

DRAFT OF THE CLAUDIO MARTINI INTERVENTION AT BSC AND NSC
(Herning, 13-6-08)

1/ REGIONAL POLICY

Recently, the European Commission has launched 3 public consultation papers:

- A/ On the European Union budget reform;
- B/ On the post-2013 cohesion policy;
- C/ On the results of the Common Agricultural Policy “health check”;

These three papers alone bring under examination virtually 80% of the total Community budget.

Often, “Cohesion policy” and “Agriculture” are the first EU policies to be criticised. “Out of date”, “fund consuming” - the terms used to describe them are not very gratifying... Yet in the global context, the essence of these two policies is more up to date than ever, even if the types of structural adjustment and agricultural support will definitely have to change radically.

In addition to this, the debate on how to follow up on the Lisbon Strategy comes next. The strategy to “make Europe the most competitive and most dynamic knowledge economy in the world by 2010...” ends in 2010, so the question of how to follow up on it, is already in the air today...

What should be done about the Goteborg Strategy that was finally linked to the Lisbon one, but is all too often played down or even forgotten when it is time for action and making choices?

Does Europe want to move united towards a strongly business-oriented integrated world? Or, on the contrary, would Europe regress to a regionalised world economy scenario, which is far from being the present trend? Globalisation is not an economic gamble with a positive outcome for everyone; it is a chance for new growth and new opportunities but also for new economical, social and territorial unexpected transformations.

Therefore, CPMR decided to participate the debate presenting its positions that had been discussed in the Political Bureau of Seville. The position, called “A Project for post 2013?”, is based on a clear distinction between an “Integral convergence policy” and a “Territorial excellence” policy:

The “Integral convergence” will enable the States which are the furthest behind in terms of development to catch up and it will target the least prosperous States, the pre-accession countries, the States situated at the external borders of the EU, and the outermost Regions;

The “Territorial excellence” policy, applicable to all the Regions in the European Union, is designed to structurally adapt each region of the EU to the “external” challenges such as the globalisation and the climate change. This policy will focus on 3 different priorities:

- strengthening the regional capacities of knowledge and innovation;
- adapting to climate change and mitigating its impact on the environment;
- rural development;

Concerning the future, the CPMR intends to participate actively in the debate on territorial cohesion which will be launched at the occasion of the publication of a Green Paper on this issue at the end of September. It has already prepared a technical paper, which will be presented at the Political Bureau of Rhodes, which aims at providing a number of questions and analysis on this matter for a fruitful debate.

NB La novità è l'apertura agli stati per la politica di convergenza e l'inclusione di tutte le regioni per la politica di eccellenza territoriale.

2/ AGRICULTURE

Today the European Agriculture is in full metamorphosis due to the conjugated effects of:

- □ the growing importance of trade negotiations at global level (WTO);
- □ the significant price increases in the whole world including Europe and US with catastrophic effects particularly in emerging countries;
- □ the impact of climate change on food security in many parts of the world;
- □ new environmental challenges;
- □ food quality and public health issues;
- □ conflicts in the use of green fuels with food security;

In this highly complex context, how can sustainable production and competitiveness be balanced? This is the main question!

Although CAP is something where CPMR have different views between Northern and Southern regions, we will try to contribute to the debate on the CAP reform during the second half of 2008. Indeed, we wish to send a paper to the EU institutions during the period when the Health Check will be finalised. To find a common position among the CPMR's Members this paper will be discussed in the Political Bureau of Rhodes and amended at the CPMR's General Assembly in Bayonne on 2 and 3 October. I do hope that this document will also provide discussion material for the seminar that the CPMR and the Committee of the Regions will organise in Nantes on 23 October, which will be attended by Michel Barnier the French Minister for Agriculture who will then be chairing the Agriculture Council, and by Marianne Fisher Boel, European Commissioner.

Concerning the content of this paper I would like to highlight 3 points of discussion:

1/ First of all, we should take into account that the demand for agricultural commodities is growing faster than supply, which increases the strategic importance of European agriculture. Therefore, should or not the CAP guarantee a safe and stable supply of foodstuffs for European consumers in compliance with the strictest standards of security, sustainability and protection of the environment?

2/ In 2007, the CPMR conducted an analysis of the regional breakdown of funds spent under the First Pillar and it has noted the wide variety of degrees of dependence from one region to another within the CPMR network. Diversity within the European farming industry constitutes a decisive comparative advantage for the EU. Therefore, the CAP needs to ensure that all the elements that make up this diversity are maintained: biodiversity (wild and cultivated), diversity of products and methods of production (especially organic, GM-free or traditional farming). However, a quality model complying with EU guidelines and recognised by consumers throughout Europe territory needs to be consolidated in order to use this diversity to its best advantage. Indeed, such a unified system will give all farmers the chance to give value to their produce while avoiding distortions of competition, both within the EU as well as with third countries, particularly within the WTO.

3/. Furthermore, should CPMR's member regions support a Common Agricultural Policy focused on the production of food products? (Of course taking into account the necessary adaptation to climate change.)

In short, CPMR believes that agricultural and food policy remain a common policy in light of the strategic importance of the farming and food industries for Europe and in light of the need to maintain a territorial balance of production. Indeed, according to the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council, the debate on CAP (started with its health check last year) is today a major issue, if we consider the evolution of the context in which we live, and the new challenges for agriculture and food in Europe and in the rest of the world. Food security and self-sufficiency are at the core of the discussions and will influence both financial and political EU decisions in coming years.

Finally, let me also mention the second pillar of the CAP: we will propose to use it to protect ecosystems and maintain landscapes, soil and water resources in a sustainable manner; but also to promote competitiveness in the agricultural and agri-food sectors. Finally, "Territorial cohesion policy" will also target the development of rural areas. In other words, after the recent proposals of 20th May,

rural development comes back into the EU debates: regions can have a significant role in the near future to face climate change, to manage the water supply and to create agro-energy too. Therefore, regions must be part of this important reform in order to legitimate the CAP giving it new challenges of territorial cohesion.

3/ MARITIME AFFAIRS

To monitor the implementation of the EU Action Plan resulting from the Blue Book "An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union" 40 regions decided to create the AQUAMARINA GROUP within the CPMR.

AQUAMARINA met already once in Brussels last March to discuss about Maritime safety.

Next appointment will be the 8th of July 2008 at the Committee of Regions (chiedere scusa perché Luglio e' il mese di vacanze estive nei paesi scandinavi). Luis Valente de Oliveira, European coordinator on motorways of the sea, Dimitrios Theologitis, head of unit at DG TREN, and Ann Bell, North Sea Commission Marine Resource Adviser will be the main speakers. Of course, the debates will focus on the "motorways of the see" after their inclusion into the Marco Polo programme.

Among the recent "good news" linked to the Maritime policy the Commission decided to include, thanks also to our action, maritime research projects into the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development.

4/ FOGAR

I know that the FOGAR is a delicate point for some Northern, Scandinavian and Baltic Regions. I received a letter asking for clarification on this new organization and I deliberately did not answer yet, because I wanted to discuss personally with some of you before. As I said already in the Political Bureau of Seville, the creation of FOGAR comes from the need for Regions to face some global challenges such as globalisation and climate change. The idea is to encourage the introduction of a global territorial cohesion policy, to promote a regional and local approach and multi-level governance for development aid, and to create a synergy between regional cooperation actions designed to aid development.

The FOGAR is and must be totally separated from the CPMR institutionally and economically. However, at the moment, some regions, like Tuscany, voluntarily decided to support financially this new body which is an association of organizations. CPMR is just one member of this association and currently it has the presidency.

Further to FOGAR, CPMR has been very active these last months regarding the preparation of EU current and future policy on development and the role of EU regions within this policy. Two technical papers from the General Secretariat have been presented to promote the necessity to increase a real and positive participation of regions in this policy. This participation must become more strategic and EU must include a territorial approach to development allowing development to become more efficient and useful for under developed countries and regions all over the world. We know that decentralised cooperation and development aid is not always a priority in Baltic and North Sea regions, but first its is a very important priority for a numerous number of CPMR regions and the principles we are promotion (territorial approach to development, specific and important role for regions within this policy, cooperation among regions...) also regard the relations between EU regions and their neighbours.

5/ FUTURE OF CPMR

A consultation process has been launched among all the members and a questionnaire will be sent to see how CPMR could adapt itself to new challenges such as globalisation, climate change or the reform of the EU after the enlargements.

On these topics, Jean-Didier Hache, who knows CPMR better than everyone..., is working very seriously and I am sure that the presentation that he gave you yesterday was clear and precise.

Concerning my role, I will do my best to ensure that this process will be done in the most transparent and appropriate way and I will try to prepare the organization to face these important challenges.