;

18. stresses the importance of regional flexibility in achieving the efficiency and renewable energy targets, given that regional flexibility reduces the overall cost of climate policy. However, these targets should be obligatory at EU level;

Regarding emissions trading as a climate policy instrument

19. agrees with the Commission that the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) should play a central role since it is potentially a cost-effective instrument for mitigating GHG emissions;

20. urges the Commission to effectively manage the number of permits allocated since the ETS will only operate effectively if the *cap* (i.e. the total level of *emission permits*) is significantly lower than the level of GHG emissions;

21. stresses that the total number of permits to be allocated within the ETS should be reduced in line with the emission

targets set by the Commission for 2020, to avoid putting too much of the burden of emission reduction on sectors that are not participating in the ETS, such as households and other small energy users;

22. is in favour of partly *auctioning* the permits, especially those for sheltered industries, because this will provide a better incentive to reduce emissions and, hence, will also improve the ETS's efficiency. This approach is also more in line with the 'polluter pays' principle. It would also create less of an economic burden for participating firms than would be the case if all permits were auctioned;

23. takes the view that the auction and the *free (benchmark) allocation* of the other (main) part of the emission permits can be left to Member States, provided that the allocation procedures within the EU are harmonised, in order to prevent distortion of competition between Member States and to improve the efficiency of the system; in a future trading system, consideration could be given, in respect of specific sectors of the economy with comparable European benchmarks, to an allocation and/or target at EU level outside the national reduction target, with an equal allocation of emission rights per unit of production to all market participants;

24. requests the Commission to consider whether appropriate means, such as from the Structural funds, have to be used to compensate outermost regions if they will be relatively strongly affected by the inclusion of aviation in the ETS.

25. welcomes any efforts to coordinate the European emissions trading system with comparable approaches in third countries. Distortions of competition in favour of producers from countries with no comparable emissions trading system should be prevented by means of appropriate measures, such as compensatory levies;

26. welcomes the proposal to extend the ETS to other gases and sectors as this will raise both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the system;

27. urges the Commission to carefully consider the option of opening up the ETS to small, but energy-intensive emitters since this would probably lower their *reduction costs*;

28. agrees with the Commission that aviation should be included in the ETS because this industry is a rapidly growing source of greenhouse gases, and urges the Commission to take all the effects that this industry has on climate change into account;

29. requests the Commission to take into account the specific characteristics of the aviation industry within the allocation of permits, in particular to deal with the fact that emissions from aviation (both carbon and hydro) have larger impact on climate change than activities occurring at ground level;

30. is strongly opposed to the proposed exemption for government flights since governments should lead by example to boost public support for the policy;

31. believes that Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) should be included in the ETS only on strict conditions relating to monitoring and safety. Before this happens, it must be proven by means of demonstration plants to what extent and/or at what cost these technologies can make a contribution to the avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions;

Regarding other instruments of climate policy

32. urges the Commission to develop systems through which Member States and regions can meet the targets on renewable energy and energy efficiency cost-effectively;

33. takes the view that Member States which have only limited possibilities to produce energy from renewable sources should be given the option of achieving their target on renewable energy through trade, either within an EU-wide green-energy certificate system, or through bilateral contracts with other States which have a more abundant supply of renewable energy. The aim here is to reduce the overall costs of meeting the targets on renewable energy;

34. requests the Commission to set the target for energy efficiency on an aggregate level (i.e. energy intensity of the whole economy) taking into account regional differences in sectoral structure. This would give Member States and regions the flexibility to achieve the target using a wider range of measures, including measures aimed at the energy consumption of apparatuses and the industrial structure of the (regional) economy;

35. welcomes the Commission's intention to reduce average emissions of new cars sold in the EU by 2012 to 120 g of CO₂ per kilometre, and calls upon the Commission to do its utmost, for instance by supporting research in this field, to reach the target of 95 g CO₂/km by 2020;

36. calls upon the Commission to give careful consideration to the subsidiarity principle when creating new policy instruments. Regional and local authorities are well placed to take effective measures in the field of public transport, traffic infrastructure, energy infrastructure, spatial policy, energy-efficiency measures and communication measures aimed at the public;

Regarding the role of local and regional authorities in European climate policy

37. is convinced that measures at regional and local level are indispensable for an effective European climate policy;

38. believes that local and regional authorities also have an important role to play in adapting to climate change. The CoR will be drawing up an opinion on this subject in due course;

39. notes that regional and local authorities are already contributing to the European climate-policy in a number of ways, for example:

- a. communicating with the public, for example in schools, on the necessity of taking action to prevent further climate change;
- b. making climate and energy issues a driving factor in spatial planning;
- c. encouraging investment in infrastructures for biomass and biofuel filling stations;
- d. stimulating investment in heat infrastructures, which connect heat supply (remnant heat, geothermic heat, cold and heat storage in the soil) with demand;
- e. strengthening the modal shift in transport through, for example, spatial policy;
- f. encouraging regional public transport, for example light rail connections;
- g. planning and introducing more footpaths and other routes for non-motorised traffic;
- h. promoting clean technology in public transport through green public procurement;
- i. simplifying permit procedures for renewable energy projects;
- j. enhancing the regulation of energy efficiency by local and regional authorities through the creation of expert centres;
- k. establishing international partnerships to extend the international coalition against climate change, and transfer energy-saving technology to less-developed countries;
- l. boosting research and development in technology by creating regional 'energy valleys';
- m. linking goals for energy efficiency or renewable energy to regional goals such as employment, innovation, social policy;
- n. formulating ambitious targets, such as action plans for local or regional emission reduction and 'climate neutral areas' or 'climate neutral public transport and buildings';
- o. using public procurement as a tool to reduce energy use and improve energy efficiency for both goods and services;

- p. encouraging the treatment of organic matter and raw materials on regional and local level, because the reduction of transport movements contributes to the CO₂ balance.
40. will assume its responsibility by strongly encouraging the implementation of these kinds of measures at regional and local level through three types of action:
- a. improving the dissemination of knowledge on cost-effective climate measures;
 - b. encouraging cooperation between EU regions;
 - c. encouraging cooperation between EU regions and regions in other parts of the world, such as in the United States, China and India, partly by intensifying already existing relationships between these regions;
41. calls on the Commission to organise a conference on regional and local climate policy, in order to disseminate best practice among European regions, and to discuss how the Commission can support regional and local climate policies effectively;
42. will encourage the development of a permanent network of ambitious local and regional authorities that are keen to enhance information exchange and create a platform for the development of new ideas to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively;
43. offers to participate actively in the further process of designing the European climate policy.

Brussels, 10 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Local and regional Government in Ukraine and the development of cooperation between the EU and Ukraine'

(2007/C 305/05)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- notes that following the events which led to the 'Orange Revolution' at the end of 2004, Ukraine has pursued an agenda of ambitious reforms to root democracy and the market economy firmly in the country and to bring Ukraine closer to the EU; takes note nonetheless that these reforms are still in a fragile state of development;
- welcomes that EU and Ukraine opened negotiations on a new Enhanced Agreement in March 2007;
- awaits with interest implementation of the next stage of the Ukrainian Administrative Reform Plan, with particular emphasis on the competences of local and regional authorities, fiscal decentralisation, and territorial reform;
- welcomes the proposed establishment of an institutional platform to facilitate consultation of civil society actors in the EU and Ukraine, in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the new Enhanced Agreement; but regrets that currently no provision has been made to ensure the same level of consultation of cross-border and regional cooperation actors, and therefore invites the European Commission to establish a similar institutional platform committee for EU and Ukrainian local and regional authority representatives;
- recommends that, with practical help from the European Commission, and in compliance with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed by the EU and Ukraine, it could draft a framework agreement on cooperation with local and regional authorities in Ukraine and EU Member States; such an agreement could form the basis for cooperation between local and regional authorities in EU Member States and their counterparts in Ukraine;
- recalls that allocation of funds for cross-border cooperation on the eastern border of the EU represents only 5 % of the ENPI; is of the opinion that the allocation of funds for the whole ENPI is insufficient and requests that at least 10 % of the ENPI funds are dedicated to supporting cross-border cooperation programmes.

Rapporteur: Mr István SÉRTŐ-RADICS (HU/ALDE), Mayor of Úszka, Vice-President of the RELEX commission

Policy recommendations

EU-Ukraine relations' strategy and main challenges

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. would like this own-initiative opinion to contribute to promoting democracy in Ukraine on both regional and local levels, and also to instigate and to add impetus to tangible efforts in the context of the Strategic Partnership and the EU-Ukraine Neighbourhood Action Plan, in the framework of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) already underway. This own-initiative opinion should therefore more specifically focus on opportunities for solving common problems through increased cross-border and regional cooperation between the regional and local authorities of the EU and Ukraine;

2. is of the opinion that the EU has an important strategic interest in Ukraine's political stability and economic development, but the case for closer relations between the two entities has become even greater following the enlargement and adhesion of two new states that have land or maritime borders with Ukraine. There is no doubt that Ukraine can best achieve comprehensive development by strengthening its position as a prosperous market for EU exports and investments, as well as a stable, predictable and cooperative partner for peace and security in Europe. These factors all have major influence on stability, security and prosperity in the EU;

3. recalls that Ukraine is currently engaged in self-governance reform, so practical examples and models from EU Member States would certainly be welcome. An important next step is, however, to ascertain how consistently and how transparently the legislation is being implemented. This includes institutional capacity-building, which is necessary to ensure the development of democracy as well good governance and compliance with the European principles of subsidiarity, proximity and partnership. These concepts are all pivotal to sustainable economic development, which is the aim, not only of Ukraine, but of the EU as well;

4. recalls that as the shared border with the EU becomes substantially longer, Ukraine, along with other NIS countries, will become an even more prominent and strategic EU neighbour; and that the EU needs to develop good and balanced relations with Ukraine — its second biggest neighbour — and it should therefore promote good governance and democracy in this country, not only on the national level, but also on the regional and local levels. Practical and tangible steps should be taken in order to address the dynamic changes and new challenges posed by the ten plus two new EU Member States, which have significant ramifications for the EU's relationship with Ukraine;

5. stresses that the impact of EU enlargement does not only affect Ukraine's relations with the current EU Member States, but also Ukraine's relations with other NIS and Russia. Therefore, the state of current cooperation structures and other networks have to be reassessed and improved in a way which avoids disruption and first and foremost allows for more tangible progress in the field of democratic stabilisation, genuine

decentralisation and territorial cohesion. Furthermore, it is important to note that with accession of the new Member States the prospects for the area surrounding the Black Sea will change dramatically. Politically and economically these new challenges need to be addressed;

6. outlines that in the past the EU has assisted in the development of local democracy and effective local administration in central and eastern European countries. This has, for example, happened through the TACIS and Twinning framework programmes. The coordination between programmes, however, has been insufficient and it would therefore like to support a more efficient approach to the administration of the new EU external aid programmes such as the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and new Neighbourhood Investment Fund. The linkage between all the old and new policies and especially the programmes and financial instruments attached to them needs to be clarified from the perspective of local and regional authorities;

7. recalls that the twinning between local and regional authorities is especially recognised by the EU and it has proved to be a useful way to increase administrative efficiency and people-to-people contacts. It would therefore like to see such partnership schemes continue and possibly be expanded in order to address the special needs of local and regional institution building in Ukraine and this geographic area. Furthermore, local and regional democracy is a key instrument for further development of democratic institutions and capacity-building in Ukraine and should send out a message of conformity not least with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted on 15 October 1985. The debate must therefore involve all parties concerned, including local and regional organisations as well as sub-national authorities;

8. believes that a credible partnership should build on a strategy and on a practical agenda based on common interests, in order to pursue the policy goals which have been set. To this end, specific practical measures must be adopted which are capable of responding to changes and new challenges in relations between the recently enlarged EU and Ukraine. At local and regional level, it is vital to ensure growth, given that it is the foundation of future prosperity; also, development must be adapted to the various tasks of local and regional authorities. Education, environmental protection, transport, business development based on public-private cooperation, social services and healthcare are the main aspects of regional development able to deliver growth in Ukraine and the EU and bring about closer cooperation between local and regional authorities;

9. recommends that the EU must also pay close attention to regions in particular need of growth and development; for example, European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument must be used to help areas which are lagging behind in economically depressed Ukrainian regions. It is also important to focus on adapting the principles of European structural and cohesion policy to local conditions, taking into account the need for improved living conditions, sustainable development and enhanced regional competitiveness;

10. recalls that it intends to give priority to areas falling within local and regional competences. National authorities are responsible for issues affecting society as a whole, whereas local and regional authorities focus their activities on areas of importance for individual sections of society and which are close to citizens' daily lives;

11. notes that through close cooperation at the level of individual projects, the EU can help to ensure that reforms of public administration and services are launched in a balanced way at national, regional and local levels. Thus, at the level of projects the EU can help to build up human capital through developments within individual sectors. The EU must continue developing personal relations in this area, in particular through partnerships forged in the field of education.

EU-Ukraine relations: recent developments

12. notes that following the events which led to the 'Orange Revolution' at the end of 2004, Ukraine has pursued an agenda of ambitious reforms to root democracy and the market economy firmly in the country and to bring Ukraine closer to the EU; takes note nonetheless that these reforms are still in a fragile state of development;

13. notes that the policy objectives defined in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of April 1998 and the EU-Ukraine Action Plan of February 2005 remain an important basis for the development of cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. The Agreement lays down a framework for bilateral cooperation and establishes the main forums and decision-making bodies, to ensure that matters of common interest are dealt with at all levels, information is exchanged and conflicts are resolved;

14. welcomes that EU and Ukraine opened negotiations on a new Enhanced Agreement in March 2007. The main aim of the new Enhanced Agreement, reflecting the strategic importance of developing EU-Ukraine relations, is to draw Ukraine closer to the EU, enhance political co-operation, increase trade and investment and thus contribute to economic development and prosperity in Ukraine;

15. welcomes the proposed establishment of an institutional platform to facilitate consultation of civil society actors in the EU and Ukraine, in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the new Enhanced Agreement; but regrets that currently no provision has been made to ensure the same level of consultation of cross-border and regional cooperation actors, and therefore invites the European Commission to establish a similar institutional platform committee for EU and Ukrainian local and regional authority representatives;

16. points out that it views cooperation under the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) separately from the EU accession process, i.e. cooperation in itself does not predetermine EU membership; however, enhanced cooperation under

the new ENP can promote reform processes in Ukraine and establish future long-term strategy of relations, possibly helping to bring the country closer to the EU;

17. is ready to participate constructively in identifying and developing common area, including a common economic area, a common area of freedom, security and justice, as well as cooperation on external security, and research, education and culture, as agreed at the EU-Ukraine summits in December 2005 and October 2006;

18. feels that that local and regional authorities have a legitimate stake in many aspects of the common areas, and proposes its direct participation in work on developing the common areas in issues which fall within its remit and also in those covered by the method of open coordination;

19. awaits with interest implementation of the next stage of the Ukrainian Administrative Reform Plan, with particular emphasis on the competences of local and regional authorities, fiscal decentralisation, and territorial reform, and expects progress on opportunities for cooperation between the local and regional authorities of the EU and Ukraine;

20. trusts that the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government of October 1985 will also be included in forthcoming legislative proposals;

21. is pleased that attention is being paid to cooperation between local and regional authorities in the EU and Ukraine, as this will mean prioritising solutions to shared problems which are close to public concerns, at the level of local and regional authorities;

22. considers that local and regional-level exchanges of information and best practice foster democracy and social and economic development;

23. is pleased to note that the positive outcomes of projects implemented jointly by EU and Ukrainian local and regional authorities have strengthened the desire for continued cooperation under favourable conditions and would emphasise that lasting cooperation between local and regional authorities is a necessary and important precondition for the role of those developing joint projects.

The decision-making process and key priorities at local and regional level

24. would strongly call on local and regional authorities in the EU and Ukraine to cooperate in areas of common interest, given that there is scope for cooperation in numerous areas, for example culture, social affairs, regional economies, environmental protection, transport, agriculture, and specific initiatives to promote private-sector research and development. These are areas of particular relevance to territorial competences for regional development;

25. feels that health and to a large extent healthcare are the main elements of society's growth potential, and are therefore important sectors within the competences of local and regional authorities which are linked to social matters and directly or indirectly impact on other sectors too; they have therefore become key components of other sectors, helping to promote and maintain social stability;

26. recommends that, with practical help from the European Commission, and in compliance with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed by the EU and Ukraine, it could draft a framework agreement in cooperation with local and regional authorities in Ukraine and EU Member States; such an agreement could form the basis for cooperation between local and regional authorities in EU Member States and their counterparts in Ukraine;

27. is in favour of promoting the exchange of information and dissemination of best practices in action areas, provided that this takes place under conditions which are favourable for society as a whole; it would be willing to help organise regular debates on Ukraine to enable evaluation of EU-Ukraine cooperation and relations; such debates would make a special contribution to areas within the competences of local and regional authorities;

28. feels that the exchange of experiences and information with the European Economic and Social Committee could contribute to better mutual understanding between the EU and Ukraine in areas of common interest; it would also open up new possibilities for specific initiatives aimed at Ukraine in the form of joint workshops, seminars, meetings and conferences, given that both partners have an interest in this and would like to contribute to closer EU-Ukraine cooperation.

Cross-border and regional cooperation

29. points out that the second stage of the new neighbourhood programme is due for implementation in 2007-2013, and is likely to open the door to closer and more effective cross-border cooperation, with specific outcomes;

30. shares the view that more technical and political support is needed to ensure permanent cross-border and interregional cooperation between the EU and neighbouring countries on the other side of the shared border over the 2007-2013 period, and that the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) should be used to provide firm support for territorial cooperation objectives;

31. welcomes the European Commission's ENPI Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Ukraine 2007-2013 that recalls that cross-border cooperation as a key element for cooperation between neighbours; stresses that this form of cooperation is the best way to overcome misgivings over the introduction of the Schengen border, and also represents great benefits for

border regions on both sides, irrespective of the current state of development of the EU's eastern border region;

32. recalls that allocation of funds for cross-border cooperation on the eastern border of the EU represents only 5 % of the ENPI; is of the opinion that the allocation of funds for the whole ENPI is insufficient and requests that at least 10 % of the ENPI funds are dedicated to supporting cross-border cooperation programmes;

33. considers — in this light — that the priorities for cross-border cooperation need to be very carefully defined to maximise synergies and avoid an unproductive dispersal of funds; such a small amount of money should not be used to support general economic and social development programmes in border regions; likewise, it is unrealistic to expect that this small financial envelope will cover other priority EU objectives such as providing effective and secure borders which must be addressed under other EU policies;

34. recommends reinforcing of three priorities of cross-border cooperation — namely a) solving common border problems including joint local infrastructure and integrated regional development, b) people-to-people contacts and c) development of human resources and support for education, science and research in border regions;

35. points out that it is advantageous to stimulate and develop an interest in cooperation — particularly in the fields of culture and education — based on cultural activities and traditions which are characteristic of indigenous local and regional cultures;

36. looks forward to the possible future role of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) legal instrument in the above mentioned areas, particularly on the fields of public health, public transport, disaster preparedness or the creation of transnational structures for tourism. Moreover EGTCs will be able to serve as an additional instrument to implement public private partnership strategies; therefore invites the competent national authorities, in Ukraine and in the neighbouring EU Member States, to take the appropriate steps for allowing the participation of Ukrainian partners to future EGTCs, as allowed by the Regulation (EC) 1082/2006;

37. considers it important for the EU to step up financial cooperation with Ukraine, in particular by means of the ENPI and by launching new instruments such as the Neighbourhood Investment Fund, which Member State institutions providing development aid could use to stimulate investment in ENP countries, and also proposes that Ukraine contribute to the signing of a joint financing agreement, to be implemented by a joint foundation;

38. emphasises the importance of town twinning programmes in contributing to the exchange of information in specific action areas;

39. welcomes the European Commission's insistence on the importance of local ownership, while assuring national-level support; but in the context of building better cooperation suggests that the implementation of bilateral programmes should also be taken into account within the EU-Ukraine Neighbourhood Action Plan;

The particular situation of regions directly bordering the EU

40. emphasises that Ukrainian regions directly bordering on the EU are most affected by international relations between the EU and Ukraine; it therefore supports closer cooperation in these regions through interregional relations and partnerships between local authorities;

41. urges a quick conclusion of bilateral agreements between Ukraine and bordering Member States, implementing the local border traffic regime established by Regulation No 1931/2006/EC;

42. emphasises the importance of helping economically depressed, backward regions to catch up, and feels that this requires a government strategy in the Ukraine which is consistent with the principles of European regional policy, as well as the development of a system of instruments and institutions; Member State regions could assist in this through knowledge transfer, with opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in specific projects, cooperate in particular areas envisaged by the EU-Ukraine Neighbourhood Action Plan, and also contribute to the dissemination of best practice. It is extremely important to make financial resources available for implementing the specific content of the EU-Ukraine Neighbourhood Action Plan; these resources must be readily accessible;

43. in multicultural regions, emphasises the importance of people-to-people contacts, particularly in the fields of culture and education, and also in cooperation between young people. It is precisely the pooling of experience and knowledge that can act as a major spur to cross-border cooperation and may help Ukraine to carry out indispensable reforms.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The European Research Area — New Perspectives’

(2007/C 305/06)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- highlights that the process of the creation of the European Research Area needs to be intensified, if the aim of making Europe the leading knowledge society and the most dynamic economy is to be achieved; regions, through supportive programming, structural and legislative framework conditions in the context of their research policies, make a significant contribution to the creation of a vibrant European Research Area;
- supports the idea of coordination of regional, national and EU research programmes and priorities; however, bearing in mind the subsidiarity principle, emphasises the responsibility of Member States and regional and local authorities for science and research, and continues to reject centralised research planned at European level;
- considers progress in the mobility of scientists, including necessary adjustments in the areas of residence law and pensions, along with supporting family-friendly measures, to be especially important to the development of a European Research Area;
- emphasises the need to create standards and protection rights for intellectual property; the development of a European charter for the handling of intellectual property from public research and higher education institutes could make a significant contribution to shaping the European Research Area and to promoting cooperation networks;
- encourages universities and colleges to explore new avenues of cooperation between public institution and the private sector, for example through joint public and private innovation funds. Universities and colleges must be seen and supported as drivers of innovation in their regions.

Reference documents

Green Paper on the *European Research Area — New Perspectives*

COM(2007) 161 final

Communication on *Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe: embracing open innovation — Implementing the Lisbon agenda*

COM(2007) 182 final

Rapporteur: Michael SCHROEREN (DE/EPP), Member of the North Rhine-Westphalia Landtag

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. highlights the great significance of the creation of a European Research Area for Europe's economic and social development and ability to innovate, for the achievement of the Lisbon goals, for the sustainable and balanced growth and success of Europe's regions, and for improving its citizens' quality of life;

2. agrees that, since the decision by the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 to create a European Research Area, significant measures have been launched to make it a reality; however, this process needs to be intensified if the aim of making Europe the leading knowledge society and the most dynamic economy is to be achieved;

3. therefore welcomes the Commission's initiative in launching, with the Green Paper, an assessment of the progress, successes and failures on the road to the European Research Area since it was set up in 2000 and discussing new ideas taking into account new developments;

4. considers progress in the mobility of scientists, including necessary adjustments in the areas of residence law and pensions, along with supporting family-friendly measures, to be especially important to the development of a European Research Area. Furthermore, better coordination and cooperation among Member States and the regions with regard to research programmes may lead to synergies and thus to added value for the European Research Area. This will strengthen Europe's competitiveness on the worldwide knowledge market. In this context, improved knowledge transfer, *inter alia* through cooperation in innovation clusters, is urgently needed. The EU's funding programmes, in particular FP8 for research, technological development and demonstration, should be expanded and targeted accordingly, and the latter should be linked even more closely than hitherto with the European Structural Funds;

5. highlights the significance of the regions, which, through supportive programming, structural and legislative framework conditions in the context of their research policies, make a significant contribution to creating European added value in the field of research and to the creation of a living European research area. The EU should only legislate where this appears indispensable to the creation of a European Research Area and where coordinating measures, *inter alia* under the open method of coordination, are not sufficient. Beyond this, the Committee continues to reject any centralised planning at European level;

6. would draw attention to the major importance of cities and regions in developing innovative environments. Their policies have a substantial impact both on establishing the European research area in terms of the mobility of scientists — only versatile, tolerant and innovative environments attract scientists — and as centres of development for research infrastructure. Relevant here are local innovation policies, technology centres, business incubators, science parks and venture capital;

7. believes that a perspective that is generally absent from the ERA Green Paper is that close cooperation between publicly funded research and other society players also applies to local and regional authorities. Industry, which is mentioned with reference to certain situations, is not the only one concerned. In many Member States the local and regional level is responsible for important areas of public welfare services. Closer cooperation between academia and public players is important and there is a great need for 'social innovations', not least in order to meet the major challenges facing society and, in so doing, help to achieve the Lisbon Strategy;

In relation to the mobility of scientists

8. agrees that the mobility of scientists across institutions, sectors and countries is of great significance to the further development and passing on of knowledge, and should therefore become a natural and integral part of today's CVs and careers;

9. shares the view that at present, the mobility of scientists is often hindered by an inadequate legislative and institutional framework, as well as by poor working conditions and obstacles to careers;

10. emphasises the importance of training scientists in different parts of the European Union, including the new Member States. Training scientists throughout the Union will guarantee more equal opportunities, also in terms of access to training, thus ensuring that Europe's talent potential is optimised to the benefit of the whole Union. This perspective highlights the importance of funding for universities and research institutes as well as of EU and national funding instruments, and measures by local and regional authorities;

11. encourages local and regional authorities to take such measures as are in their power to improve mobility in all areas, in particular between academia and industry. Close pan-European cooperation between businesses, universities and colleges, and research institutes, involving political actors and administrations at local, regional and national level, is very important in this context. The proportion of women in academic careers must be steadily increased. In this context, flexible careers and working time arrangements, arrangements for transferability of pension rights, childcare services that are fit for purpose and other supporting family-friendly measures (e.g. assistance in getting spouses' and partners' careers off the ground) are of the utmost importance;

12. stresses the need to attract excellent academics from outside Europe and therefore emphasises the importance of EU mobility programmes such as the Marie Curie programme and measures that have been taken in some regions to support returning academics;

13. with this in mind, supports in principle the need for greater opening up of regional and national R & D programmes. However, there is a need for clarification as to how this is done in practice;

14. highlights the role of the EU in supporting better coordination of efforts by national bodies to promote mobility, by using the open method of coordination to create transparency and highlight examples of best practice from the regions;

In relation to the creation of excellent research infrastructure

15. restates its belief in the need to create modern and efficient European research infrastructure, in particular through the creation of modern virtual networks and knowledge databases. It also supports the view that, in addition to European resources,

regional, national and private funding needs to be attracted for this purpose. In this context, achieving the target of 3 % of GDP, two-thirds of which is to come from the private sector, is of decisive importance;

16. reiterates its view that, in order to guarantee the international competitiveness of the European Research Area, impetus needs to be given to the networking and further development of existing research institutes. The European Structural Funds could make a significant contribution to the funding and establishment of new research infrastructure. In addition, efforts towards closer links with the RFP should be made. This aspect and/or the role of the Structural Funds in establishing a European Research Area so far receives too little attention in the Green Paper;

17. calls for the issue of implementing and financing the European Roadmap published by the European Strategy Forum (ESFRI) to be discussed as an important milestone in the creation of a European Research Area. In doing so, clear and transparent decision-making processes and the criterion of excellence should be at the forefront;

18. therefore welcomes the efforts being made in various regions to facilitate more private involvement by giving universities and colleges greater autonomy. It expressly encourages them to explore new avenues of cooperation between public institution and the private sector, for example through joint public and private innovation funds, which could be trailblazing examples of sustainable use and safeguarding of public money. Colleges must, more than has hitherto been the case, be seen and supported as drivers of innovation in their regions, and be involved in the relevant discussions at regional, national and European level;

19. believes that better coordination of public and private R&D activities, as well as those of the EU Member States, is needed and that the open method of coordination is an appropriate means of achieving synergies in this area;

In relation to strengthening research institutes and driving them towards excellence

20. emphasises the significance of colleges and non-university research institutes for fundamental and applied research as drivers of development of culture, the economy, and society as a whole in their regions and in supra-regional contexts. With this in mind, the Committee advocates a wide-ranging interpretation of the concept of innovation, going beyond a purely economic meaning;

21. stresses the importance of cross-border cooperation of colleges and research institutes with non-university partners in industry and commerce, government, culture and other sections of society;

22. supports efforts towards the creation of virtual skills centres and, in this context, draws attention to the efforts of regions to support the cooperation of stakeholders in clusters, including virtual ones;

23. welcomes the activities of the EU to strengthen these measures through appropriate funding programmes, or actions as part of those programmes — for example under the seventh EU framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration — and calls for the relevant programmes to be further developed in a targeted fashion, with the aim of stronger cooperation of the above-mentioned institutions and stakeholders so as to achieve the necessary critical mass and the creation of excellent, internationally visible clusters;

24. notes that as the aim is to achieve critical mass at the level of research institutes, this critical mass depends on the subject of study, the research area and the participants. A 'one size fits all' approach should not be applied to all research areas or all forms of support;

25. welcomes the objective put forward in the Green Paper of finding an appropriate balance between institutional and competitive funding. In line with its previously expressed views, the Committee of the Regions calls for the debate about the appropriate balance between institutional and competitive funding to continue. How this balance is struck is very important to the dynamics of the system;

26. is inclined, as it has pointed out previously, to have more faith in scientists and their teams selecting interesting and useful areas of research and in voluntary (bottom-up) networking than in processes managed heavily from above and the ritualised cooperation that these entail;

27. at the same time, stresses the need to ensure not only the promotion of excellence and high achievement, but also good education and training for the people in every region as the foundation for individual and collective prosperity and for the ability of regions to innovate;

In relation to a democratic and effective transfer of knowledge

28. agrees with the analysis concerning the great significance of digital media for a democratic and effective cross-border

transfer of knowledge and scientific discoveries, *inter alia* to inform policymaking, and also supports the transfer of knowledge via international networking;

29. emphasises, particularly against the background of international cooperation, the need to create standards and protection rights for intellectual property. The absence of such standards and protection would be a serious impediment to confidence in interinstitutional and cross-border cooperation, for example in clusters and centres of excellence;

30. reiterates its view that, with this in mind, the systematic development and implementation of European and international standards should be promoted and should be supported by the publication of examples of best practice, in particular in the transfer of knowledge between industry and public-sector research. In this context, the development of a European charter for the handling of intellectual property from public research and higher education institutes could make a significant contribution to shaping the European Research Area and to promoting cooperation networks;

31. stresses that provision must be made for the inclusion and involvement of the regions and SMEs even in large EU cooperation projects such as the European Technology Institute;

In relation to the coordination of research programmes and priorities

32. supports the idea of coordination of regional and national research programmes and priorities with a view to a European Research Area and research market and with the aim of better coordination of individual countries' research activities and greater focus on the shared aim of creating a European Research Area. However, bearing in mind the subsidiarity principle, the Committee emphasises the responsibility of Member States and regional and local authorities for science and research, and continues to reject centralised research planned at European level;

33. reiterates its view that providing local and regional authorities with a research-friendly framework could make a significant contribution to the creation of a European research area and of research that is coordinated *inter alia* in terms of its content. This happens through EU funding programmes such as the seventh EU framework programme for research, but considerable progress in this area could also be made by means of appropriately agreed and structured programmes that allowed for synergies between the Structural Funds and research funding;

34. recognises that research and innovation models that are successful in one region cannot simply be copied and transferred to other regions or political entities. However, if proper account is taken of the respective structural, social and cultural circumstances, they can serve as examples for the development of appropriate models in other regions, including disadvantaged ones;

35. agrees that the ERA Net programme for coordinating regional and European research programmes has demonstrated its value and should be developed further;

36. points out that EU benchmarking will only be accepted in the regions if it takes into account each region's specific conditions for, stages of and requirements for development. If benchmarking in the EU is to be successful, indicators and investigation methods must be developed that allow a proper comparison between regions and lead to meaningful results. The involvement of the regions in this development process is an essential prerequisite for the future success of any benchmarking exercise;

37. regrets the fact that the ERA Green Paper does not address 'social platforms', which are a genuine innovation in that they try to formulate and implement strategic research efforts around major challenges facing European society, e.g. the environment, ageing population and integration. The socio-economic sciences and humanities section of the December 2006 cooperation work programme does, however, mention social platforms for cities and social cohesion, which is

to be welcomed. It is, however, important that the Commission should continue to develop this innovative approach to the research issues of tomorrow, as it is already doing through discussions between scientists, public players, businesses and civil society, etc.;

In relation to the openness of the European Research Area to the rest of the world

38. supports the idea that science and research are international in nature and emphasises the need for cooperation that goes beyond the EU, and for exchange of knowledge and scientists;

39. welcomes the activities of Member States aimed at improving such international cooperation by creating helpful framework conditions such as appropriate modernisation of immigration law, and calls for close cooperation among Member States in this area;

Next steps:

40. welcomes the European Commission's initiative in launching a comprehensive public debate involving the Committee of the Regions, during which the proposed priority topics and measures for the creation of a European Research Area taking into account the subsidiarity principle that applies in the area of research need to be fleshed out.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Outlook opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘Success factors for local and regional restructuring strategies’

(2007/C 305/07)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ISSUES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important to recognise that the restructuring process in cities and regions is a constant phenomenon accompanying our socio-economic lives. Restructuring should be treated as an opportunity for tackling existing and future economic problems.
- The CoR recommends the constant monitoring of these processes across the whole European Union, to be carried out by bodies independent of all the stakeholders. The European Union and the Member States should encourage the creation of local and regional partnerships between administrative authorities, businesses and the social partners, thereby promoting cooperation for local development in a globalised world, particularly in peripheral areas, where there is a danger of a loss of cultural heritage.
- Local and regional level restructuring must ensure that objectives can be achieved which are in line with EU policies, whilst at the same time maintaining high levels of employment to secure an appropriate standard of living. The current restructuring process should also be a first step in a modernisation process which seeks to create an economy focused on the future and based on knowledge and innovation; This objective cannot be achieved without increasing investment in human capital.
- An integrated approach to the restructuring of rural areas ensures (or should ensure) a minimum level of access to services of general economic interest, in order to attract business and skilled workers and stem depopulation. It is also imperative that ERDF, ESF and an EAFRD funding should be used to support innovative action rather than to prop up the status quo. One important instrument in addressing the immediate problems which can be caused by re-structuring is the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

Rapporteur: Witold KROCHMAL, Mayor of Wolow (PL/UEN-EA)

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Socio-economic and political background to the opinion

1. On 16 October 2006 the European Commission asked the Committee of the Regions to draw up an outlook opinion on effective restructuring strategies for Europe's cities and regions. The Commission believes that the Committee's opinion will provide valuable input for formulating the Commission's approach to the restructuring processes essential for the European economy.

2. The European Union is currently undergoing a period of fundamental economic change, involving the restructuring of the entire economies of cities and regions. As a result, local and regional authorities are facing new challenges which they must respond to in order to maintain the socio-economic and environmental balance.

3. Restructuring should be treated as an opportunity for tackling existing and future economic problems and for alleviating and eliminating their negative effects. Because of its grasp of grassroots reality and its ability to respond in an appropriate, rapid and flexible manner, the local and regional sphere is the most effective in implementing restructuring policies, especially when these processes are not in response to structural problems.

4. Local and regional level restructuring must ensure that objectives can be achieved which are in line with EU policies i.e. competitiveness and innovativeness, whilst at the same time maintaining high levels of employment to secure an appropriate standard of living for EU citizens.

5. These challenges particularly concern cities and regions, i.e. local authorities, which have significant scope for transforming strategic guidelines into concrete courses of action and for mobilising local social organisations and businesses to take such action.

6. The aim of this opinion is to contribute a number of additional factors to the debate on current local and regional restructuring processes, which have become a continual and inevitable process and a constant accompaniment to our social and economic lives.

7. The main reasons behind the restructuring process which local, regional and national authorities need to manage and preferably predict and anticipate are:

- the expansion of the globalisation process,
- security and combating terrorism,
- energy and climate change,

- the opening up of the world's economies to international trade,
- the development of the EU's internal market,
- the introduction of new innovative technologies,
- higher standards in the field of environmental protection,
- the growing importance of services of general interest,
- changes in consumer demand.

8. Restructuring may take place at various levels and in various fields:

- at inter-sectoral level,
- at sectoral level,
- at enterprise level.

9. Irrespective of the approach adopted for a given branch or sector, restructuring processes mainly occur at local level. This is because it is local and regional communities which are the most affected by these processes.

10. Due to the pace of events that make restructuring necessary, these processes very often consist of sudden, forced action taken by businesses in order to adapt to the requirements of the global economy and the changing consumer market.

11. As a result of an increasingly globalised economy, crises in or deficits of short-term business or sectoral competitiveness are growing in importance. Such crises are unpredictable and, by constantly chipping away at the economic fabric of regions, can cause serious damage to them.

12. For the same reason, we are witnessing increasingly frequent relocations, understood as the abrupt transfer of an economic activity from one region to another. These unexpected decisions are based on strategic and financial criteria, and others such as the cost of production factors, but sometimes tend to be encouraged by regional incentives and policies to attract investment.

13. This type of ad hoc restructuring yields unsatisfactory results, in spite of the existence of solid legal instruments and professional managers in many countries. Such processes are unable to prevent far-reaching negative social and regional changes and lead to short-term solutions being favoured at the expense of more permanent and stable solutions. Such action often results in serious social and regional problems. The relocation benefits for businesses often have serious repercussions for the regions left behind.

14. The challenge is not to curb inevitable restructuring but rather to embrace it, albeit in such a form that, as far as possible, enables regions, municipalities and individuals to be compensated and even to appreciate the opportunities in the long run.

15. Particularly affected by ad hoc restructuring were those countries which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. This was in large part due to different levels of economic development and advancement in the field of new technology and innovation among the EU 27. In many cases, the expected economic effects were achieved but at the cost of adverse social consequences caused primarily by the short period of transition.

16. If we assume that restructuring processes are continuous, we need to analyse cases of restructuring in the EU 15 countries, using the anticipation method, enabling the earlier recognition of impending difficulties, thus partially eliminating or at least alleviating the negative effects of restructuring.

17. The success of a given restructuring process, particularly the anticipation of problems, is to a great extent dependent on dialogue between the company, the third sector, employees and their organisations (for example trade unions), local or regional authorities, centres of higher education and research institutes as well as government bodies such as regional development agencies. The outcome and success of the restructuring process is very often dependent on the quality of this dialogue.

18. Local and regional authorities play an important role in this process. It is possible to define three types of action in the event of impending restructuring:

- strengthening and, where necessary, diversifying the local economic and social base and infrastructure,
- taking action to retain major employers and to strengthen SMEs as motors for jobs,
- making the region, city or local area more attractive.

Both the above action and restructuring process require appropriate statistical data, information resources and a special strategy for gathering and sharing information with all participants in the restructuring process.

19. The information policy should take particular account of those small and medium-sized enterprises which, given their specific situation, have greater difficulty in accessing information resources which make it possible to anticipate market changes.

20. The SME sector deserves special protection during both the restructuring process and the anticipated period of change. Intervention is most needed at these stages, in order to strengthen and develop the managerial, organisational and strategic skills and abilities that can sustain SME growth, breaking out of the original, traditionally family-focused mould and introducing a model for control and management that is commensurate with global competition. The examples examined show that the subcontracting strategy has proved to be the most effective method, but only in those cases where it was possible

to go beyond standard market relations and establish partnership-based cooperation between businesses or firms within a network, particularly at regional level.

Conclusions

21. The restructuring processes analysed show that there is no single approach to this process and that it is in large part dependent on the type of local authority concerned (region, city, local district), the economic sector, the nature of the area in question both in terms of its location (peripheral areas), land use (agricultural, light industry, heavy industry) as well as the level of economic development of the country in which the restructuring area is located.

22. The current restructuring process should also be a first step in a modernisation process which seeks to create an economy focused on the future and based on knowledge and innovation. This objective cannot be achieved without increasing investment in human capital through better education and by improving skills. And this requires effective and productive investment in the local or regional labour market, which will make it possible to anticipate the challenges posed by the rapid economic and social restructuring process.

23. Broadening and increasing investment in human capital and adapting education and training to meet the new skills requirements arising from restructuring involve additional costs; appropriate mechanisms are needed to ensure that these costs are shared by business, public-sector bodies and private individuals. Particular support should be given to comprehensive training strategies that provide the skills needed in a knowledge-based and innovative economy. Sharing experience and establishing partnerships between cities and regions in the area of education and training is essential for the effective implementation of these processes.

24. As the above examples show, activity in the area of human capital investment is an extremely important part of the restructuring and regeneration of urban and rural areas. It is a key task for the organisations involved in restructuring at local level. Issues such as professional and economic mobility or balancing supply and demand on the labour market at local level have a decisive impact on the effectiveness of restructuring. The mobility of job seekers and those facing unemployment, particularly low-skilled workers, should be promoted through the provision of personalised job seeking services and work experience and training courses to adapt the skills of job seekers and those facing unemployment to the requirements of the local labour market. This is especially relevant to young people, who have particular difficulty finding jobs.

25. Activities based on the principles of the European Youth Action programme, covering career guidance, assistance with completing education and access to appropriate training courses, can facilitate the smooth transition from education to employment in areas affected by restructuring.

26. Such action should help combat adverse developments in urban and rural areas, including, for instance, rural depopulation. This is a problem not only because it may mean that rural areas cease to function as communities, resulting in a loss of cultural values, traditions and local character, but also because of the risk of a loss of hydrogeological balance. The most effective means of halting these processes is through action funded by ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), ESF (European Social Fund) and EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) programmes. An integrated approach to the restructuring of rural areas ensures (or should ensure) a minimum level of access to services of general economic interest, in order to attract business and skilled workers and stem depopulation. It is also imperative that ERDF, ESF and an EAFRD funding should be used to support innovative action rather than to prop up the *status quo*.

27. One important instrument in addressing the immediate problems which can be caused by re-structuring is the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund which offers short-term assistance to regions affected by the relocation of economic activity caused by globalisation. The Committee of the Regions has welcomed the creation of this instrument and has recommended to increase its volume to EUR 1 000 million/year. The Committee of the Regions expects its first annual report on the results achieved by the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in 2007 (report to be released in 2008) to analyse thoroughly whether the intervention criteria set in Article 2 of Regulation 1927/2006 EC enable an appropriate execution of the Fund and offers its contribution to any future debate about a possible review of these criteria.

28. As a result of restructuring many regions are becoming increasingly dependent on tourism. Here the integrated approach, making use of natural resources and cultural heritage, focuses on quality, with the primary objective of satisfying the customer. The success of such processes depends to a high degree on the development of communications, connecting restructured areas to major national and European networks, and using new technologies, including broadband Internet access, for communication in the broad sense, and on appropriate education and training measures.

29. Cultural richness and natural resources should become key instruments used in these processes. On occasion, they are the major assets in the restructuring process, particularly in

sparsely populated peripheral areas. They make dynamic growth in tourism possible, which then becomes a lever for local development.

30. Around 60 % of the EU's population lives in urban areas of 50 000 or more inhabitants. Most jobs, businesses, higher education institutions and other centres of socio-economic life are located in towns and urban areas. These are areas which not only offer opportunities but also harbour dangers. In addition to activities specifically related to the economy, restructuring carried out in European cities also includes action to regenerate urban areas in the broader sense.

31. As the examples show, it is only by comprehensively tackling economic, social and spatial problems that it will be possible to achieve the results expected by residents, local authorities and the EU. It is easier to find partners for restructuring in urban areas, but only by maintaining partnerships between the public, private and third sectors, and by using a variety of sources of financing has it been possible to bring the process to a successful conclusion.

32. Those cities that have maintained a dominant position in their regions, for example by virtue of their size or history, have adopted a strategy of renewal as the driving force behind the region. Their position today makes it possible for them to support restructuring throughout the region, both through direct partnerships as well as through organisations located in these cities.

33. Action to increase competitiveness and promote enterprise, innovation and the development of services has made it possible to attract and keep a highly skilled workforce. This has significantly improved the range and standard of services for local residents. Appropriate planning, design and maintenance of urban spaces have led to a fall in crime in cities, which has made streets, parks and children's play areas more attractive. A high-quality urban environment is an essential part of effective restructuring as it helps guarantee an attractive environment for work, living and investment.

34. Experience shows that those cities which have promoted cluster formation have managed to increase their competitiveness significantly. Relations between urban and rural areas should be maintained at an appropriate level by creating a level playing field in development conditions, thereby reducing differences between rural and urban areas.

35. A diversified approach to regional-level restructuring processes should be monitored by networks that bring together regions with similar types of restructuring (peripheral region networks, mining region networks).

36. It is also important that businesses, partners in the restructuring process, have increased access to sources of financing. In addition to subsidies and the available EU funds, these should also include bank guarantees, mutual guarantees, loans and micro-credits. The European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund can play a major role in this process.

37. No single restructuring model can provide a guarantee of ultimate success. However, in spite of the diversity of the various restructuring processes, it is possible to identify a number of factors that are a characteristic of successful restructuring processes:

- constant monitoring of economic processes for early anticipation of restructuring,
- anticipation cannot solely be limited to forecasting but must also create probable scenarios in preparation for their realisation,
- the presence of organised social and civil society dialogue, including the flow of information between parties taking part in the restructuring process,
- the existence of structures linking together academic institutions, scientific and research institutes, industry and administrative authorities at all levels,
- the existence of easily accessible high-quality education and training structures,
- regular public reviews of the quality, effectiveness and outcome of the action taken,
- the existence of diversified sources of funding for the restructuring processes, covering all stakeholders, which leads to more effective action,
- the extent to which the region or city is capable of implementing a territorial policy that is able to maintain the capacity of local businesses to produce goods, provide services and distribute them,
- the awareness of the local community of the need for constant change, expressed in the form of local or regional identity. This ensures an integrated approach to sustainable development from an economic, social and environmental perspective, which represents an additional factor for attracting new investment,
- a highly proactive attitude on the part of the regional and local authorities, supported by leadership skills and the availability of competition and finance-related instruments,
- a locally-generated, comprehensive project, tailored to the local situation, combining various aspects on a case-by-case basis: economic development, education, social integration, culture, spatial planning, etc.

The Committee of the Regions' recommendations

38. It is important that the European Commission recognise that the restructuring process in cities and regions is a constant phenomenon accompanying our socio-economic lives.

39. Urges local and regional authorities to develop genuine forward planning in their areas, encompassing monitoring, support for the existing economy and the inclusion in regional strategies of local action in this field, on the basis of broad-ranging and shared city-regions projects.

40. In connection with this, the Committee of the Region recommends the constant monitoring of these processes across the whole European Union, to be carried out by bodies independent of all the stakeholders, and covering businesses, social partners and local and regional communities by region and by sector. This system should include an analysis of socio-economic changes at local, regional and national level, taking into account rural, peripheral and upland areas, and also analyse future economic trends on the labour market.

41. Recommends the publication of restructuring best practices for use in other cities and regions of the European Union. Such publications should be ordered according to areas with similar types of restructuring (agricultural areas, peripheral areas, regions with heavy industry, mining, and light industry, textiles, urban areas).

42. The European Union and the Member States should encourage the creation of local and regional level partnerships between administrative authorities, businesses and the social partners through the use of financial instruments, thereby promoting cooperation for local development in a globalised world. This will make it significantly easier to anticipate restructuring processes.

43. The Committee of the Regions calls on the European Commission and the Member States to pay particular attention to the flexibility of EU funding mechanisms, especially the ESF, to ensure, that funding is available to respond quickly to situations appearing suddenly and without warning. In these cases the need for funding for incubators, recruiting activities, help and advice for start ups and focused training is immediate. Within three months the possibilities of those losing their jobs due to restructuring to find new employment are greatest and decline substantially after that. The application mechanisms for the different EU-level instruments should take this need for responsiveness into account. The measures for speedy responses to the hardship which can be caused by restructuring should also include assistance to cover the immediate social needs of the individuals concerned (housing, health-care, counselling etc.). People affected by restructuring need social support to enable them to start new activities and to adapt to restructuring.

44. Recommends taking advantage of the cross-border location of certain cities and regions in the restructuring process and urges the removal of all procedural obstacles impeding the flow of labour and capital, and hindering the restructuring process.

45. Recommends that the European Commission, within the framework of the possibilities offered by the EU structural funds, adopt an integrated approach to co-financing restructuring processes from European funds, which will make it possible to tackle both economic and social problems, whilst implementing the European Union's policies.

46. Calls on Member States to remove the legal barriers and other obstacles to the creation of public-private partnerships (PPPs), which can provide effective and active support for the restructuring processes.

47. Calls on the European Commission and other institutions which provide joint financing for restructuring processes to increase supervision over the effectiveness of spending, particularly in the area of 'soft projects' financed by the ESF.

48. Calls on the European Union to take account of aspects relating to the restructuring processes in the European Union's current policies and when drafting new policies, from the anticipation stage to completion.

49. Urges the Member States to use financial instruments compatible with EU law for businesses affected by the restructuring process, particularly in peripheral areas, where there is a danger of a loss of cultural heritage or local or regional identity, and where restructuring concerns the SME sector, for which this process is particularly difficult.

50. Expects to be consulted by the Commission when the Community guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring firms in difficulty, due to expire in October 2009, will have to be reviewed in 2007/2008.

51. Particularly recommends that Member States and all businesses involved in the restructuring process ensure the preservation of local traditions and culture, which can also be an asset in current or future restructuring.

52. Recommends making use of the European Commission's new *Regions for Economic Change* initiative and the networks of cities and regions which are being created as part of this initiative, and which are co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, whilst continuing to anticipate restructuring processes and promote best practices for helping cities and regions adapt to the changes brought on by globalisation.

53. Recommends that the Commission be particularly vigilant with respect to the application of regional incentives in relocation operations.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

APPENDIX 1

Short summary of the case studies of city and regional restructuring

What had initially seemed like a transitional crisis of adaptation in the 1970s and 1980s actually turned out to be a recurring event in the social and economic life of modern Europe. It came to be a permanent process, requiring businesses and their environments to adapt to changing market conditions, i.e. a constant process of restructuring. For the purposes of the opinion on restructuring in the cities and regions of the EU drawn up at the request of the European Commission, we analysed the information received on the development of these processes along with other information contained in numerous documents. The conclusions and recommendations have been included in the opinion.

Scotland — United Kingdom — an example of strong competition on the global market

The number of workers employed in industry fell from 276 000 to 227 000 during the years 2002-2006, whilst production for export decreased by 36 % over the same period. Most firms transferred their production to new EU Member States or to India and China. The Framework for Economic Development in Scotland (FEDS) is focused on ensuring productivity and competitiveness on the global market. The PACE programme set up by the Scottish authorities (Partnership Action for Continued Employment) has made it possible for all organisations in the private and public sectors to actively avert mass redundancies. Restructuring has hit the Scottish labour market, particularly industry, very hard. However, the growth in the numbers employed in service industries and in the business sector has meant that Scotland now has one of the highest rates of employment in the EU, while unemployment is at its lowest level for 30 years. Moreover, the Scottish economy is reaping the benefits of the globalisation process. Scottish banks have expanded abroad, which has strengthened their standing among their competitors.

The Basque Country — Spain — restructuring of a region and its cities

Local industry, structured around the shipbuilding, steel and heavy industry, went into decline in the 1980s. The Basque government, employers and trade unions decided to restructure and modernise these sectors of industry. Nine clusters were created, which together made up 45 % of the Basque country's GDP. Today they remain the driving force of the region's economy. After a process that has lasted some twenty years, the Basque country's GDP is currently the third highest in Europe, after regions in Luxembourg and Ireland. Unemployment, which was 25 % in 1990, currently stands at 4,5 %. Much of the capital invested has been in innovation; private funds account for 66 % of total investment (the average in Spain is 48 %; the figure for Europe is 54 %). The restructuring process was linked with the redevelopment of the region's cities, including the capital, Bilbao. Culture and local identity played a major role in this process, which led to a high degree of social acceptance of the process itself.

Crete — Greece — from agriculture to tourism services

Restructuring in Crete, which was financed by the national government and European funding, is based around cooperation between businesses and research institutes (the University of Crete, Heraklion research institute) and aims to help people move from the agricultural sector to the services sector. This aim has only been achieved in part. The main reason for this has been the vertical structure and top-down nature of the action. Strong centres were strengthened further, marginalising peripheral areas lying deep within the island's interior, which only widened the gulf between the sub-regions and did not result in any growth in competitiveness.

Tawira — Portugal

Restructuring based on redevelopment, leading to the development of tourism services, an increase in investment in this sector, which helped finance the preservation of the region's historical and architectural heritage, which in turn led to a further increase in tourism and an in-flow of private capital. This process was financed from the PITER, URBCOM, INTERREG and PROALGARVE funds.

The regions of Austria

Restructuring involving transition from a one-sector economy to a diversified industrial structure based on R & D projects, as well as transition to the tourism sector and business-related services. This process is supported intensively through the constant development of opportunities for vocational education and training.

Porto, Portugal

A restructuring process begun only recently, made necessary by the relocation of numerous government bodies and firms to the capital, as well as by a shrinking population and the collapse of traditional retailing in favour of supermarkets. The aim of the restructuring process is to breathe new life into the city centre, to develop cultural services and to redevelop the city's housing. 2004 saw the launch of the PortoVivo initiative, which aims to attract private investment to the town. This major restructuring and redevelopment project has a twenty year time frame. The renovation of over 5 000 buildings is planned during this period, which will help preserve a valuable cultural and historical heritage, and will in turn develop the services sector, thereby creating new jobs.

Liberec, Czech Republic

A restructuring process which was triggered by a change in the political system aims to bring the economy into line with EU standards. Mainly financed by the State and regional budget and EU funding. This has led to support for the SME sector and the development of PPPs. The main problems are debt and the state of public finances.

Wrocław, Poland

The last seventeen years have seen a change in both the city's economy and in its appearance in general. The redevelopment of both the city centre and specific areas of the town has drawn private investors to the city. Hotels and restaurants have appeared. The open policy of the city authorities, its partnership with its twin towns, regional authorities and central government, as well as the cooperation between the city and its immediate neighbours have led to new branches of industry being established in the city's surrounding area. The Wrocław Technology Park and the city's centres of education and industry have launched many initiatives in the field of R&D. Unemployment has fallen from 18 % to 6 % over this period; one drawback has been rising prices, e.g. property prices have soared by 400 %.

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Better lawmaking 2005 and 2006'

(2007/C 305/08)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- believes that the work of the European Union, the Member States and the regional and local authorities must be reinforced by means of a real partnership, in order to respond more effectively to the economic, social, environmental and democratic challenges facing Europe, all the time respecting the competences of the various tiers of authority;
- takes the view that priority should be given to improving the regulatory environment, simplifying the Community acquis and applying the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as well as strengthening consultation and impact evaluation methods with a view to promoting genuine governance at multiple levels within the European Union;
- regrets the paucity of references to the local and regional dimension in the 'Better lawmaking' package, whereas the White Paper on European Governance adopted in 2001 stressed the need to build a better partnership between the various tiers of authority, in the knowledge that local and regional authorities are to a large extent responsible for implementing and sometimes even transposing Community legislation, depending on their powers;
- hopes that the institutional regulation in the context of the current IGC will preserve the provisions set out in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe when it comes to the local and regional authorities and the Committee of the Regions and, more specifically, the provisions relating to the definition, implementation and monitoring of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;
- is in favour of the Commission and the national and regional parliaments setting up a mechanism for monitoring the subsidiarity principle as soon as possible, so as to submit EU legislative proposals to detailed scrutiny at a very early stage in the process;
- while arguing in favour of strengthening its involvement in evaluating the territorial impact of major Community policies, offers to place its expertise at the service of the European Commission so as to contribute to the impact analyses for all new legislative proposals having a major local or regional impact;
- hopes that the 'Better lawmaking' initiative will be accompanied by adequate information and communication initiatives regarding the players involved in implementing Community legislation — in the majority of cases the local and regional authorities — and the beneficiaries of Community legislation, in particular the European public.

Reference documents

Report on Better lawmaking 2005

COM(2006) 289 final; SEC(2006) 289

A strategic review of Better Regulation in the European Union

COM(2006) 689 final

Commission working document: First progress report on the strategy for the simplification of the regulatory environment

COM(2006) 690 final

Commission working document: measuring administrative costs and reducing administrative burdens in the European Union

COM(2006) 691 final

Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union

COM(2007) 23 final; SEC(2007) 84; SEC(2007) 85

Better Lawmaking 2006 Report

COM(2007)286 final; SEC(2007) 737

Rapporteur: Mr VAN DEN BRANDE, Member of the Flemish Parliament (BE/EPP)

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General recommendations

1. believes that the work of the European Union, the Member States and the regional and local authorities must be reinforced by means of a real partnership, in order to respond more effectively to the economic, social, environmental and democratic challenges facing Europe, all the time respecting the competences of the various tiers of authority;

2. takes the view that priority should be given to improving the regulatory environment, simplifying the Community acquis and applying the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as well as strengthening consultation and impact evaluation methods with a view to promoting genuine governance at multiple levels within the European Union;

3. underlines that, in the context of the Commission's drive to codify and recast legislative proposals, 'better lawmaking' should not simply mean 'less lawmaking' and that any withdrawal of legislation by the Commission should be justified by an assessment of the European value added of the legislative proposal; it therefore calls on the European Commission to exercise its role as a driving force within the European integration process fully from now on, recalling that a coherent long-term political vision translating into tangible political action is a necessary condition for 'better lawmaking' and 'better regulation';

4. supports the European Commission's efforts to promote better lawmaking by withdrawing on-going legislative proposals whenever appropriate in the interests of the subsidiarity principle, and calls on the Commission to continue along this path;

5. regrets the paucity of references to the local and regional dimension in the 'Better lawmaking' package, whereas the White Paper on European Governance adopted in 2001 stressed the need to build a better partnership between the various tiers of authority, in the knowledge that local and regional authorities are to a large extent responsible for implementing and sometimes even transposing Community legislation, depending on their powers, and should therefore be more closely involved throughout the 'Better lawmaking' initiative, not least through CoR participation in the various interinstitutional coordination groups;

6. hopes to see local authorities, regional parliaments and regional assemblies involved in the preparation and finalisation of Community legislation, to a degree commensurate with their powers, so as to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making process;

7. endorses the priority given by the European Commission's 2007 work programme to improving the regulatory environment not least to serve the Lisbon strategy objectives of competitive growth, employment and sustainable development, thus promoting a better quality of life for the European public;

8. warmly welcomes the Better Lawmaking 2006 Report, which gives consideration to its wish to be consulted and involved in the pre-legislative phase, particularly when it comes to upholding principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in the context of impact analyses; but would nevertheless stress the need in future to bolster these efforts with regard to coordination among the various tiers of authority, communication on the Community decision-making process and the scope of Community legislative intervention and its financial and administrative impact on local and regional authorities;

Application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles

9. renews its commitment to the constitutional dimension of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and, in the absence of a Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, underlines the importance for regional and local authorities and for the Committee of the Regions of implementing the protocols or their respective content concerning the role of national parliaments in the EU and the application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, as soon as possible;

10. hopes that the institutional regulation in the context of the current IGC will preserve the provisions set out in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe when it comes to the local and regional authorities and the Committee of the Regions and, more specifically, the provisions relating to the definition, implementation and monitoring of these two principles;

11. stresses that according to the Treaty in its current form, the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are the levers for multiple-level governance, which means responsibility for their application must be shared, and a genuine culture of subsidiarity must be established in the European Union;

12. warmly welcomes the Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, which stresses the need to share tasks out between the European Union, the Member States and their regional and local authorities, and thus gives recognition to multi-tiered governance;

13. calls upon the other European institutions to take regular and systematic account of the local and regional dimension of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles at all stages of the legislative process;

14. wishes, to this end, to make its expertise available, not least through the subsidiarity monitoring network, in accordance with the assessments made and conclusions drawn by the two pilot tests conducted to date;

15. urges the regional parliaments to set up parliamentary committees to monitor the application of the subsidiarity principle and become preferred contacts in the above-mentioned network;

16. welcomes the European Commission's initiative of informing national parliaments directly of all new legislative proposals and consultation documents, and inviting them to inform it of their reactions so as to improve the policy-making process, particularly with regard to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles and the actual content of proposals; and calls for this practice to be extended to sub-national legislative bodies, in accordance with the distribution of competences within each Member State;

17. calls for binding internal agreements on the procedures for early warning systems to monitor application of the subsidiarity principle, to be drawn up in Member States where competences are shared between national and regional level;

18. consequently calls on the European Commission to set up a computerised system to give local and regional authorities access to appropriate information at all stages of the legislative process;

19. is in favour of the Commission and the national and regional parliaments setting up a mechanism for monitoring the subsidiarity principle as soon as possible, so as to submit EU legislative proposals to detailed scrutiny at a very early stage in the process; and insists that provision should be made for the Committee to cooperate in the establishment of this mechanism, so as to make the most of existing synergies, the Committee being prepared to share the experience it has gained from its subsidiarity monitoring network;

Consultation process and structured dialogue

20. underlines the importance of it being consulted during the legislative process, in its capacity as the institutional representative of the local and regional authorities of the European Union and as the European Commission's official consultative partner; strengthening this consultation will make the decision-making process more open, inclusive, operational and democratic, and bring it back to the level closest to the European public;

21. reiterates the commitments made under the cooperation protocol signed in November 2005 with the European Commission, which stipulated that 'Under the good governance principle the Committee must play to the full its role as a link in the dialogue with local authority organisations. The Commission shall ensure that the Committee is fully involved in the political preparation of jointly organised meetings', and welcomes the involvement since 2004 of nine European Commissioners in a structured dialogue, along with nearly 80 European and national associations representing regional and local authorities;

22. believes that the structured dialogue with local and regional authority associations is a tool that should be used in the preparation phase for the European Commission's legislative work programme in particular;

23. offers a number of suggestions for future discussions with the social dialogue partners with a view to improving the procedures involved and securing the initial objectives of this dialogue, while also strengthening the political and institutional role of the Committee of the Regions:

— hold a structured dialogue session at an appropriate time of the year so that the associations of local and regional authorities and the Commission can have a proper discussion on the work priorities before the Commission adopts its annual legislative work programme;

- prepare the annual programme and meeting agendas for the structured dialogue by means of close cooperation between the Committee and the European and national associations of local and regional authorities;
- develop the interface with local and regional media in cooperation with the associations of local and regional authorities;
- provide the opportunity for local and regional authorities to submit comments in writing and to raise issues of interest to them, in accordance with the European Union agenda, and receive a reply;
- provide minutes, prepared by the relevant Commission services, after each meeting;
- put an emphasis on strengthening the follow-up to structured dialogue by means of regular evaluation in close cooperation with the Committee and the national and European associations that represent local and regional authorities;

24. would also like to have greater responsibility for organising the structured dialogue and to see a more transparent process established;

25. reiterates the recommendations it made in its opinion on the 'Better lawmaking 2004' annual report, calling for systematic consultation of local and regional authorities at an early stage in the preparation of European legislation; and believes that it is essential to ensure that the consultations are effective and that they are taken into account;

Improved transposition and application of Community legislation and policies at local and regional level

26. recalls that local and regional authorities are, in the main, hostage to the quality of transposition of Community legislation at national level; and emphasises the importance of improved coordination between the national level and local and regional authorities;

27. reiterates the need to put the partnership principle into practice during both the preparation and the implementation phase of Community legislation and policies;

28. recalls that the European Commission launched and developed the idea of tripartite contracts and agreements on objectives; repeats its proposal that these instruments should be revised and proposes the establishment of European territorial pacts, drawing on the results of the test phase initiated by the European Commission for tripartite agreements;

29. underlines the fact that European territorial pacts, like the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, would boost territorial coherence and the flexibility of policies with a high local impact, owing to structured cooperation between the various levels of governance in order to implement objectives

defined jointly between the local, regional and European levels; recourse to this instrument should remain voluntary;

30. stresses that there can be no real partnership without a financial contribution from each of the parties to the agreement; and proposes that discussions on the financing of the European territorial pacts should focus on the potential for synergy between existing budget headings in the areas concerned and the Structural Funds on the European side, and the budget headings available at local, regional and national levels, without creating another financial instrument for Community regional policy or requesting additional funds to this end;

31. considers that consultation should be stepped up between the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions with regard to the definition and implementation of the European territorial pacts;

32. assures the European Commission of its desire to play a proactive role to encourage the conclusion of European territorial pacts and to be a reliable partner to all the players concerned;

33. calls, nevertheless, for greater support from the European Commission with regard to initiatives from local and regional authorities; also stresses on the need to give greater attention to existing projects, which must not be abandoned once the test phase is over;

Impact analysis and evaluation of the administrative and financial burden

34. in accordance with the recommendation set out in its opinion on 'Better Lawmaking 2004', welcomes the European Commission's proposal to set up an independent impact assessment board under the authority of the president in order to strengthen monitoring;

35. argues in favour of strengthening the involvement of the Committee of the Regions in evaluating the territorial impact of major Community policies; also stresses the key role that local and regional authorities can play in transposition and implementation if they are properly involved in the preparation of legislation;

36. supports the search for a common impact analysis method and a joint methodology for assessing the administrative costs engendered by European legislation; recommends tailoring this methodology to local and regional level so as to be able to evaluate as effectively as possible the financial and administrative burdens shouldered by local and regional authorities; and wishes to be fully involved in interinstitutional cooperation in this area;

37. welcomes the European Commission's action programme for reducing administrative burdens in the European Union and the objective proposed to the European Council of 8 and 9 March 2007 of a 25 % reduction in the burden to be reached jointly by the European Union and the Member States by 2012; recalls nevertheless the need to take into account the local and regional dimension as well as the role of local and regional authorities in implementing this objective;

38. in the spirit of the cooperation agreement of November 2005, offers to place its expertise at the service of the European Commission so as to contribute to the impact analyses for all new legislative proposals having a major local or regional impact;

39. on this note, undertakes to carry out a pilot test in the context of its Lisbon strategy monitoring platform, with a view to contributing both to making the consultation of local and regional authorities on European legislation systematic in the preparation phase and to searching for a common method for analysing the resulting impact of the said legislation for local and regional authorities; believes in this respect that it would be useful and tie in well with its commitment to the success of the Lisbon objectives were it to be represented at the spring European Council meeting;

Simplification of Community legislation, transparency and information

40. repeats its request for a regional strand to be added to the national action plans for the simplification of legislation;

41. welcomes the Commission initiative aimed at promoting transparency, and points out in this respect that if the EU genuinely wishes to increase its democratic legitimacy, it must also do more to involve local and regional players in its legislative and decision-making processes; regrets therefore that no reference is made to the local and regional dimension in this initiative and calls on the Commission to give greater consideration to this matter;

42. hopes that the 'Better lawmaking' initiative will be accompanied by adequate information and communication initiatives regarding the players involved in implementing Community legislation — in the majority of cases the local and regional authorities — and the beneficiaries of Community legislation, in particular the European public; Community legislation cannot be properly implemented if it is not understood by the players concerned; this means that in addition to involvement in the pre-legislative process, there is a need to develop information and communication;

43. on this note, draws the Commission's attention to the need to arrange for the translation of all the legislative proposals it has adopted into all the official languages of the European Union, before the official start of the Community's legislative stage and before referral to the Committee of the Regions;

44. stresses the potential of its subsidiarity monitoring network to become an effective tool for information and communication in the context of the Community's legislative process.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the European Union's Southern Maritime Borders and to the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union'

(2007/C 305/09)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- considers that European migration policy and the management of the European Union's external borders respectively, are the responsibility of the European Union and the individual Member States, which should act together according to the principles of solidarity and mutual trust, founded on full respect for human rights and European migration policy;
- believes that regional and local authorities are on the front line when it comes to migration policy, either as regards the problems caused by illegal migration (reception and management of arrivals, illegal employment, criminality and urban security) or as regards the services that local authorities are responsible for providing to residents (housing, healthcare, education etc.);
- recommends that immediate action is taken to harmonise laws to put an end to human trafficking and the criminal organisations that carry it out;
- points out that local and regional authorities have an important role in promoting cooperation and twinning programmes with their counterparts, and recalls that local and regional authorities bring know-how and experience to decentralised cooperation. This needs to be included systematically in the development of European immigration policy;
- calls the Commission to encourage and contribute to the identification of practical solutions to reinforce the management of the southern maritime external borders and improve the capacity of the Community, its Member States and its local and regional authorities to deal with critical situations, such as the mass influx of illegal immigrants;
- encourages at the same time local and regional actors to make use, on a project basis, of the funds available and stresses that these funds should be made available without further delays;
- recommends to involve local and regional authorities and their national associations particularly more closely in candidate countries but also in partner countries in EU contributions such as training and twinning of law enforcement officials, cooperation with Frontex, social protection and training of officials for labour matters, the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, the collection of data and the monitoring of migration flows.

Reference documents

The Global Approach to Migration one year on: Towards a comprehensive European migration policy
COM(2006)735 final

Reinforcing the management of the European Union's Southern Maritime Borders
COM(2006)733 final

Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union
COM(2007) 247 final

Rapporteur: Mr Ian MICALLEF (MT/EPP), Councillor, Gzira Local Council

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General recommendations

1. considers that European migration policy and the management of the European Union's external borders respectively, are the responsibility of the European Union and the individual Member States, which should act together according to the principles of solidarity and mutual trust, founded on full respect for human rights and European migration policy;

2. supports the efforts of the European Union that since 1999 has taken a series of initiatives towards a comprehensive European Migration Policy and encourages the European Commission to proceed further in this direction, paving the way also for closer cooperation and coordination between the EU and third countries; welcomes in particular also the re-confirmation of the common aim of such a policy contained in the conclusions of the European Council of 21-22 June 2007;

3. believes that regional and local authorities are on the front line when it comes to migration policy, either as regards the problems caused by illegal migration (reception and management of arrivals, illegal employment, criminality and urban security) or as regards the services that local authorities are responsible for providing to residents (housing, healthcare, education, etc.);

4. emphasises the key role played by local and regional bodies, owing to the experience they have gained through their relations with countries of origin and their measures to integrate migrants, particularly in the fields of healthcare, housing, education and employment;

5. invites the Commission to launch public awareness and information campaigns with the cooperation of national, local and regional authorities on legal immigration policies and their

positive impact, notably in order to dispel public anxiety; in parallel, calls the Commission to support the countries of origin in launching campaigns designed to increase public awareness and knowledge of legal migration possibilities and also to stress the risks of illegal immigration;

6. urges the EC to propose mechanisms to ensure that future regularisations of illegal immigrants takes place in a coordinated manner as part of a common immigration and asylum system; welcomes therefore the Commission's proposal to issue a study in 2007 on the regularisation practices and effects in the Member States and on their regional and local authorities;

7. supports the proposal of the Commission which envisages that when Member States in the region are faced with a critical situation, such as a mass influx of migrants, the capacity of the future Coastal Patrol Network should be reinforced;

8. welcomes the European Parliament's decision to increase the budget allocated to Frontex substantially and its approval to the Rapid Border Intervention Teams budget; recommends that the Rapid Border Intervention Teams include coordination between Member States and other parties involved, including communications with the proposed regional command centres at the southern maritime borders ⁽¹⁾ and those regional administrations that are highly affected by the influx of migrants;

9. supports the proposal for the establishment of a pool of experts from Member States administrations that could be made available for deployment at short notice in other Member States facing particular strains on their capacities so as to assist in the prompt initial assessment of individual cases at point of arrival, including the identification of persons; or who may be returned to their countries of origin or transit and the subsequent efficient handling of individual cases, including the assessment of the health conditions of immigrants and refugees as well as any related epidemiologic situation and to address the specific situation of unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups;

⁽¹⁾ COM(2006) 733, pt. 23.

10. recommends that the pool of experts from Member States administrations should be based as close as possible to the needs of local and regional authorities, including, if requested, representatives of regional or local administrations from the areas concerned or national or regional associations of local authorities and the possibility for regional and local administrations to ask for the intervention of such experts in their territory, as the arrival of illegal immigrants in any Member State has an immediate effect on the locality or region in which they arrive;

11. agrees with the proposal of the Council of Justice and Home Affairs whereby partnership agreements on migration and development oblige the partner countries to recognise principles of democracy and rule of law as well as protection of human rights;

12. recommends that immediate action is taken to harmonise laws to put an end to human trafficking and the criminal organisations that carry it out;

13. agrees with the request of the Commission to Member States to increase their efforts, so as to ensure the swift implementation of those measures already agreed upon and to complement EU action with their own initiatives;

14. stresses that regional and local governments must be considered as stakeholders and must be involved in all such dialogue initiatives including with countries of origin and transit, particularly through the Committee of the Regions;

15. stresses the importance, and looks forward to actively participate to future editions, of conferences such as 'Integrating cities: European policies, local practices' organised in 2006 for the exchange of best practices and strengthening cooperation between regions, and recommends the EU to exploit the potential of the regions forming its maritime border as a platform for developing mutually beneficial relations with third countries;

16. points out that local and regional authorities have an important role in promoting cooperation and twinning programmes with their counterparts, and recalls that local and regional authorities bring know-how and experience to decentralised cooperation through their public health and education services, urban services, territorial economic development, together with the provision of institutional support for local management, experience in local and regional democracy and functioning democratic institutions. This needs to be included systematically in the development of European immigration policy;

17. calls the Commission to encourage and contribute to the identification of practical solutions to reinforce the management of the southern maritime external borders and improve the capacity of the Community, its Member States and its local and regional authorities to deal with critical situations, such as the mass influx of illegal immigrants;

18. stresses its unanimous call of 13 February 2007 (CdR 258/2006) ⁽²⁾ for the setting up of an Agency specifically responsible for tackling the issue of illegal migration and asylum seeking by third country nationals, which Agency should be situated in Malta;

19. calls for a special attention for regions of the European Union situated in the Mediterranean and Atlantic area experiencing a particularly heavy inflow of illegal migrants and suffering from a lack of means to deal with a large number of immigrants with due human dignity levels requiring immediate and decisive action at local, regional, national and European levels, in order to prevent further tragedy among illegal migrants who die in large numbers in attempting to reach the shores of the European Union and the consequences for security and cohesion in the whole EU; therefore underlines that a short term policy is required to deal urgently and effectively with the problems created by influxes of illegal immigrants and urgently calls for the creation of a financial instrument aimed specifically at regions with the highest immigration levels, and at transit areas with large inflows of illegal migrants;

20. stresses the need for Member States to manifest solidarity in practice by taking concrete measures to alleviate the pressures exerted upon frontline States and Regions by continuous waves of mass influx of migrants, through allowing the relocation and hosting of such migrants on their territories until such time when a final decision is taken concerning their status;

21. encourages at the same time local and regional actors to make use, on a project basis, of the funds available, namely the External Borders Fund, the Return Fund, the European Refugee Fund and the Integration Fund and stresses that these funds should be made available without further delays, and notes with concern that these funds should have been in operation in January 2007 whilst the return fund would not even be available until 2008 at the earliest;

22. calls for Member States to associate, in respect of the principle of subsidiarity, local and regional authorities in the elaboration of migration policies and in the establishment of national plans for integration and employment, including the number of foreign workers to be admitted in their territory; furthermore considers that the local and regional dimensions must be included in the analyses, statistics, and reports which serve to frame European immigration policies;

Concerning Relations with Africa

23. supports the approach of increasing the dialogue and cooperation on migration issues with Africa, covering the whole range of migration issues, from legal and illegal migration to strengthening protection for refugees and better harnessing the links between migration policy and development policy;

⁽²⁾ Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Towards a Future Maritime Policy for the European Union' unanimously adopted at its 68th plenary session, held on 13 and 14 February 2007 (meeting of 13 February 2007).

24. recalls that, with regard to the North African countries, further developments will be sought, and will promote and foster bilateral protocols at regional level, within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and of the Wider Neighbourhood Action Plan for the Outermost Regions (ORs) and their neighbouring countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which takes into account migration issues whilst work would also have to continue in the EUROMED context as well as enhancing further the bilateral cooperation with the Mediterranean partners involving local and regional authorities within this framework;

25. stresses that, in this framework of bilateral cooperation, it is crucial to make use of the experience built up by some regions, such as the Outermost Regions (ORs), which, due to their specific geographical situation and proven experience, provide the EU with a unique platform for cooperation with neighbouring countries;

26. supports the EU cooperation with Africa as defined by the EU Strategy for Africa which primary aims are the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for the promotion of sustainable development, security and good governance through a continued dialogue with ACP countries based on the agenda of Article 13 of the Cotonou agreement;

27. notes that Article 13 of the Cotonou agreement provides that *'Each of the ACP States shall accept the return of and readmission of any of its nationals who are illegally present on the territory of a Member States of the European Union at that Member State's request and without further formalities. ACP States will provide their nationals with appropriate identity documents for such purposes'*;

28. stresses that the EU should promote the enforcement of this Article and increase substantially its efforts to oblige countries of origin to take back those immigrants who do not qualify for asylum and who have nevertheless taken the route of illegal passage;

29. notes the proposal for the creation of platforms on migration and development bringing together African countries, EU Member States and International organisations in an effort to manage migration more effectively in the interests of all; believes that local and regional authorities, particularly those that are directly concerned, should participate, possibly via their national and regional associations, in these cooperation platforms and in the level of dialogue with ACP countries since such participation would be to the benefit of all parties concerned;

30. supports the initiative of the Commission to promoting investments in labour-intensive sectors in regions in Africa with high outward migration and to inviting Member States to complement this contribution, whilst not forgetting that such investment cannot be promoted without the effective involvement of private business, for which instruments facilitating such investment must be provided;

31. supports the Commission proposal of creating migration profiles for each interested developing country, and, of migra-

tion support teams (MISTs) made up of Member State experts which could provide the necessary assistance to requesting African States including initiatives by the Commission stimulating the establishment of a pan-African network of migration 'observatories' and/or migration research institutes but stresses that local and regional authorities are to be equipped with the necessary expertise and moreover stress that experts coming from regions and cities are able to provide a sure added value to these teams;

32. stresses that local and regional administrations can contribute in the collection of information presented in the Immigration Portal, in the European Job Mobility Portal, in the EURES network, and in the European Researchers Mobility Portal that as stated above would provide African countries with information on the legal possibilities for working in Europe, including through specific information campaigns and in facilitating the management of seasonal workers, the exchanges of students and researchers and other forms of legal movement of people;

Combating illegal immigration and strengthening integration measures

33. supports the proposal for new legislation aiming to impose penalties on the persons employing illegal immigrants and initiatives whereby Europol will dedicate attention to combating facilitated illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings;

34. stresses the need to equally endeavour the adoption of all measures needed to put an end to human trafficking and the persons and/or criminal organisations which carry it out, as well as combat the black economy which gives rise to such activities;

35. supports the Commission in strengthening its activities on integration measures, whereby instruments will be developed that allow for the wider participation of the different stakeholders, including migrants themselves, thus contributing to the promotion of an effective integration strategy; believes that regional and local governments must be considered as stakeholders and must be involved in all such dialogue initiatives;

36. notes that the instruments will include a) the establishment of an integration platform where relevant partners can exchange views on a regular basis; b) the consolidation of the role played by local authorities; and c) the creation of an Integration website and new editions of the Integration Handbook and the Annual report on migration and integration;

Concerning Frontex

37. recommends the activation of Article 7 of Regulation (EC) 2007/2004 establishing Frontex as this constitutes an important solidarity measure between Member States by the voluntary pooling of Member States' technical equipment under the agency's management which could be at the disposal of requesting Member States following a needs and risk assessment carried out by Frontex;

38. notes that in order for Frontex to be able to produce targeted and general risk analysis, with a view to preventing and managing critical situations, it would require access to information gathered by Member States' Immigration Liaison Officers (ILOs);

39. supports the Commission's proposal for an amendment to Regulation (EC) 377/2004 on the creation of the Immigration Liaison Officers' Network in order to cater for access to information by Frontex and its participation in meetings organised in the framework of the Network since such information should be a useful resource and thus such access to information is being supported;

40. stresses that the Commission ensures that the sea border patrols by Frontex particularly off the Canary Islands and the central Mediterranean area are effected during the entire periods of calm seas, particularly from mid Spring up to beginning Autumn in order to prevent further immigration flows to the EU Member States;

41. encourages the Commission to propose incentives to engage the northern African states in working together to prevent people-trafficking on Europe's Mediterranean coasts. Nevertheless, the best method for achieving a long-term solution is to implement policies to aid development in the countries in which migration originates;

Concerning the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union

42. notes that the key objective in applying the Global approach to Eastern and South Eastern regions neighbouring the EU is the need to maintain policy coherence and to ensure complementarity with ongoing dialogue and cooperation initiatives on migration and related areas already taking place in the overall context of the EU external relations policy;

43. supports the opinion of the Commission that dialogue with candidate and partner country authorities would include how the developmental impact of migration can help strengthen stability and foster growth in the region including the promo-

tion of policies to prevent brain drain including investment in training and capacity building to improve work conditions and increase labour opportunities;

44. proposes to work closer to the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in relation to countries which are members of the Council so as to improve the capacity of partner countries to treat illegal migrants in accordance with international standards and the needs of victims of trafficking and other vulnerable persons;

45. recommends to involve local and regional authorities and their national associations particularly more closely in candidate countries but also in partner countries in EU contributions such as training and twinning of law enforcement officials, cooperation with Frontex, social protection and training of officials for labour matters, the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, the collection of data and the monitoring of migration flows;

46. welcomes the proposal that Frontex should be given a more prominent role including development of cooperation with Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, the Western Balkans and Asian countries but stresses that this agency should first strengthen its current operations and risk analysis as these have commenced late during the year and suspended during summer when in the southern region of Europe the influx of illegal immigrants is extremely high;

47. supports the proposal to deepen a comprehensive dialogue with Russia on all migration-related issues including asylum, the protection of internally displaced persons in line with international standards, the fight against illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings, labour migration and all relevant social aspects of migration;

48. reiterates that those states which have doubted the efficacy of such joint patrols to be more willing to allocate resources to Frontex, not only out of a spirit of burden-sharing but also out of self-interest because illegal immigration is a pan-European problem, not simply affecting those countries bordering the Mediterranean.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Outlook opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The situation of migrant women in the European Union’

(2007/C 305/10)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- emphasises that optimum integration of immigrant women and men is crucial, not least in view of their role in bringing up families, and therefore in the effective integration of the second and third generations of persons of foreign origin, given the role played by women in the development of society;
- emphasises that integration means sharing and respecting the fundamental rights and duties of the individual, which are part of the European legal *acquis*;
- highlights the key role played by public services, especially at local and regional level and their ability to create networks between services and with local communities, associations of migrant women and the voluntary sector;
- is concerned about the high level of school failure and drop-out rates among young girls of foreign origin, who are disadvantaged in their training and vocational choices, and are sometimes held back by their families, as well as by cultural prejudice and difficult economic circumstances; considers that ensuring equal opportunities for girls (and boys) from immigrant families requires parents to be made familiar with the educational system, thus enabling them to make well-informed choices on their children's and in particular daughters' education, taking into account their individual potential and aspirations and transcending gender stereotypes; and believes, furthermore, that initiatives to improve awareness and involvement among all stakeholders are needed to secure real equality of opportunities.

Rapporteur: Sonia MASINI (IT/PES); President of the Province of Reggio Emilia

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. **welcomes** the Commission's request for an outlook opinion, also with a view to the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008;

2. **reiterates** the need for a comprehensive European migration policy that provides for approaches coordinated between the Member States and local and regional communities, and coherent measures on legal migration, both in order to promote the integration of immigrants who comply with the laws of the host countries and to strengthen the fight against illegal immigration and irregularities;

3. **notes** that the Commission communication *A Common Agenda for Integration* recognises that any measures must include a gender perspective, as well as addressing the particular issues of young people and children;

4. **emphasises** that optimum integration of immigrant women and men is crucial, not least in view of their role in bringing up families, and therefore in ensuring the effective integration of the second and third generations of persons of foreign origin, given the role played by women in the development of society;

5. **points out** that its opinion on the *Policy plan on legal migration* drew attention to the concern of local and regional authorities about gender issues, noting the need to consider the discrimination which may be faced by women based on their gender, ethnic roots, geographical origin or other causes listed in Article 13 of the EC Treaty;

6. **notes** the need to guarantee effective legal protection against discrimination; to look at future measures for completing the current legislative framework; to incorporate the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities into Union policies; to promote innovation and good practice; to improve awareness-raising among the groups concerned as well as the host population and cooperation with them; and to tackle the discrimination and social exclusion faced by many ethnic minorities;

7. **recalls** that integration is a two-way process, involving both the host communities and migrant women, both as individuals and as members of their national communities and that awareness raising is necessary for both immigrant and host communities;

8. **emphasises** that integration means sharing and respecting the fundamental rights and duties of the individual, which are part of the European legal *acquis*, as recognised by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, the common

constitutional traditions of the Member States, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

9. **notes** that, especially in the case of migrant women, conflicts may arise between different categories of individual rights and the right to cultural and religious identity, and **believes** that the latter should be safeguarded provided the practices deemed to express this identity do not violate fundamental inalienable rights and are consciously chosen by women rather than imposed by the family network or community to which they belong and/or the community of origin;

10. **observes** that local and regional authorities have acquired considerable experience in policies relating to reception, mediation, labour market access, welfare for migrant women, and combating different forms of exploitation and violence, which may be useful in drawing up new European strategies and programmes; and that involving associations of migrant women and other representatives of the relevant groups of migrant women in permanent dialogue with local and regional authorities, and representing such groups in the administration, is crucial to enable the development of effective strategies and programmes;

11. therefore **calls on** the Member States and the European Union, as recommended by the European Parliament, to support these efforts both financially and with human resources by exchanging information and good practice;

12. **particularly welcomes** the adoption of the framework programme on *Solidarity and management of migration flows*, especially provision for a *European Integration Fund*, whose measures must take account of gender issues and optimum integration of women of all ages, young people and children of migrants;

13. **confirms** the wish expressed in its opinion on the *Policy plan on legal migration*, that the *European Integration Fund* should be managed in such a way as to take account of the demands of local and regional authorities and that the latter should be actively and constructively involved in negotiations on national programmes and operational plans;

14. **highlights** the crucial contribution of organised groups of migrant women and NGOs;

15. **stresses** the importance of joint measures with the countries of origin to promote women's rights, and urges the Commission and the Member States to support measures organised by local and regional authorities in collaboration with those countries and their respective local and regional authorities in order to establish suitable indicators;

16. **points out** that gender-sensitive language use is very important;

Statistics

17. **points to** the lack of precise statistical data on immigration in the European Union, especially illegal immigration and the full circumstances regarding undeclared work;

18. **believes** it is vital that the data-gathering process should include non-binding gender variables and that indicators of gender inequality should be drawn up;

19. **highlights** the possibility of analyses based on data provided at regional and local level, which are essential for conducting decentralised policies and ensuring an effective approach to migration;

Social services and healthcare

20. **observes** that access to social services and healthcare are often a migrant's first point of contact with the public services and laws of the host society, and **believes** that it is essential to overcome the forms of discrimination that are actually emerging, in order to eliminate healthcare inequalities;

21. **underscores** the need for all migrants to be covered by the health checks and preventive actions carried out by the appropriate services; also **underlines** the need to devise and fund appropriate social and healthcare programmes, based on objective studies on specific health problems, to combat recurrent diseases in the migrant population;

22. **stresses** the need to step up appropriate information and health awareness-raising among people of foreign origin, in particular women, and **believes** it is important to design methods of enquiry that are more attuned to individual and cultural particularities, making use for instance of linguistic and cultural mediation and dialogue, not only with individual people and groups, but also with organisations; respect for cultural diversity must be underpinned by the basic right to healthcare and women's right of self-determination, especially with respect to health and sexuality;

23. **favours**, therefore, the introduction of targeted measures in relation to information provision, prevention, support and awareness-raising with the aim of combating any discriminatory and/or humiliating practice or tradition and of capitalising on effective, high-quality multidisciplinary and cross-cultural bridge-building/dialogue approaches to preventive and proactive mechanisms (e.g. linguistic or cultural mediation, childbirth preparation classes, social integration initiatives for migrant women and cross-cultural consultation schemes) in use in the various European countries and at local and regional level;

24. **highlights** the key role played here by public services, especially at local and regional level (in fields such as family advisory services) and their ability to create networks between services and with local communities, associations of migrant women and the voluntary sector, i.e. the third sector;

25. **believes** it is important to widen the use of good practice in the social and healthcare spheres, establishing a proper European register in which to classify different policies of excellence and good practice implemented in this area;

Education, youth and cultural policies

26. **notes** that the younger generation is the critical factor on which future integration depends, in part because of the crucial importance of mediation between the society in which a person is raised and their family of origin;

27. **restates** the need for specific and appropriate actions to enable immigrants to be fully integrated into the host educational system (in the first place, language-learning), particularly during the early part of their stay;

28. **highlights** the requirement for school curricula that reflect diversity;

29. **recalls** its views set out in its opinion on the *Policy plan on legal migration* concerning the high rate of school failure in many EU countries among young people of immigrant origin, and the proposal to establish specific financial and policy instruments to address these problems. It draws particular attention to the need to strive for all young people to be able to achieve their aspirations and potential, and **notes** that particular emphasis should be placed on the academic achievements of and educational opportunities for girls; close contacts between teachers and parents together with complete information on educational systems should ensure that girls' individual potential should be recognised and promoted in line with their wishes and needs;

30. **draws attention** to the special situation of migrant women of all ages, but particularly young girls of foreign origin, who are sometimes torn between the cultural identity passed on by their families and their attraction to the new identity promoted by the society they have grown up in, and **underlines** their need for specific attention, to enable them to become one of the real strengths underpinning the new Europe;

31. **is concerned** about the high level of school failure and drop-out rates among young girls of foreign origin, who are disadvantaged in their training and vocational choices, and are sometimes held back by their families, as well as by cultural prejudice and difficult economic circumstances; **considers** that ensuring equal opportunities for girls (and boys) from immigrant families requires parents to be made familiar with the educational system, thus enabling them to make well-informed choices on their children's and in particular daughters' education, taking into account their individual potential and aspirations and transcending gender stereotypes; and **believes**, furthermore, that initiatives to improve awareness and involvement among all stakeholders are needed to secure real equality of opportunities;

32. **supports** the call, made in the Parliament resolution on women's immigration, to promote young immigrants' access to the integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013);

33. **believes** that when framing youth policies, the measures developed must be inclusive of the cultural and gender diversity of young people of foreign origin, using their potential as a resource for intercultural mediation, and encouraging the establishment of dedicated forums for cross-cultural encounters and the development of a culture of women's associations;

34. **stresses** that communication, particularly through the media, plays a key role in the integration of migrant women and calls for the promotion of media-related initiatives to harness the potential in this area and make good the information deficit in both immigrant and host communities in order to overcome stereotypes and negative prejudice;

35. **reiterates** in this regard how worthwhile it is to find ways of cooperating with the media (by promoting voluntary codes of conduct for journalists), as highlighted in its own opinion on the Communication *A common agenda for integration*;

Economic integration

36. **restates** the need to promote migrant women's access to employment and vocational training, not least by means of positive measures aimed at combating discrimination and at removing the obstacles that effectively prevent equal opportunities from becoming a reality;

37. **highlights** the fact that migrant women are often employed in poorly paid, low-skilled temporary jobs, in hidden economic sectors or in illegal activities, and therefore **requests** the Commission to undertake a study to examine this issue and make recommendations on how best to deal with it;

38. **stresses** the importance of measures designed to recognise professional skills and educational qualifications or professional experience gained by women in their countries of origin;

39. **confirms** its support for the Commission's aim to draft a general framework directive on the rights of third country citizens legally employed in a Member State, and in this context to address the problem of the recognition of professional diplomas and qualifications;

40. **notes** that, in certain Member States in particular, immigrant women are widely employed in care assistant and home help positions and that this is changing European welfare conditions, and **calls on** the Commission to study the phenomenon and consider drawing up specific instruments;

41. **strongly underlines** the need to encourage women's independence and entrepreneurship in the economic field, both in their home countries and in the host countries, by means of specific measures, for instance by using micro credit;

42. **welcomes** the attention given in the second edition of the *Handbook on integration* to immigrant business support schemes, **believes** this type of scheme is essential so as to contribute to the real independence of women and **calls on** the Commission to support these initiatives, for instance professional and language training in the countries of origin;

43. **highlights** the particular difficulties faced by women immigrant workers with children and the consequent need for measures to facilitate a proper work-life balance, **stresses** the important initiatives that have been taken at regional and local level, not least in conjunction with women's associations and voluntary groups, and **urges** the Commission to support these initiatives;

44. **notes** that in many cases women's rights are undermined in practice by the serious problems they encounter in terms of transport and mobility, in part owing to the conditioning of their cultures of origin, and **calls on** the Commission and Member States to promote independence as regards transport (e.g. driving lessons);

45. **notes** that undeclared work often exploits women, and **supports** efforts to unearth and combat this phenomenon;

46. would **stress** the need to devise appropriate measures to combat illegal employment, treating the victims of these situations fairly, and **notes** the Commission's recent proposal for a directive designed to harmonise the sanctions against employers who either employ immigrants who are illegally resident or employ legally resident immigrants under illegal conditions;

47. in line with its opinion on the *Policy plan on legal migration*, **repeats** its call to the Commission and Member States to adopt measures to make it easier for migrants to send back their remittances and to encourage their use in productive investment schemes in their countries of origin;

Protection against forms of coercion and participation rights

48. **notes** that some immigrant women may be particularly vulnerable to forms of exploitation, the violation of their fundamental rights and physical and psychological coercion, and **agrees** with the European Parliament that such practices cannot be in any way justified or tolerated for any cultural or religious reason;

49. therefore **joins** the European Parliament in **calling on** the Member States to take immediate and effective action to address and combat all forms of violence against women, in accordance with national legislation and international and EU laws; and **considers** it vital to provide full information on such legislation in order to ensure that migrants are also aware of it;

50. **urges** the Commission to support these measures and the efforts made by regional and local authorities;

51. **notes** the particularly widespread nature of domestic violence and **calls on** the Commission to examine effective measures to prevent and combat it, and bring forward those measures as a matter of urgency so that they can be incorporated into EU legislation. Honour crimes are a specific type of domestic violence, and particular attention should be paid to them;

52. **stresses** that marriages (or de facto unions) between people of differing nationalities are a citizenship right and are potentially test benches for positive integration between differing cultures, sensibilities, religions and laws. At the same time, it **emphasises** that the protection of the fundamental rights of women and children should be ensured regardless of whether or not there are reciprocal legislative arrangements;

53. **observes** that reuniting families is an increasingly powerful and positive way of improving integration, and is essential for the protection of the right to a family life, and **agrees** with the European Parliament that Directive 2003/86/EC has yet to be applied in a satisfactory manner by all the Member States;

54. **highlights** the fact that in the course of family reunification, the individual rights of all the members of the family group must be respected, and free choice on the part of women must be guaranteed;

55. **condemns** forced marriages and practices that do not comply with European laws (e.g. infibulation, polygamy) and **calls upon** Member States to take immediate and appropriate action to ensure the laws that forbid these practices are implemented fully;

56. in line with its own opinion on the fight against illegal immigration, **reiterates** the recommendation to adopt, as a priority, all necessary measures to put an end to human trafficking, of which women are the main victims, and to eradicate the organisations responsible and all forms of slavery, including those involving children and adolescents, by adopting appropriate laws and specific action programmes and to recognise that even when some of those victims are illegal immigrants that they are seen to be special cases and that in some circumstances deportation may lead to extreme violence against them, or even death, if they are forced to return to their country of origin;

57. **supports** the European Parliament's invitation to Member States, in its resolution on *women's immigration*, to show special awareness in relation to the participation of migrant women in society and political life, in accordance with national legislation.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Equal opportunities and sport'

(2007/C 305/11)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ISSUES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sport can be used to address discrimination and inequality within sport and in the wider society, and can promote social values, such as cooperation, tolerance and solidarity.
- Local and regional authorities should plan, develop and promote equality through their sports provisions and services.
- Certain societal groups tend to participate less in sport, are poorly represented in decision-taking and are excluded from some sporting facilities; in many countries, sports administration does not reflect the diversity of the community that it serves.
- Local and regional authorities should encourage participants and spectators from all communities to sporting events and protect them from abuse and harassment; make available without discrimination sporting facilities that they own, operate, finance, or licence; encourage individuals from all communities to become involved at all levels of sports administration, management and coaching — these functions should become an indicator of local and regional authorities' overall performance.
- Local and regional authorities should learn from the experiences of other authorities across Europe and world-wide, and promote good practice locally and regionally.
- The EU should establish benchmarks in the promotion of equal opportunities in sport and sporting provision. In this connection CoR has established a 'Charter for equality in sport'.

Rapporteur: Peter MOORE, Member of Sheffield City Council (UK/ALDE)

'Sport has the power to unite people in a way little else can. Sport can create hope where there was once despair. It breaks down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of discrimination. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand.'

Nelson Mandela

'The hidden face of sport is the thousands of enthusiasts who find in their football, rowing, athletics and rock-climbing clubs, a place for meeting and exchange, but above all the training ground for community life. In this microcosm, people learn to take responsibility, to follow rules, to accept one another, to look for consensus, to take on democracy. Seen from this angle, sport is par excellence the ideal school for democracy.'

Daniel Tarschys

Secretary-General Council of Europe

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General remarks

1. Considers that sport, like other domains of social life, can both unite and divide society.
2. Believes that discrimination and inequality exists in sport, but that sport can be used to address these issues within sport and in the wider society, and can promote social values, such as team spirit, fair competition, cooperation, tolerance and solidarity.
3. Equal opportunities for all societal groups within and through sport can best be achieved through joint and complementary efforts by all spheres of governance: local and regional authorities have a key role to play.
4. Welcomes the designation of 2007 as the European year of equal opportunities for all. Regrets that the CoR and some Member States have not participated as fully as possible, whilst considering this opinion to be a contribution towards the Year.
5. Recalls the declaration of the Nice European Council in 2000 which called on the EU to take account of the specific characteristics and the social, educational and cultural functions of sport. Recalls that the social significance of sport is the subject of Declaration No 29 appended to the Amsterdam Treaty. Welcomes the European Commission's White Paper on sports, published on 11 July 2007, and calls on it to address the issues of equality of opportunity mentioned therein.
6. Supports the Council of Europe definition of sport as being 'all forms of physical ability which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.
7. Believes that the pursuit of equality is not just about tackling unlawful discrimination where it exists, it is also about being proactive in changing perceptions and attitudes to dispel ignorance and prejudice, and making the best of our communities' talents and allowing everyone to realise their own potential.
8. Recognises that discrimination exists in many forms: direct and indirect; institutional and individual; overt and subtle; plays a part in reducing (or increasing) the access, opportunities and life chances of sectors of society in social, political and economic life.
9. Recognises that, for differing reasons, certain societal groups tend to participate less in sport, are poorly represented at decision-making levels and for a variety of reasons are excluded from some sporting facilities. Recognises that as a consequence some of these communities experience disproportionately high levels of illness associated, for example with sedentary lifestyles.

10. Recognises that in many countries, sports administration does not reflect the diversity of the community that it serves. Considers that this issue should be addressed by local and regional authorities, including appropriate training for administrators to ensure that discriminatory practices — whether deliberate or unwilling — are identified and addressed.

11. Recalls the work of the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia (EUMC), in conjunction with Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) and UEFA, in the area of combating racism in football. Welcomes the creation of the European Fundamental Rights Agency which brings with it the opportunity to broaden the scope of their work. Calls on it to include equal opportunities and sport as part of its remit. Requests it to report to CoR on an annual basis on this matter.

12. Calls on the organisers of major international sporting events (a) to raise the issue of equal opportunities in their sport; (b) to organise seminars in parallel to the event to discuss equalities issues relevant to the sport, and to include the local and regional dimension.

Age

13. Whereas sports policy is largely addressed towards younger people, for understandable reasons, recognises that participation in sport declines significantly as people get older, even though participation in sport can increase longevity and quality of life in older age.

14. Considers that for older people, sport provides an opportunity for lifelong learning, both through developing skills and competence as a participant, and more widely through lifelong involvement including qualifications in coaching, sports leadership and administration.

15. Calls on local and regional authorities' sports policies and provision to be balanced across all age groups, and to accord equal value to the less vigorous and non-competitive sports which are more accessible to older people.

Disability

16. Recognises that participation in sport is lower for people with disabilities. Steps must be taken to ensure that disabled people of both sexes and of any age can exercise to the full their right to participate in all forms of sport.

17. Calls on local and regional authorities' sports policies and provision to take into account people with disabilities, and to accord equal value to the less vigorous and non-competitive sports which are more accessible to people with disabilities. Calls for special consideration to be given to providing sporting activities and facilities for older people, including the provision of appropriate advice relative to their physical and mental health.

18. Calls on local and authorities to monitor the recruitment of people with disabilities as sports administrators and coaching staff.

Gender

19. Recognises that participation in sport in some Member States is higher by men than by women, although there is evidence that this gap is narrowing.

20. Calls on local and regional authorities to use their training and education policies, principally, to avoid gender stereotyping in directing girls and boys towards certain sports and away from others. Calls for the same opportunities to be given to boys and girls to engage in whatever kinds of sport they find interesting. Local and regional authorities should use the gender budgeting technique when drawing up draft budgets for sports facilities and planning sports provision.

21. Calls on local and regional authorities to monitor gender balance in the recruitment of sports administrators and coaching staff.

22. Calls for special consideration to be given by local and regional authorities to providing sporting activities and facilities for pregnant women and young mothers, including the provision of appropriate advice relative to their condition; the provision of childcare facilities at sports centres and venues; and the provision of safe, convenient and affordable public transport access to sports centres and venues.

Race

23. Recognises that sports such as, for instance, basketball, baseball, running, tennis and volleyball all require similar 'bioenergetics'; however there is much to suggest that an individual's choice of sport is more contingent on social and cultural factors than on any physical determinants.

24. Stresses the importance of discrimination-free access to all forms of sporting activity for all sections of the population.

25. Welcomes the European Parliament resolution on football and racism (14.3.2006) which calls on all stakeholders to do more to fight racism in the sport.

26. Considers that the relatively high level of racial diversity in elite sport, notably football, is not replicated in other levels of sporting activity. The emergence of some non-white individuals at the highest level of some sports can give the impression that racism has been eradicated. In truth, professional sport delivers relatively few from social disadvantage. Racism can also occur when non-white players are assigned stereotypical roles.

27. Calls for action to combat any racial stereotype that may exist among teachers and coaches and that may be a contributory factor in channelling particular ethnic minorities into or out of particular sports.

28. Calls on local and authorities to monitor race and ethnic balance in the recruitment of sports administrators and coaching staff.

Religion or belief

29. Recognises that all religions and faith groups have specific customs (e.g. single-sex bathing) and practices (e.g. ritual, timing and frequency of prayer) that can lead to unwitting exclusion from sport; thus a ban on the wearing of the Islamic headscarf (*hijab*) creates a potential barrier to the full participation of Muslim women in football. Considers that exclusion of certain groups can also arise from islamophobia, anti-semitism and other phobia or forms of hatred and calls on the EU to address this form of discrimination as for racism and xenophobia. In this connection, the EU should involve Member States and local and regional authorities as infrastructures providers, and citizens and sports organisations as users in promoting and encouraging more fun and spontaneous sporting activity as an area for equal opportunities for all.

30. Calls on local and regional authorities to promote dialogue between these groups and sports organisers to get a shared understanding of the issues and to explore ways of accommodating specific practices and customs in a tolerant and constructive manner, whilst recognising that in some cases a practicable solution might not be possible.

Sexual orientation

31. Considers that the treatment of gays and lesbians in sport is a special cause for concern. They are often faced with the stark choice of concealing their sexuality, or creating sports clubs and events solely for gays and lesbians. Recognises that whereas a significant proportion of the European population is homosexual not one current professional footballer is openly gay. Concealment and segregation cannot be a long-term solution: the objective must be to make all men and women welcome in all sports clubs, regardless of sexual orientation.

32. Calls on local and regional authorities to work with local and regional lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups to find ways to remedy these issues.

33. Welcomes the 2006 FARE five-point guide for combating homophobia in football.

Equal opportunities in sport and sporting provision

34. Calls on local and regional authorities to challenge and remove discrimination in sport and sporting provision.

35. Believes that greater research should be undertaken on the situation of minorities in sport. Attention should be paid to all forms of discrimination, which can vary from country to country, region to region, and indeed from sport to sport.

36. Calls on EU-wide sporting bodies, notably UEFA, to implement meaningful and effective sanctions in instances of racial and other discriminatory abuse in events within its jurisdiction; calls on UEFA especially to rectify this position and report to CoR after the 2008 European football championships.

37. Calls on local and regional authorities to encourage and welcome participants and spectators from all communities to sporting events, whether or not organised by a local or regional authority, and to protect them from abuse and harassment.

38. Calls on local and regional authorities to make available without discrimination sporting facilities that they own, operate, finance directly or indirectly, or which they licence for sporting activity.

39. Calls on local and regional authorities to encourage individuals from all communities to become involved at all level of sports administration, management and coaching.

Promoting equal opportunities through sport

40. Calls on local and regional authorities to use sport to promote tolerance and understanding within the context of social inclusion and combating discrimination.

41. Calls on local and regional authorities to become more actively involved in sporting provision.

42. Calls on education authorities to encourage children not only to practice sport, but to appreciate the societal and cultural dimension of sport in all its diversity.

43. Calls on European networks of sports organisers, coaches and administrative sports staff should be encouraged to consider and promote the equalities dimension of their work.

44. Urges local and regional authorities, organisations and clubs to provide training in multiculturalism, non-discrimination and tolerance for their staff and coaches.

Local and regional authorities

45. Believes that local and regional authorities have as a core function the provision of sport, leisure and cultural services. These services must be recognised as key tools in the promotion of social inclusion and combating discrimination.

46. Considers that local and regional authorities should plan, develop and promote equality through their sports provision and services, incorporating gender budgeting as well.

47. Considers that the provision of sport, and the equality of opportunity within and through that provision, should become an indicator of local and regional authorities' overall performance.

48. Calls on local and regional authorities to recognise and address institutionalised discrimination in the provision of an appropriate service to people because of their age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, or sexual orientation, which can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes or behaviour which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which cause disadvantage to those societal groups.

49. Calls on local and regional authorities to address themselves to three main areas of action:

(i) Commitment, policy and planning: demonstrating a commitment to promoting equality through sport by producing written policies and robust action plans, and to monitor and review them regularly.

(ii) Participation and public image: making every effort to increase the diversity of participants and employees in sports and leisure services, including steps to achieve a positive and inclusive image.

(iii) Administration and management: setting up procedures to tackle discrimination and inequality. Local and regional authorities should seek to improve the diversity of representation in sports governance, administration and management.

50. Calls on local and regional authorities to work with civil society, partner associations, sporting associations, local sports clubs and non-governmental organisations to achieve mutual objectives in this area and to exercise political leadership.

51. Recommends that local and regional authorities develop a media strategy to advertise sporting opportunities for target groups with a view to increasing their participation, and to publicise their activities and achievements. Local and regional authorities should work towards eliminating stereotyping, discrimination and racism in sports reporting, including in publications produced or financed by these authorities, for example by reporting on women's football as the norm and not as a novelty.

52. Calls on local and regional authorities to exchange and learn from the experiences of other authorities across Europe and world-wide, and to promote good practice locally and regionally. Calls on the EU institutions to facilitate this exchange of good practice. In particular, the CoR and European associations of local government (CEMR, AER, Eurocities, etc.) should consider how to facilitate the creation of networks of cities, local authorities and regions that have special experience with these activities.

53. Calls on the EU to establish a benchmark for local and regional authorities in the promotion of equal opportunities in sport and sporting provision. In this connection, establishes a CoR Charter for equality in sport:

CoR Charter for equality in sport

'Signatories are committed to using their influence to create a world of sport in which all people can take part without facing discrimination of any kind. Signatories pledge to:

- Challenge and remove discrimination in sport*
- Encourage people from all communities to become involved in sport*
- Welcome employees and spectators from all communities and protect all employees and spectators from discriminatory abuse and harassment*

— Encourage skilled and talented individuals from all communities to become involved at all levels of sports administration, management and coaching

— Develop the best possible equality policies and practices that are subject to regular review and update

— Celebrate diversity in sport.'

54. Calls on local and regional authorities to sign this Charter and to audit their current approach in respect of the above.

55. Undertakes to establish an annual CoR award for local or regional authorities who best implement the Charter.

Brussels, 11 October 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE
