

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

COMMUNICATING EUROPE IN CITIES AND REGIONS



**Implementation of the Plan D for Decentralisation
First progress report**

(October 2005 / October 2006)



FOREWORD

At the end of 2006 we are now approaching the second period of reflection declared by the heads of state or government last June, a new impulse to re-establish dialogue with citizens on their common future.

Many events have taken place in our cities and regions over the last 18 months and this report, which presents the results of a preliminary, incomplete survey, demonstrates the tremendous energy and variety of local initiatives.

By adding a third “D” – Decentralisation – to Plan D (Democracy, Dialogue and Debate) proposed by the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions wanted to draw attention to the relevance of the political and public debate on proximity and to the need to promote a decentralised communication policy across Europe.

The support of the Committee of the Regions, of all its members and many local authorities has made it possible for a large number of events, in Brussels but above all in our cities and regions, to create a new forum for dialogue and broad debate that has been reported in the local and regional press.

I welcome these developments and would ask all local and regional elected representatives to continue their good work and organise more similar and complementary events in 2007, so that this progress report is the first in a long series of testimonies to a new European impulse focused on our citizens’ concerns and expectations.

Michel Delebarre
President of the CoR



Ms Mercedes Bresso (IT-PES)

(President of the Piedmont Region, rapporteur for the CoR opinion on Plan-D and the White paper on communication policy, CoR representative to the Inter-institutional Information Group)

I believe that the European Union's difficulties over communication with its citizens are symptomatic of a democratic deficit within the EU. Major decisions that influence the lives of Europeans are made on the basis of complex intergovernmental and interinstitutional negotiations during which citizens are passive or only occasional observers. In my opinion, the European institutions will have a primary obligation to help compensate for the consequences of the democratic deficit in order to enable citizens to express their opinion on the future of the European project. This is why the Committee of the Regions has spent over a decade fighting for a new bottom-up approach promoting participation by citizens and the feeling that they are a part of Europe. Our answer during this critical period for the European Union is Plan-D for Decentralisation.



Mr António Paiva (PT-EPP)

(Mayor of Tomar, chair of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice)

I am convinced that, by virtue of their office as local or regional representatives, Committee of the Regions members must act as ambassadors for the European Union to the inhabitants of our cities and regions. However, we cannot win their confidence simply by organising a dialogue and drawing up a list of their requests. They must be convinced that ultimately it is they, via their elected representatives, who make the decisions concerning the future of the Union; the credibility of European democracy depends on this.



Ms Claude du Granrut (FR-EPP)

(Member of Picardy Regional Council and chair of the working group on the reflection period)

I believe that it is essential to link a renewed and effective communication policy to the promotion of active citizenship through measures designed to enhance the value of European Union events or decisions and focus attention on public opinion surveys and new tools. In this way, the communication policy would be targeted at the broadest possible audience, irrespective of borders and in all Member States, which will make the European Union more tangible for all of its citizens.

Moreover, in order to communicate effectively with people, we must work closely with their elected representatives and the local and regional media. This is vital for establishing direct dialogue with Europeans and ensuring that they are aware of the possibilities open to themselves and to regional and local authorities for participating in the administration of the European Union.



INTRODUCTION

Since October 2005, the Committee of the Regions has been contributing actively to Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate launched by the European Commission. The CoR, by adding the dimension of Decentralisation to the Plan-D, highlights the need for engagement with local and regional networks and the press for true dialogue that is close to the citizens, in accordance with the Commission's goal of involving all the partners¹. In practice, its political support has taken the form of organising a substantial number of events which aim to highlight how to bring Europe closer to our citizens. These events will create different platforms for communication on Europe, focus media attention and establish decentralised networks for the exchange of expertise and best practice. Indeed, the CoR is endeavouring to enlist the support of regional and local actors, via its networks, to step up the provision of information about Europe.

In addition, thanks to the involvement of local and regional authorities and to Europe Direct information networks, discussion forums have been developed at regional and local level throughout Europe.

The CoR's operational contribution to the period of reflection is based on a partnership with the European Commission, mainly through the CoR secretariat-general and the Commission's DG Communication. The partnership will last for the entire period of reflection, with this first phase merely an initial stage in consolidating a genuine decentralised communication policy on Europe.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE DEBATE AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS:

- ▶ *The themes for the debate on Europe identified in this report reflect people's concerns: the European socio-economic model, Europe's borders, internal security, Europe's place on the international stage. The views expressed can be summarised as follows: there is a desire for clarification of the activities of the European Union, justification for such activities and solutions to the practical difficulties that people face. The aim of Plan-D for Decentralisation is to make Europe easier for the public to understand, to highlight its added value and to give Europe's achievements a higher profile. It confirms the importance of building a neighbourhood Europe, which the Committee of the Regions has always upheld.*
- ▶ *The events show that more needs to be done to listen to people, to get closer to the people and engage in dialogue with them: the debates must present the full spectrum of views, with more direct contacts between political decision-makers and the European public. We must move away from the formal context of highly elitist, didactic conferences and debates, and give priority to dialogue and the direct exchange of ideas and opinions. Communication on Europe must be simpler, more accessible and better geared to the target public.*
- ▶ *People need to feel that they are stakeholders who are part of a common project instead of feeling excluded. It is essential that they are involved in the European project.*
- ▶ *Sporadic communication activities must give way to a continuous process of debate and dialogue with citizens via decentralised CoR networks.*
- ▶ *A decentralised approach to the debate which takes into account the public's specific concerns is the only way of enlisting people's support and establishing direct contact with them. Giving Europe a higher profile at local level (impact of regional policy) should pave the way for this.*
- ▶ *Targeting a specific group such as young people, businesses, the elderly or women has proved effective. The most successful actions are those that have a well-defined target audience. For a campaign to succeed, an objective partnership needs to be set up between the European institutions and local organisers.*
- ▶ *EU financing is crucial to facilitate such projects.*
- ▶ *It is important to organise seminars, lectures and training to help different target groups understand Europe and how it affects everyday life. It would be a good idea for MEPs and members of the European Parliament to take part in the events organised in connection with Plan D at local and regional level.*
- ▶ *The strategy must be consistent overall. A programme of initiatives to be developed by European Commission representations in the Member States must be disseminated in advance and better coordination of activities ensured. Greater involvement of CoR members will also increase success.*
- ▶ *Education, particularly during the school and university years, is essential. The experiences of young Europeans bear witness to the benefits of opening their minds to Europe and promoting genuine European civic education, and the importance of continuing to raise awareness throughout people's lives by gearing communication strategies and messages to different stages of their active life.*
- ▶ *Scrutiny of different activities (reporting, ex-post analysis of debates/activities and mid-*



term reviews) must be improved so as to derive maximum benefit from the lessons learned from debate with the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE DECENTRALISED COMMUNICATION POLICY

The CoR suggests:

- ▶ the creation of a network between the press offices of local and regional authorities which, by giving a local slant to news on

European events, would make for easier and more effective use of information on Europe by local and regional media. The CoR could promote this communication strategy through the active involvement of its members in the network and by highlighting the local and regional dimension of its opinions;

- ▶ the organisation in the various Member States, in cooperation with national associations of local and regional authorities, of seminars for regional and municipal representatives to discuss subjects of key national interest to them. The CoR's national delegations could invite local and regional authorities and their political representatives to take an active part in these seminars. It is vital that MEPs and representatives of the European Commission take part in events of this kind;

- ▶ the holding of a special session by local and regional councils devoted to the period of reflection. In this context, the councils would be asked to make proposals for future action;

- ▶ the holding of conference-debates in connection with Plan D on the margins of the CoR commissions' external meetings, so as to develop a dialogue between the CoR members and the public targeting particular themes;

- ▶ the publication of the most relevant findings in the Proceedings of the Open Days;

- ▶ the publication of a standard text on Plan D for Decentralisation on the websites of European municipalities and regions, outlining the priorities of the Communication on Europe; enhancing of the links to the CoR's "going local" website and the website of the European Commission.



CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENTS:



MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

CoR plenary session of 16-17 November 2005, Brussels: debate with the Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Institutional relations and communication strategy, Ms Margot Wallström.

Interinstitutional Group on Communication (GII): participation by CoR representatives in the GII meetings held in Strasbourg on 17 January, 17 July and 24 October 2006.

Information conference on Plan D, 25 January 2006, Brussels: the conference was attended by over 400 representatives of administrations of regional and local authorities, regional parliaments and European and national associations of local and regional authorities, and, in particular, the organisers of campaigns throughout Europe.

Creation of a working party for monitoring the period of reflection by the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, whose tasks include monitoring decentralised political and communication measures.

Questionnaire on Communicating Europe - Going local: In December 2005 a survey was launched regarding the involvement of local and regional authorities in Communicating Europe. It reveals that European Union regions and cities are active, creative and enthusiastic in communicating about Europe, but stresses their desire to strengthen the partnership with the Community institutions:

the cities and regions want the institutions to participate more closely in the events that they hold, encouraging European Commissioners and officials to attend their events and to co-finance them.

CoR website: The CoR has set up the “Debate Europe: Going Local” website, dedicated to Plan D. A timetable of activities per Member State is published on line.

CoR decentralised action plans: For each of the Member States which have received additional human and financial resources from the European Commission’s DG Communication (Barcelona, Berlin, Bonn, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Lisbon, Ljubljana, London, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Paris and Rome) a contact for the CoR secretariat-general – Team Leader – has been appointed, responsible for running and coordinating the action plans. These Team Leaders are responsible for liaising with the European Commission representations and the national delegations of CoR members.

Structured dialogue with associations representing regional and local authorities on Plan D and decentralised communication policy, held in Brussels on 15 June 2006, with the participation of European Commission Vice-President, Margot Wallström.

Local and regional authority media forum and political dialogue with Margot Wallström, plenary session, 13-15 June 2006: On the occasion of the adoption of the Opinion on the Communication from the Commission on The Commission’s contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (COM(2005) 494 final) and the White paper on a European communication policy (COM(2006) 35 final), an in-depth debate took place between CoR members and the European Commission Vice-President.

Forum in conjunction with the European Commission’s DG COMM, presenting the CoR’s initiatives emanating from Brussels and involving networks of local and regional authorities and media. This forum made possible a dialogue with two types of editors: editors of publications issued



by local and regional authorities (regions, cities and other authorities) and editors of publications issued by national and European associations of regional and local authorities.

Exhibition during the CoR plenary session: eight exhibitors from regions and cities presented their best ideas in passing on information to the public and examples of best practices.

CoR contribution to Spring Days in Europe: at the initiative of the European Commission's DG Communication, schools were invited to hold, between 21 March and 9 May 2006, European Days of exchanges, debates and meetings with local, regional, national and international public figures. CoR members also participated in this initiative, which will be one of the EU's priorities for 2007. The CoR president, Michel Delebarre, also took part in a chat forum with young people as part of the initiative.

The organisation, for the third year running, in collaboration with the European Commission's DG Regio and *Europe Direct*, of the **OPEN DAYS event**, from 9-12 October 2006, on the theme "Investing in Europe's Regions and Cities". This

event involved more than 100 regions and cities and brought together some 2,500 participants from all over Europe. In 2006 this unique communication platform was decentralised to the partner regions and cities, who were asked to organise communication activities in their own localities. The information networks of EUROPE DIRECT had been informed of the opportunities for collaborating locally with the OPEN DAYS partners to enable them to join forces in the provision of EU information.

The organisation by the **CoR's CONST Commission**, in association with the City of Vilnius and the Lithuanian Association of Local Authorities, of a conference-debate on Decentralisation and the euro, challenges for Lithuanian cities and regions in the EU and citizens' expectations, held in Vilnius on 18 October 2006. The aim of this event was to launch an open discussion between representatives of national, regional, local and European institutions and the citizens of Lithuania, and in particular representatives of civil society (students, journalists and NGOs, as well as professional associations, etc.).

MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY THE COR POLITICAL GROUPS

The CoR's new budget line for members' political and information activities offers the four political groups new opportunities to contribute to the second phase of the reflection period.

On 19 and 20 September 2006, the **EPP Group** held a Summer university entitled "Local Media Meets Europe - Europe Meets Local Media". Local and regional journalists and press officers from all over Europe were invited to take part in discussions about key European topics and policies that have an impact on local and regional authorities. This initiative, which is to be repeated in 2007, demonstrated that local media help to make the EU's work more understandable and more open to the public's concerns and that the CoR has a responsibility to make them aware that it takes an

interest in the specific and everyday issues affecting them.

The **CoR's PES Group** will use this budget line to support two concrete initiatives. The first will involve inviting press officers from European social democratic parties to an information meeting on the CoR's role and how it operates. The second will take the form of a seminar, to be held alongside the PES Congress in Porto in December 2006. This seminar will provide an opportunity to examine how far women's interests are represented in local and regional authorities. These activities, involving a number of CoR members, are intended to raise the Committee's profile and to bring added value through exchange of best practices and communication.

On 8 September 2006, the **UEN-EA Group** organised a seminar in Tallinn entitled "Communicating Europe". The event brought together MEPs and members of the Estonian Government and representatives of local and regional authorities from across Europe to discuss the EU's communication strategy and opening continuous two-way dialogue.

As part of the European Year of Workers' Mobility, the **ALDE Group** will organise a seminar on 18 December 2006 in Brussels, which aims to focus as much on the "listening" part of Plan D, as on the communicating part. The objective of the event is to ensure that the voice of experts in citizen mobility based in the regions is heard. The seminar will give them the opportunity to inform EU policy-makers of the difference between the theory and the reality of mobility as seen in their areas. It also aims to bring the experts up to date with the latest ideas in the EU institutions regarding mobility.

INITIATIVES BY EUROPE'S REGIONS AND CITIES

The various discussion forums held by the CoR and the responses to its questionnaire have revealed a variety of measures launched by EU regional and local authorities, the most common

being conferences, workshops and seminars targeting principally officials in local administrations. Other events have taken the form of, for instance, radio programmes, internet chat forums, association newsletters, the development of a Europe board-game, a theatre play introducing the European Union to children, parliamentary debating days dedicated to European Affairs and school classes integrated into the regional education curriculum. A much cited event is Europe Day, on various occasions extending to a whole week of activities, organising debates, presenting information stands, etc.

Some of the most successful events are listed below by topic and type of event:

Discussion with young people:

North Rhine-Westphalia federal state parliament (Germany): organisation of the event *Tonart E. – Reden über Europa. Europa braucht mehr! – Kinder, Arbeitsplätze, Einwanderung* to discuss European issues mainly with young people (held in the parliament and broadcast by a radio station).

The City of Bremen: launch of the project "*Jugend macht Europa*". Organisation of a major Youth Festival at the Bremen City Hall in May 2006, with information stands on all the EU Member States and on the gamut of opportunities available to schoolchildren and students. Presentation of all the activities carried out by the City of Bremen with support from the European funds. Exhibitions on the history of Bremen, theatrical productions and a discussion forum for young people, together with the opening of an "Italian Café".

Brussels-Europe Liaison Office - BELO (Belgium): organisation of a European convention of young people from Brussels to draw up a constitution for Europe.

Cooperation between the **Flemish Ministries for Education and Foreign Affairs (Belgium)** has led to a teaching kit on the EU constitution being

prepared for teachers, enabling them to convey facts to schoolchildren.

Dobrich Municipality (Bulgaria): organisation of a series of activities and events dedicated to the EU conducted with children and students in kindergartens and schools, such as drawings and exhibitions entitled “Dobrich children in Europe”, “Children’s festival of colours”; concerts dedicated to the cultures of Europe’s peoples and countries, all as part of the Day of Europe in Dobrich; debates about the EU; European Christmas meals as well as conferences on Europe and the EU – “The child’s smile is the same in all languages”, “All different – all equal”.

The Basque Parliament (Spain), in cooperation with UNICEF, organises an annual “Children’s plenary session”, which debates key issues such as European values and identities. The plenary is preceded by rigorous preparation in the participating schools and work in specially established children’s committees; it concludes with a final declaration.

The “Rectorat de l’Académie de Picardie” (**Picardy education authority (France)**) is taking advantage of a new measure introduced by the Ministry of Education, which has added “**Knowledge of Europe**” to the core skills to be acquired by pupils in the course of their schooling, by extending the new subject to include various discovery of Europe activities, including school twinning schemes, sports competitions, internships in Member States, debates, competitions on Europe, the use of new, concrete and practical techniques for learning European languages, particularly English, and the creation of a Europe class in all secondary schools.

Loire Regional Council (France): “les Animateurs Europe”: representatives visit schools, associations, etc. to present and discuss European topics.

The Abruzzo Regional Council (Italy) is participating in Plan-D through a series of initiatives targeted at young people, women and immigrants, designed to promote knowledge of the European institutions and to assess the added value of Europe: visits to the Regional Council by

schoolchildren, setting-up of a regional parliament for students, holding of a conference as part of the Europe Day celebrations (9 May 2006), etc.

Tuscany (Italy): setting-up of a European Youth Parliament.

In 2006, the AICCRE (Italian Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions), in collaboration with the **Lombardy Region (Italy)**, created a prize for the best university dissertations on European integration and the drawing-up of a European constitution, with a specific focus on the contribution of local and regional authorities.

Province of North Brabant (Netherlands): organisation of a European Youth Parliament, involving students from Dutch and Belgian high schools, aiming at simulating the EU-decision making process.

The City Council of Tomar (Portugal) and the *European Club* of the Jácome Raton High School organised a debate mainly for students and teachers in the framework of the *1000 debates on the European Constitution*.

The City Council of Tomar (Portugal) and the *European Club* organised in May 2005 a debate about the future of Europe in the city library auditorium. Two MEPs participated: Ana Gomes (PES) and Carlos Coelho (EPP). This debate was mainly addressed to students and teachers and its main objective was to alert the young to European problems and the need for a “European Spirit”.

The future of Europe – public debate and civil initiatives:

North Rhine-Westphalia federal state parliament (Germany): Discussions in different cities on “Your say on Europe and other citizens’ gatherings”, with MEPs, representatives from the European Commission, federal ministers, mayors and the public at large. The event is co-financed together with the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Salzburg federal-state government (Austria): Political discussion held alongside the Sound of Europe conference by the Salzburg federal state in January 2006, attended by the European Parliament and European Commission presidents and by the First Minister of the Salzburg federal state.

The “Patronat Català Pro Europa” (Spain) organised a series of lectures with high-level speakers from the world of economics, politics, society and academia to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Spanish EU accession. Under the slogan Opina! (Give your opinion!) the “Patronat” has prepared a brief survey for citizens to express their opinions about the EU. Its results will be published under the aegis of the Europe Direct programme and Plan D on communication.

City of Dunkirk (France), in partnership with the Permanent Representation of the European Commission in Paris, will organise a conference in December 2006, on the theme, “Building Europe here!”, including a public debate and technical workshops.

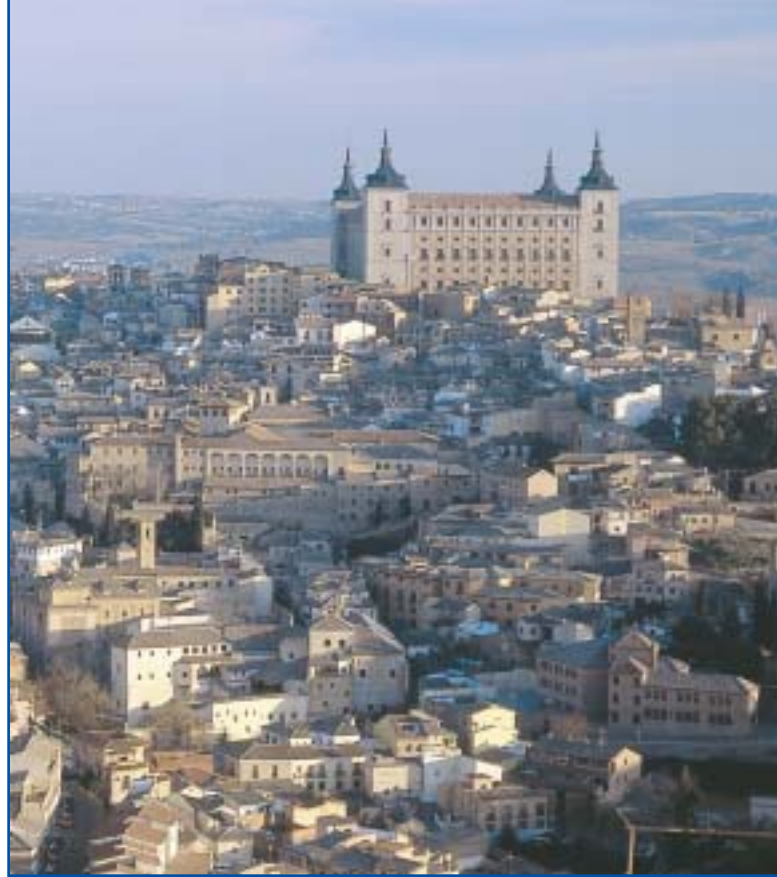
Province of Zuid-Holland (Netherlands): organisation (in the framework of European Information Days 2005) of a “European debate” – a discussion with supporters and opponents of the European Constitution (aimed at both officials and citizens).

Province of North Brabant (Netherlands): organisation in conjunction with the European Commission representation in the Netherlands of several public debates on the EU (planned).

Awareness-raising campaigns on Europe – promotion of Europe:

Community of Valencia (Spain): organisation of awareness-raising campaigns on Europe, training of officials, scholarships, on-line debates on Europe with municipalities.

Basque government (Spain): organisation of a European days event entitled Europe in the 21st century: values, frontiers and European



citizenship. A Basque contribution to Plan-D on 11 and 12 April 2006 in the Guggenheim museum, Bilbao.

Brittany Region (France): In 2005, the regional council created the Brittany Conference of European affairs with a view to involving Bretons more in European integration. Its objectives are, in particular, to keep abreast and raise awareness of European current affairs in Brittany, and to invite Bretons to contribute to the Region’s policy on European affairs (e.g. Brittany is currently drawing up its policy on Plan-D) and to build their future together with the European Union and the state.

The city of Dunkirk (France) has launched a communication initiative, «The EU in our daily lives, illustrations from the Dunkirk area» to raise the inhabitants’ awareness of the key role the EU plays in the development of their city. Information boards have been put up across the city, each mentioning the key dates in the history of the EU and the financial contribution it has made to local development and infrastructures.

Conferences on the subject “Let’s talk about Europe” (Hungary) organised by Europe Direct, civil society and libraries: a series of events in towns and cities on topics of local interest, followed by a debate. The participants are asked to



complete a questionnaire on what they think about the future of Europe and Plan-D. The public is the local population as a whole or target groups, such as the elderly or pensioners. The participants also receive material on the European Union in Hungarian, provided partly by the European Commission and partly by Europe Direct. Average attendance ranges from 30 to 60.

Province of Reggio-Emilia (Italy): as part of Europe Day 2006 a conference debate was held on “Europe: innovation, culture and regions” (9 May 2006), with participation by CoR members, representatives of provincial political authorities and local entrepreneurs.

Ventspils City Council (Latvia) launched an internet portal to promote integration (<http://integracija.ventspils.lv/default.asp?Lang=LV>) aimed at raising awareness amongst the non-Latvian speaking population, non-citizens and ethnic minorities about issues related to Latvia’s

accession to the European Union; to promote political and social participation of inhabitants, availability of information, culture and education, as well as to facilitate integration of this sector of the population.

Province of Zuid-Holland (Netherlands): organisation (in the framework of European Information days 2006) of a series of four “Tour of Europe” seminars with such topics as: European funds, European law, Spatial Planning and Contract work, as well as of monthly lunch meetings. The themes are Europe-related and presented in discussions, debates and presentations.

Västra Götaland Region (Sweden) launched a series of seminars addressed to senior citizens to encourage international contact and experiences; it organised Discover Europe initiatives in schools, giving information about the possibilities of working, studying and volunteering in Europe, and arranged a role-play on the theme (as part of Europe Week 2006).

Awareness-raising campaigns targeting local and regional elected representatives

Picardy (France) has launched an information campaign targeting local elected representatives from the Oise, Aisne and Somme departments, with the aim of passing on information on the EU’s situation: an accurate overview of its competences, the present and future challenges of enlargement, the development of its responsibilities internationally, its budget and the Structural Funds 2007-2013; the aims of the Constitution; how its institutions work; the practical implications of European citizenship and the role of local authorities and grassroots institutions; the inclusion of a European theme, at least once a year, on the agenda of municipal assemblies. In order to facilitate discussion, documentation will be made available to these assemblies.

Information on Europe and the Media

Generalitat of Catalonia (Spain): in November 2005 the “Patronat Català Pro Europa” set up the “Network of European Information Points” with the aim of ensuring that all news providers cover the European Union as part of their everyday work; helping to ensure that members of the public do not have to travel to large cities in order to obtain information on the European Union; helping to ensure that the information and documentation generated by the institutions is more accessible and understandable, especially for non-experts. The network currently consists of 350 European Information Points.

Government of the Principality of Asturias (Spain): launch of an information and awareness-raising campaign on the European Union entitled 20 years of Asturias in Europe, addressed to all the inhabitants of the region, with some measures targeting a specific public such as young people. The activities include conferences with discussions (Spain in the EU; the history of 20 years as part of the EU; Europe within arm’s reach; 2006: European year of workers’ mobility), EU information stands, plays, etc.

Piedmont Region (Italy): establishment of a press unit within the regional representation in Brussels for the purpose of disseminating information on Europe via the regional web site.

Province of Turin (Italy): project entitled “The European Union and the media: the European dimension of news”, proposed by the Europe Direct Centre and targeted at local media with a view to “monitoring” how Europe activities are communicated and improving information tools. The aim of the project is to raise local media awareness of European issues and to pave the way for active public participation.

Province of North Brabant (Netherlands): publication of full-page advertisements in the regional newspapers about past and future EU funds for regional development.

Calarasi County (Romania): information campaign entitled European Integration Caravan, a project aimed at increasing information, understanding and participation levels of citizens in the integration of Romania into the EU. A caravan visited cities, city halls and schools, with a team of specialists.

Cultural events, exhibitions

Lombardy Region (Italy): call for tender for the presentation of cultural projects promoting European integration for the year 2006.

Rotterdam (Netherlands): organisation of an exhibition entitled “Image of Europe”, about the history of Europe and the EU.

Province of Zuid-Holland (Netherlands): exhibitions “Zuid-Holland in Europe and Europe in Zuid-Holland”, and “Image of Europe” (in the framework of European Information Days 2005).

Lancashire (United Kingdom): art exhibition on the topics of enlargement, free movement of people, tolerance and understanding of new EU neighbours.

As part of Europe Week 2006, **Region Västra Götaland (Sweden)** organised under the title “Lets talk about Europe”, a series of after-work meetings in pubs and bars around the region, which were filmed by Europe by Satellite.

Governance – role of local and regional authorities

Seminars organised by the Local Government International Bureau - LGIB (United Kingdom) with local politicians to explain the impact of European legislation on local and regional authorities.

Social and cohesion policy

The Västra Götaland Region (Sweden) is undertaking - for the new programming period of the European Social Fund and the Structural and Cohesion Funds - a comprehensive preparation and implementation process in conjunction with representatives of municipalities and the social-dialogue parties.

Environment

The city of Tallin (Estonia) launched a sustainable development initiative entitled European Green Capital. A Memorandum about this initiative, signed by more than 60 European cities, has been presented to the Commission's President Barroso; the city of Tallinn will in the future coordinate the Advisory Group of cities.

Europe's borders

The Slovenian "Klub Evropa plus" and Europe Direct co-organised a public conference entitled Slovenia-Croatia - A new EU border, in **Secovlje (Slovenia)** on 24 May 2006. The conference dealt with the consequences of Slovenia's inclusion in the Schengen Area from October 2007.

Participants, who included ambassadors, Slovenian government representatives, local representatives and EU officials, discussed problems which people living along the Slovenian-Croatian border may

face after the land frontier becomes an external EU border.

TRANSREGIONAL COOPERATION

Euregio Rhein-Waal/Euregio Rijn-Waal (Germany + Netherlands): various activities such as a joint website with News about Europe; press releases and publications; Europe Direct news-stands.

Several associations - for example ASAEL (Spain) and Österreicher Gemeindebund (Austria) - produce high-quality newsletters addressed to all local administrators from their member authorities. Articles in such newsletters - some written by CoR members - often cover European issues.

The Rhône-Alpes Region (France) has been active in the European project, developing cooperation initiatives with other regions in order to exploit Rhône-Alpes' assets more effectively. The region has published an information brochure entitled "Europe at heart", which describes its European commitment through examples of cooperation initiatives with other regions, particularly in the field of transport, research, spatial planning, university exchanges, economic development, agriculture and the environment.

Friuli Venezia Giulia autonomous region: cross-border cooperation with Austria, Slovenia and Croatia on the European Constitution and women's involvement in the European Union.

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