



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

LINZ DECLARATION
21ST MARCH 2002

Meeting at Linz (Upper Austria) on 21st March 2002, at the initiative of Mrs Liese Prokop, President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Presidents and Senior Political Representatives of the following organisations representing local and regional authorities in Europe:

- Adriatic Alps Working Community (ALPEN ADRIA),
- Assembly of European Wine-producing Regions (AREV),
- Assembly of Fruit, Vegetable and Flower-growing Regions (AREFLH),*
- Association of European Border Regions (AEBR),
- Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology (RETI),
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR),
- Jura Working Community (CTJ)*,
- Working Community of the Alpine Countries (ARGE ALP),
- Working Community of the Danube Countries (ARGE DONAULÄNDER),
- Working Community Galicia - North Portugal*,
- Working Community of the Low and Middle Adriatic*,
- Working Community of the Pyrenees (CTP)*,
- Working Community of the Western Alps (COTRAO),

And of the

- Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR),

And of the

- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe,
- Committee of the Regions of the European Union (CoR);

REFERRING TO

- the draft European Charter on Regional Self-Government of the Council of Europe,
- the AER Declaration on Regionalism in Europe,
- the Declaration adopted in Vienna on 21st June 1995 by the AER and eleven interregional member organisations,
- the founding texts of the interregional organisations present as well as their reference documents on the place and role of Regions and Local Authorities in Europe;

* absent in Linz, formal agreement still to be received



UNDERLINING THEIR COMMITMENT TO

- the building up of a democratic united Europe, respectful of Human Rights and of the diversity of our continent, through its member States;
- the recognition of the equal dignity of Local and Regional Authorities whatever their size, wealth and the extent of their competences;
- the organisations representing Local and Regional Authorities which contribute to the European Unification Process, to Democracy, to Freedom, to Safety, to the Protection of Minorities as well as to European Policies and Programmes;

CONVINCED THAT

- Regions and Local Authorities can contribute to reducing the democratic deficit existing between Europe and its citizens;
- Interregional, transnational and cross-border cooperation are relevant and efficient ways to better integrate the Regions and Local Authorities from Central and Eastern Europe and to prepare their entry into the European Union,
- Regions and Local Authorities should speak with one voice whenever this may be possible;

HAVE DECIDED TO

- adopt a common position on the following issues that are of great relevance for them:
 - regional policy and cohesion,
 - governance and the future of Europe,
 - transport networks in Europe,
 - sustainable agriculture and protection of rural areas,
 - sustainable development,
- carry on and strengthen the cooperation between themselves in accordance with the role, specific nature and autonomy of each one,
- request their Secretary Generals to regularly consult each others in view of common projects between their interregional organisations,
- give mandate to their Secretary Generals to reach common positions, in collaboration with their interregional organisations, in particular on the work underway on the European Convention,
- call on their members to invite their respective governments to support the draft European Charter on Regional Self-Government in order to have this text rapidly adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as an international treaty,
- make this declaration known to the European Institutions.



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Future Regional Policy, Cohesion and Community initiatives



Conditions for a new political approach in an enlarged EU

The challenge for the period as from 2007 lies in developing new and flexible policies regarding the Structural Funds, Cohesion and Community Initiatives in an enlarged European Union. Despite the given content-related and financial priorities these policies need to serve the manifold interests of the European Union as a whole. Instead of truncating the debate to EU support programmes it must rather entail a fundamental political as well as a socio-cultural and economic dimension.

New political, economic and social objectives for an enlarged EU require a revision and an adaptation of the existing instruments and not vice versa. A statistical shifting of EU subsidies from "West to East", justified by the existing instruments, as well as an EU retreat from spatial planning, regional policy and Community Initiatives as pursued by the EU up to now would have fatal political, economic and social consequences in Europe.

Cohesion policy not merely means providing financial assistance to the most disadvantaged regions - it should first and foremost serve the interests of the Community as a whole (Article 158 of the EU Treaty)

Political approaches for a future-orientated regional and cohesion policy

An enlarged European Union will have to face a substantial increase in territorial diversity requiring a solid territorial cohesion policy and a consequent realisation of the "bottom-up"-principle considering subsidiarity and partnership.

A coherent and sustainable political approach as of 2007 needs to include spatial planning, regional and social policy, but also all sectorial-orientated policies with large territorial impact: agriculture, research and innovation, transport, education and training, competition regulations.

With regard to the impacts of European Unification and Globalisation, all policies must increasingly encourage the polycentric development of the Community Area, particularly by means of EU Community Initiatives.

Such a policy not only requires common objectives, but also the recognition that the diverse basic socio-cultural structures in Europe as well as trans-european cooperation, are the basis for sustainable economical development. Thus, the possibility exists to consider the prevailing situations in the regions, above all with those facing permanent particular difficulties.

Therefore, the GDP seems to be unsuitable as the only or essential criteria for European structural and cohesion policy as long as actual cost is not taken into consideration. A new allocation of European funding should therefore consider the actual competitiveness of the Regions.

A forward looking overall political strategy for cohesion and regional policy as well as community initiatives has to be based on its European added value:

- Multi-annual programmes for selected objectives with significance throughout Europe which exceed the individual national interests and gives planning security to the regional/local level for the achievement of these objectives,
- Multi-annual commitment of national/regional funding for these programming objectives by providing these EU funds.



Different levels of funding rates (minimum and maximum) within the enlarged EU as a whole making priority aid more accessible for Regions in difficulty and bearing in mind the specific problems of all European Regions seem to be suitable for financing these programming aims.

This corresponds to the different co-financing capacities and realities in an enlarged EU. Furthermore, 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.

A new policy with regard to European-wide Community Initiatives

Strong European differences endanger the realisation of a polycentric policy, above all in regions that do not have the abilities for coordinated structural actions.

Perceivable differences would continue to exist with regard to legal and administrative systems and structures, social and taxation legislation, economic promotion, industrial law and workforce skills and create new problems. These differences not only affect the present and future external borders as well as EU internal borders, but they also influence trans-european cooperation in general.

"Community Initiatives" imply that the EU assumes responsibility for all issues which are of major importance for the Community as a whole and for its future development. This is why INTERREG must continue to cover all parts of the EU and address all types of problems (and not only those of an economic nature), which continue to exist or newly arise.

The integration of Community Initiatives into the national mainstream programmes entails as many possibilities as risks:

- The effects of the OPs will be improved, more formally involving all actors in the realisation of objectives.
- A national solution for the numerous legal and strategic coordination difficulties of such programmes seems to be easier at first glance, but contradicts the trans-european character of Community Initiatives with necessary common solutions.
- If every Member State was free to decide whether or not to incorporate cross-border, transnational or interregional issues in these programmes, co-operation would become nearly impossible.
- The interest of genuine Europe-wide programmes and projects would therefore risk being lost.

Should Community Initiatives, despite the well-known problems, continue to be incorporated in European Structural Funds, they should at least be considered as an independent political objective (that means not as Regions eligible for Objective status) with their own "rules".

The current implementation of Community Initiatives under the framework of European Structural Funds entails considerable restrictions, obstacles and impediments.

Another possibility would be:



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TO SEPARATE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FROM THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS AS FROM 2007 AND TO DEFINE THEM AS AN INDEPENDENT EU TASK.

Because Community Initiatives are the best EU funding instrument capable of reaching the citizens and regions throughout Europe and increasing subsidiarity and partnership whilst ensuring proximity with citizens.

Once separated from the Structural Funds, an increase in funds for Community Initiatives, which might turn out to be necessary, as well as a simplification of administration procedures would be easier to obtain.

Each of these Community Initiatives, be they cross-border, trans-national or interregional, should then be linked to a European-wide network managed by the principal actors.



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Governance and the Future of Europe



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The participants at the Linz Conference:

- Welcome, in particular, the decision of the European Council of Laeken to launch a Convention to prepare the future of Europe;
- Express their contentment, bearing in mind his long standing commitment to Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, with President Giscard d'Estaing's nomination at the head of this Convention;
- Take note of the inclusion, in the Declaration, of the role of the regions, notably to rectify the democratic deficit of Europe;
- Recall however their attachment to the principle of equal dignity of local and regional authorities who must all participate, according to their level of competence, in the European decision making process.
- Reiterate their demand that, alongside of 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;

Furthermore, the participants at the Linz Conference:

- Welcome the publication of the White Paper on European Governance by the Commission;
- Are satisfied with the recognition by the White Paper of the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of governance in Europe and will monitor the due respect of this statement of cooperation;
- Regret, however, that the White Paper did not consider the possibility of revising the Treaties;
- Welcome the official recognition by the Commission of the role of European and National Associations of local and regional authorities;
- Invite the Commission to search for, with these Associations, the means of solidly establishing this dialogue;
- Recommend the drawing up of a Code of Conduct by which the Commission would commit itself to cooperation with the Regions, local authorities and their representative bodies from the decision-making process upwards, i.e. from the consultation process and until the decision is taken. This would represent an important step towards real dialogue between the EU, Regions and towns;
- 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;



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- 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, understandability of European action and coherence between public territorial policies;
- Express their desire to see the new system of competence distribution included in the Treaty in order to materialise and specify the principle of subsidiarity;
- 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 thus established is not respected; It remains to be seen which authorities would be able to refer to this body.
- Recall the essential principals which should be the basis of good governance in Europe and which strengthen the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality:
 - consultation
 - participation
 - partnership
 - openness
 - democracy

and confirm that the implementation of these principles be assessed in relation to the application of good governance;

- Confirm their availability to fully participate, alongside of the CoR, in the process of consultation of European local and regional authorities, a key element in the establishment of real European governance.
- Call for the reinforcement of the role of the Committee of the Regions;
- Consider that the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union, included under Treaty article 158, must be joined by a more balanced type of governance with increased participation. The objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion will be difficult to achieve without all levels of authority being involved as co-actors;
- Call on the member States to further include their Regions and Local authorities, as well as their national and interregional associations, in national debates on the future of the Union;
- Call for the generalisation of State-Region Conferences, as used in certain States, in order to include the Regions in the drawing up of national policies on European policies. These Conferences allow real partnerships to be set up without questioning national organisation.
- Recall the essential role played by local and regional elected members in the organisation of relations with civil society, while insisting on the need not to consider the latter at the same level as local and regional authorities.



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The Future of the European Transport Policy



I BACKGROUND

Without any doubt, transport plays an important role in European economic development as a whole; to this must be added its primordial strategic role in the integration process.

Transport policy aims to build a coherent multi-modal network which is able to guarantee the best outcome both in terms of cost and efficiency and in terms of security, the environment, regional accessibility and social priorities.

The guarantee of mobility in all circumstances for both goods and passengers represents the most important objective of this policy.

The recently published White Paper on Transport and the proposed revision of the TEN-T are not likely to achieve their claimed major aim – i.e.: “establishing intelligent transport systems that optimise existing capacities” – without full recognition of the pivotal role of Regions and interregional and cross-border co-operation in Transport Strategy.

Organisations representing local and regional authorities in Europe will actively participate in the European debate on the White Paper on transport during the next 3 years and two successive revisions of the TEN-T (Trans-European Network - Transport).

Trans-European Networks - Transport (TEN-T)

In its search for an adequate transport system meeting all requirements, the European Union helped to draw up an internal EU transport network in order to reach important common objectives such as the smooth running of the internal market and the promotion of economic and social cohesion.

The outcome of this process led to decision N° 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and Council on common directives concerning the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN).

These directives describe the principles applicable to the development of road, rail, maritime, inland, and air transport in the European Union. Their real meaning lies in the fact that they try to launch the idea of a global vision of an internal EU network as it will exist in 2010 for the first time. The priorities, measures and projects at the service of common interests are also included.

However, only 25% of the TEN's programme has yet been achieved (10/2001): work is too slow! (Only three out of the 14 priority projects have been finalised: Belt bridge, Malpensa airport and Cork rail line).

In addition to decision 1692/96 concerning the internal EU strategy "Agenda 2000" also stresses the urgent need to develop and improve transport infrastructure in applicant countries and the need to make up for the lack of connections between applicant countries and the existing Union. Improvements to the transport infrastructure can be considered as an important element in the economic development strategy, which will allow applicant countries to handle competition and market forces within the enlarged Union.

The concept of corridors

The concept of corridors represents the basis for reasonable economic development of the existing Trans-European Network towards applicant countries. The transport network will play an important role in the "pre-accession" phase in economic relations between the European Union and applicant



countries. The three last pan-European Conferences on transport - the most recent was held in Helsinki in June 1997 - defined 10 multi-modal corridors to act as the foundations for the basic network 'TEN - East' (TINA process), on the basis of these aspects. 4 pan-European transport Regions (PETRAs) must be added to this list, mostly including links between maritime Regions.

The TINA process

The future trans-European transport network must be able to cover the transport needs of each Region in the Community and guarantee the free circulation of citizens and the free transport of goods whilst allowing easy access to European centres and protecting the environment. The development of a balanced multi-modal transport infrastructure must be based on this strategy.

The needs of applicant countries regarding their transport infrastructure have been assessed. This assessment (Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment, TINA) led to the following conclusions:

- The network must meet the criteria set in the common directives for the implementation of Trans-European Transport networks (TEN, Council Decision N°1692/96/EC);
- The deadline for completing this network must not be later than 2015;
- The costs incurred in this network must remain realistic in view of available funds: average expenditure until 2015 must not go over 1.5% of the annual GDP of each country.

The TINA network includes two sections:

- A backbone network based on ten multi-modal pan-European transport corridors within TINA countries.
- Additional network components are advised by three groups of regional TINA networks, based on the advice of the countries, and endorsed by the TINA Senior Official Group.

At the end of the first phase the complete TINA network will be made up of 20 924 km of rails, 18 683 of roads, 4 052 in inland waterways, 40 airports, 20 sea ports, 58 river ports and 86 terminals - of which 68 will be independent and 20 connected to sea or river ports. The current estimation of costs is at around 90 thousand million Euros up until 2015.

II BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN TRANSPORT POLICY

1. Preamble

A Region without either mobility or transport is not viable, neither is the abandon of social, cultural and economic exchange between the Regions and the states. Transports thus appear as a sign of beneficial international and interregional integration. Nor is it possible for the standard of living and the quality of the environment to block transport. Transport is not an end in itself, but a sign of communication between people and networking where work is shared. The idea is not to work out if transport exists, but rather, whether it is organised in an efficient manner without causing environmental damage.

The development of transport systems is specific to the Regions and different from general development and this must be used to create equivalent standards of living in all European regions.

The measures which are suggested in the White Paper 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;

2. Regional differences

Differences exist between European Regions - many of them stark - in the fields of culture, society, ecology and the economy, just like, from many points of view, differences exist between the regional transport systems in Europe.

3. Environmental awareness

Society has become much more environmentally aware. The protection of a healthy environment and the reduction in environmental damage due to transport are important social issues. At the same time, people are asking for more and more mobility, particularly in recent years, and this will continue to grow in the future.

Most of European transport actually takes place at regional level: Regions can contribute to solving the problems of transport congestion and pollution by promoting a sustainable model of “short distance” economic and social development.

A major challenge for European transport policy will be the “Zero Emission Mobility”, i.e. non polluting transport. This implies that in the 21st century, road, rail, river and air transport will be based on non polluting technologies and will use renewable energies.

4. Limits reached

Existing infrastructure is suffering from overload both from the point of view of space and of time. Maximum limits of noise and pollution have been reached, to not say passed, in many transport systems.

5. Transport growth

Due to growing integration in Europe and the imminent enlargement of the European Union, a substantial rise in economy, tourism and transport is to be expected. Goods transport in particular is developing at a rate which will overload all existing transport networks.

In particular, as for the Enlargement perspective, the huge problems of transport infrastructure and the need to develop TENs and Sub-TENs in candidate countries, whilst recognised are not adequately addressed in the White Paper.

These problems will not be tackled without ensuring that coherence between EU Transport Policy and Structural Funds is assured and that we have come to an end with the dichotomy and the inconsistencies between, on the one hand, the regional policies that aim to improve accessibility by prioritising the building or upgrading of certain infrastructures, and a transport policy which seeks on the other hand to improve fluidity and therefore gives priority to the use of different infrastructures”.

This is why, 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,

6. Cooperation deficit between the countries, Regions and localities

Despite existing attempts at cooperation, collaboration between Regions, including between Regions and towns, remains insufficient. Transport policy must be coordinated in a more serious manner than has previously been the case within the AER, but also within the European Union.



7. Transport management requires cooperation

Transport represents a complicated global system which cannot be managed without intermodal solutions. For this reason, cooperation based on a wide consensus, including all modes of transport and in terms of coordination, i.e. harmonisation, is absolutely necessary. Thanks to the use of combined forms of transport, both the individual and general economic advantages of the various forms of transport should be used to a maximum and drawbacks reduced, whilst respecting the objectives of transport policy (creation of transport links, optimisation of transport types, transport logistics, etc.). This cooperation, which goes beyond political and administrative borders, is urgent and necessary.

8. Integrated transport planning as a whole

Transport planning in Europe must be further turned towards specific regional differences.

Regions are particularly well placed to integrate solutions to specific transport problems; the application of European Transport Policy must be tailored to meet the particular circumstances of geography, economy and settlement patterns within the Regions; on this matter the case of peripheral and ultra-peripheral regions, including the islands of continental Europe and offshore, of remote territories of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, of Northern and Southern Regions, of mountain areas, of rural areas, of cross-border regions, of Large cities and their hinterlands is undoubtedly specific;

The problems of these Regions and areas, whilst recognised, are not adequately addressed; in particular, the European Commission suggested measures fail to recognise the importance of regional aviation and do not put sufficient emphasis on the need to develop Sub-TENs (how to connect regional airports to other modes of transport)

9. Development of European spatial planning

One of the essential conditions for a forward looking transport policy is intensive cooperation between Regions, towns and the periphery. In this context, questions on the development of cities and spatial planning are important factors to take into account, the European Union must take a stronger perception of this harmonisation.

Spatial planning and transport must present transport in such a way as to ensure that all needs are met, as far as possible, in terms of efficiency, environmental protection, energy saving and surface area. Planning must contribute to balanced development with no loss of quality and without damage to the environment within the Region and within surrounding areas in due respect for nature and environmental conservation. The new tendency for vital sectors such as housing, work and leisure to be at proximity must also be considered. Transport created on this basis must be of a new level in quality. The following should be considered:

- a catalogue of flexible, targeted and organised measures, capable of reacting to new developments,
- pilot projects, to be rapidly set up,
- the creation of a new targeted image for environmentally friendly modes of transport, linked to an offensive marketing strategy and an awareness campaign.

The European Commission must coordinate its spatial planning, regional and transport policies.

At transnational level, coherence must be found between DG REGIO programmes such as Interreg IIIB and DG TREN projects such as Marco Polo or maritime highways.

As for cross-border co-operation in particular:

Cross-border co-operation also has a major role to play within the current European Union and in the preparation of candidate countries in incorporating European transport policy;

Financial support should be given to the development of co-operation between the Regions of the EU Member States and eastern Europe and other non-Community countries with a view to



tackling environmental problems, promoting safety standards and encouraging intermodality between air and other modes of transport.

An improvement or even an intensification of public transport in border regions is particularly requested. This will contribute to a sustainable improvement of human and cross-border relations.

10. Consolidation of transport infrastructure

The consolidation of transport infrastructure must be based on environmentally friendly security and mobility criteria (effecting residential areas as little as possible) and transport security. The consolidation of the transport networks must take the importance of each level of transport into account, be it international, national, regional or local. Both passengers and goods must be able to access main transport lines. When undertaking transport works, the local populations must be adequately informed and be able to participate. Their legitimate interests must be fairly weighed up. This would provide a guarantee for the acceptance of work on transport infrastructures by the populations. This is a particularly important fact in view of the decreasing level of public support for this kind of project, including for infrastructure projects which cause no environmental damage (maritime and river transport, railways), making awareness campaigns necessary. The applicable ecological laws must be borne in mind for all transport infrastructure projects, for example environmental laws.

11. Special areas: Regional aviation and Maritime transport

Regional aviation:

Because of their major role in regional development and their positive effects as a sustainable complement to large and often congested national and international hub airports, regional airports must be encouraged by the EU;

In order to protect the environment and to reduce the nuisance caused to people living in densely populated regions with good rail connections, it is indispensable to carry out studies on the need for regional airports.

Support for Regional airports by national and European authorities is still required. In this context, as for the suggested project of a Single Sky set up in the White Paper, full recognition of the importance of regional aviation is needed and concrete measures for ensuring its development and protecting it from competition from national and international airports are required.

In particular, the need for investment in airport infrastructure should be recognised; public funding and private sector support are of vital importance for ensuring the development of regional airport infrastructures; this support has to be ensured in the long-term, in order to allow Regions with regional airports to tackle open competition in a liberalised Single sky.

As for air safety, it is deplorable that regional aviation is neglected by the current EU policy in this field.

Development of maritime transport

Due to the limited environmental damage caused by this mode of transport and its positive contribution to regional economy, maritime transport should be promoted by the EU on the short, medium and long term. Europe needs a real strategy for the encouragement of maritime transport, the white paper provides no proposals for action in this area.



12. Sensitive areas

For sensitive areas such as the Alps, urban sprawls and «wattenmeers», uniform action must be taken including the long-term use of circulation flows in due respect for public health and the environment, whilst protecting cultural assets threatened by the effects of circulation.

13. Transport infrastructure financing

For long-term circulation management, the EU and member states must encourage sea, rail and river transport. In order to finance this development of particularly onerous projects or in sensitive or urban areas, exceptions will be required in the organisation of expenditure leading to cross financing using income from parallel transport routes. Road freight would thereby be transferred to means of transport using sea, rail and inland waterways. The increase of 20% announced by the European Union for the maximum contribution for this type of project is welcome.

14. The decision-making process: the Regions' point of view:

A catalogue of competencies must, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, define the competencies of the Regions in European integration, including transport policy.

The White Paper's recommendation to expand the use of qualified majority mechanism for the decision making process in this field supports this opinion.

The practice of unanimous voting, as a consensus process, should be maintained in the European decision-making process on this matter, until the Regions receive full recognition of their role, including via a catalogue of competences.

Actually, Regions should object by stating that the qualified majority system could mainly lead to the encouragement of the adoption of economically viable solutions and to the expression of the interests of more advantaged populations,

Here, the Regions should express their concern that the new transport policy encourage the achievement of effective territorial cohesion, which means a balanced development of transport and connections between peripheral and central areas;

From this respect, a consensus policy – in which Regions would be fully involved - seems to better secure the respect of all of citizens' and territories' needs, according to a long-term strategy which would not only focus on profit making.



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Sustainable agricultural policy and the defense of the rural world



Rural areas, making up 80% of the surface area of the European Union, are of great importance for the lives of citizens. The Regions are responsible for the territorial management of these areas and seek to conserve the diversity of agricultural activities and landscape in order to maintain a vibrant rural Europe, integrated into the economy thanks to its resources and to local and regional initiatives.

One of the main challenges for the future is to meet the needs of the inhabitants of rural areas and European farmers. With this in mind, the uncertainties linked to the enlargement of the current EU with its fifteen members and to the negotiations taking place within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) must be raised. The objective is to achieve generalized sustainable multifunctional and rural agriculture throughout Europe. The budgetary framework of the Union must take these aspects into account.

Multifunctional agriculture, based on sustainability, has to be competitive on an international scale; to achieve this, it is necessary that binding consumer protection, environmental and animal rights standards, are rapidly laid out in international treaties.

The future of the rural world will be defined on the basis of two concepts: the multi-functional nature of agriculture and the protection of sustainable agriculture. On the one hand, there is no doubt that agriculture has other roles than that of simple food production, and, on the other hand, the introduction of sustainable agriculture represents an ecological, economic and social challenge. This vision of agriculture is compatible with and completes the idea of competitiveness in the primary sector.

Essential aspects of European agriculture

The new model for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must be based on the multi-functional nature of agriculture and respect the three fundamental aspects laid out above: social and economic aspects of food safety, spatial planning, environmental care and conservation and rural areas.

With reference to the social and territorial dimensions of agriculture, the new agricultural model must aim to maintain the greatest number of farming operations possible in family sized units and must, in accordance with the principle of solidarity between the Regions, encourage the development of a Europe with the citizens. European agriculture must be economically efficient, bring in sufficient revenue to allow the largest number of operations possible to exist in Europe and, in parallel, continue to invest in the conservation of cultures and the landscape of rural areas. This implies that the funds required for landscape conservation perpetuate.

Agriculture must remain environmentally friendly, only the use of suitable traditional methods can allow natural heritage to be preserved and cared for.

Finally, agriculture and agricultural products must gain in consumer trust and take consumer requirements into account. A strict control system is needed in order to satisfy quality and food safety requirements both for consumers and for livestock.

The new agricultural model must have a framework. Economic globalisation and liberalisation, the future enlargement of the European Union to countries in Eastern and Central Europe (CEEC) and the WTO negotiations must all be borne in mind.



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When it comes to liberalisation, agriculture is, by nature, more vulnerable than other sectors such as industry or services. The European Union is therefore asked to draw up a global strategy for sustainable development in rural zones including compensation for permanent natural handicaps in certain areas. In this same line of thought, the European Union should gradually re-structure agricultural subsidies for the second pillar of agricultural policy i.e. the development of rural areas.

The integration of CEEC in the European Union will undoubtedly put restrictions on agricultural policy. Accession must take place in such a way as to allow the structural development of accession countries in accordance with the current CAP model.

Finally, WTO negotiations leave hope that farming subsidies will be treated independently from production. The production mentality is giving way to a conception of agriculture which recognises its role in the conservation of the natural environment. In other terms, we are witnessing economic and conceptual change coming from the fact that the role of agriculture in nature conservation and the protection of rural traditions must also take into account economic, cultural and territorial concerns.

Conclusions

It is undeniable that 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 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 involved in drawing up and implementing future common agricultural and rural policies.



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Resolution

European Decade of Sustainable Development (2003-2012)



The representatives of European organisations representing local and regional authorities:

With regard to Agenda 21 set in 1992 at the World Summit in Rio de Janeiro - from the detailed plan on sustainable development;

Considering its Summit of 21st March in Linz, Oberösterreich;

Aware that sustainable policies are a responsibility towards future generations;

Noting that sustainable development is linked to economic development and social welfare to the long-lasting protection of the foundations of our existence;

Recognising that today's policies, bearing in mind tomorrow's responsibilities, represent our duty, and we must ensure future ecological, economic, social and cultural stability and capacities.

Considering the World Summit on sustainable development due to take place in August/September 2002 in Johannesburg, in the Republic of South Africa.

Recognising that a European decade for sustainable development at the beginning of the new millenium would contribute to the European Union's efforts to stimulate sustainable development in Europe in a decisive manner;

call on the Commission of the European Union to declare

1. the period 2003-2012 the European decade for sustainable development and
2. in the context of the European decade for sustainable development, particularly considering sustainability:
 - 2003, Year of training
 - 2004, Year of the family
 - 2005, Year of health
 - 2006, Year of water
 - 2007, Year of recycable energy
 - 2008, Year of rural areas
 - 2009, Year of agriculture and forestry
 - 2010, Year of culture
 - 2011, Year of science and research
 - 2012, Year of nature
3. 14th June: European sustainable development day