



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE  
ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS  
VERSAMMLUNG DER REGIONEN EUROPAS  
ASAMBLEA DE LAS REGIONES DE EUROPA  
ASSEMBLEA DELLE REGIONI D'EUROPA

Interregional Policy  
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Press Release

**A successful step for giving European regions one voice**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2002 in Linz (A), the Assembly of European Regions united the Presidents of the European interregional organisations\* to built up a real common policy. For the first time in many years, these organisations have made a major step in joining their forces to defend and promote the role of the regions in the future of Europe. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe were also actively involved in the debates.

The participants of the Linz Conference decided in particular to invite their respective governments to support the draft European Charter on Regional Autonomy in order to have this text rapidly adopted as an international treaty by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Convinced that strength can only be achieved through unity, the participants of the Linz Conference decided together as follows\*\*:

**Governance and the future of Europe**

We :

- demand that, alongside with the CoR, the large European representative organisations of local and regional authorities be invited to be heard by the Convention and be directly involved in its activities in order to deal with issues linked to the role of the Regions and local authorities in the EU;
- recommend the drawing up of a Code of Conduct by which the Commission would commit itself to cooperation with the Regions and their representative bodies in the decision-making process, from the consultation process until decisions are taken. This would represent an important step towards real dialogue between the EU, Regions and cities;
- stress that good European governance should be built on representative and participation-based democracy;
- reiterate that the discussion on Governance did not concern further competences, but rather a clear and correct distribution of competences between the Union, the States, the Regions and Local authorities and call for a more precise definition of the distribution of competences between the Union, member States and their Regional and Local authorities in order to enhance democracy, legitimacy of European action and coherence between public policies;
- insist on the possibility of legal control via either a specialised Chamber of the European Court of Justice or a specific organ, when the competence distribution is not respected;
- call for the reinforcement of the role of the Committee of the Regions.

**Regional Policy and Cohesion**

- with regard to the impacts of the European Unification and the Globalisation, this policy must increasingly encourage a polycentric development of the Community, particularly by means of the EU Community Initiatives;
- such a policy not only requires common objectives, but also the recognition that the diverse socio-cultural basic structures in Europe as well as transeuropean cooperation are the basis for a sustainable economical development;
- the GDP seems to be unsuitable as the only or essential scale for European structural and cohesion policy. A new allocation of European funds should therefore consider the actual competitiveness ability of the Regions.

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- a harmonisation of the currently different criteria for the individual EU policies (ESDP, Structural Funds, research and innovation) will be possible: key criteria, i.e. GDP and employment, need to be complemented by other relevant factors such as economic structure, innovation, accessibility and workforce skills;
- “Community Initiatives” imply that the EU assumes responsibility for all issues which are of major importance for the Community as a whole and for the future development. This is why INTERREG must continue to cover all parts of Europe and address all types of problems (and not only those of economic nature), which continue to exist or newly arise.

One solution would be to separate community initiatives from the structural funds as from 2007 and to define them as an independent EU task.

### **Transport networks in Europe**

The measures which are suggested in the White Paper on Transport do not meet the increasing need of intermodality and – above all – do not take into sufficient account the transport needs of specific regions and areas.

- Regions have to be recognised as “statutory consultees” of European and national authorities in this field: they already have – to varying degrees – competences for transport planning, public transport provision, road transport infrastructure and maintenance, traffic management and road safety. They usually also have responsibility for the complementary social environmental and land use policies because of their involvement in these fields, Regions must be associated in defining and implementing EU transport policy;
- Due to transport’s huge impact on social, economic and territorial cohesion, Regions should ask that the development of a balanced and integrated transport be a key objective for the future structural funds;

### **Sustainable agriculture and protection of rural areas**

- Multi-functional agriculture must make an essential contribution to environmental conservation and rural planning. These are missions of public interest which must be supported by public funding as the market will not take them into account. The appreciation of these functions and their means of allocation will lay the conditions for sustainable European agriculture in a decisive manner.
- Cohesion, multi-functionality, competitiveness and sustainability must represent the foundations of the new model for agriculture. Alongside of quality and food safety standards, these elements could help the future CAP to gain credibility with European tax payers. The idea of quality must be recognised, reinforced and promoted in such a way as to differentiate between agricultural products. The registered origin label is one factor for differentiation and a means of meeting the quality requirements of consumers/citizens : Tradition, quality and safety.
- Europe must protect its wealth of rural landscape, characterised by the great diversity of its Regions. In order to preserve the social and economic importance of the rural world in the European context, the future must make full use of regional potential.

In order to reach these objectives, Regional Authorities which are close to territorial realities must be associated to the drawing up and implementation of future common agricultural and rural policies.

### **Sustainable development**

The European interregional organisations call on the Commission of the EU to declare the period 2003-2012 the European decade for sustainable development and 14<sup>th</sup> June as European sustainable development day.

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\*\*Whole Declaration available at the AER General Secretariat

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