

2007-2013: The Regions in action

EDITORIAL

THE PARLIAMENT WILL AGAIN FACE UP TO THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPE

It is difficult to deny that the European Union is currently experiencing one of the most complex moments in its history. A well-known geopolitical review has even referred to the "European bluff". I do not share this point of view but it is obvious that we are facing a huge crisis as regards the European ideal. It is said that the first indication, one might even say the cause, of this seemingly never-ending crisis was the rejection of the Draft Constitution by France and the Netherlands. It seems to me, however, that this view confuses cause and effect. The dissatisfaction expressed by some of Europe's citizens actually results from an inability on the part of EU institutions to take on a new purpose. After reaching its main aim, i.e. guaranteeing peace and stability across a continent devastated by war, the EU has only partially achieved its other objectives viz. economic growth and competitiveness along with cohesion, the coordination of economic policies, a role as a "global player", and the launch of Community policies in areas such as security, justice or internal affairs. We must be honest - by preferring enlargement to greater depth and by accepting the "physiology of processes" (the free trade area would have led to the single currency which, in turn, would have led to the Single Market and this would then have led to a political Europe), the results have been inadequate. I do not contest the choices made with regard to enlargement nor those relating to the Single Market. They were taken against a background of redefinition - the rules, procedures and political and institutional faces of the EU were all being redefined. However, as a consequence of this, we now seem to be in limbo. We have the EU of the 25, soon to be the EU of the 27, but we have no Constitution. The European Union exists but there is no economic government and no coordination between national economic policies. Then there is the lack of a common fiscal policy, a factor that is essential if we are to harmonise markets and strengthen competitiveness vis-à-vis the outside world. This, then, is why we should not be surprised at the increasing number of Eurosceptics. There are so many contradictions and the economic climate in many European States is either in recession or suffering a worrying degree of stagnation, with a drop in employment levels, an export deficit and congenital weakness as regards international competition. Of course, we cannot ignore the worldwide context characterised by the "global" nature of terrorism and the determined attack from fundamentalist and fanatical movements, deepening the suffering of the alarmed citizens stuck in "small countries" who are seeking the illusion of better security, as was said the other day by Commissioner Almunia in a keynote address. In this situation, resigning ourselves to our fate or, even worse, allowing ourselves to be carried along by a tide of neo-protectionism, would be fatal. We have to react; we have to make strenuous efforts on every front. With regard to the financial perspectives, there is reasonable and equitable agreement between the Parliament and the Council. As far as the Constitution is concerned, we must take up the discussions where we left off, convince the most deeply-divided parties and place our trust in the most controversial instruments of "reinforced cooperation" as suggested by ex-President Ciampi. The Lisbon Strategy can be relaunched, emphasising the EU's role in the coordination and monitoring of national Plans and indicating to Regional bodies and national governments the advantages of the "lisbonisation" of the use of the Structural Funds. We have to continue in our efforts to harmonise the Single Market and the financial market by resisting the pressure from neo-Protectionists and denouncing the weakness of the very principle of reciprocity. Calling upon the principle of reciprocity is an attitude that sounds a death knell for the main objective of European harmonisation which is, in fact, the only real way of highlighting the enormous (but forgotten) wealth of the largest Single Market in the world. The European Parliament, faced with the egotism of the Council and the many difficulties of the current Commission is the only institution showing any vitality, as was

recently the case for the directive on Services. We are therefore confident that, based on the positions taken by the Parliament, we will succeed in facing up to the challenge and moving forward out of the current crisis.

Gianni Pittella

MEP

TOWARDS A STATE-REGION PARTNERSHIP FOR 2007-2013

CPMR Seminar on Benchmarking, 31 May 2006, Brussels

“On what shared observations can we establish the bases of a sustainable regional policy after 2013?” might be the sub-title for the benchmarking seminar that the CPMR is hosting on 31st May in Brussels. The same sub-title could be used for the final version of the EU’s strategic guidelines on cohesion if the Commission expressed a wish, this summer, to give added importance to their timeline, going far beyond the still burning issue of the latest budget negotiations.

The actual conditions relating to the implementation of the regional policy currently being debated in the Member States will be more or less known on 31st May, at least as regards the main principles for its implementation. These principles will then remain unchanged for the next seven years and everybody will be able to measure the initial differences between the strategic preferences displayed during negotiations at Community level and the practical conditions for implementation which will soon become apparent. This will be the case, in particular, for two fundamental aspects – the place of regions in the governance of regional policy and the implementation of the principle of territorial cohesion.

The delay caused by Member States during the budget negotiation phase could be used intelligently by the European Commission to acquire initial information about the implementation while finalising the Community’s strategic guidelines. Any differences compared to the initial objectives will enable the Commission to redefine the direction being taken by the EU and clarify what it expects from the territorial dimension of the cohesion policy.

With regard to the Lisbon priorities and the accompanying “earmarking” strategy, the CPMR will also pay particular attention to the new conditions for the governance of innovation in territories since innovation is now considered as the “top priority”. Will Member States have planned sufficiently innovative systems to ensure effective implementation of this priority while, at the same time, complying with the N+2 rule? How will they have adapted to the disappearance of infra-regional zoning? Will innovation be reserved for project leaders only or will it have a beneficial knock-on effect on the governance of future cohesion policies? How will the objectives of competitiveness and territorial cohesion be combined in each of the Member States? Will the initial elements of implementation bear the hallmarks of sustainable partnership for growth or will they quickly need to be repositioned, within the framework of discussions on the post-2013 period? These are the main questions which, we hope, will be looked at during this seminar, laying the foundations for the first ideas on more comprehensive consideration in the 2008/2009 discussions.

Philippe Cichowlaz
Director

GIOVANNA DEBONO MALTESE MINISTER LOOKS FOWARD TO THE MARITIME GREEN PAPER

Giovanna Debono, Maltese Minister for the island of Gozo, and Vice-President of CPMR, expressed her great satisfaction as to the Green Paper on maritime policy that will be published by the European Commission next 7th June. Mrs Debono was the main organiser of the CPMR's last Political Bureau meeting in Malta on 5th May, where maritime policy had a key role in the discussions.

Mrs Debono, what are your expectations on this Green Paper?

First of all, I am very pleased that this Green Paper has been discussed at the regional level also in Malta, where Commissioner Joe Borg comes from.

This paper has been debated for many months already, and I hope that the European Commission will take into consideration most of the ideas and proposals, not only from CPMR, but also from all the stakeholders concerned. Indeed, although every stakeholder has his particular position, I believe this process is very useful, because in this way the Task Force of the Commission responsible for drafting the Green Paper may have a variety of reactions. Of course, now the Commission has to put in force all the suggestions we have proposed in the last months, but I am sure that the concerns of peripheral regions will be taken into account.

Why is this document so important for your territory? Do you believe that a Maltese Commissioner will dedicate particular attention to peripheral regions or islands?

Definitely this paper is very important for Malta and moreover for Gozo, the island that I represent. Dr. Borg knows our lifestyle, our concerns and our problems; I am sure that he is very keen to include our suggestions.

Gozo is an island very different from other islands because of its own particular problems due to the double insularity factors: basically, we are an island depending on another island! Moreover, we do not have rivers or mountains and we have a very small density of people which leaves us with more geographical handicaps.

I am sure that the CPMR discussion as a lobby group will be very influential on the result of this Green Paper, and I am very grateful to the CPMR, because it always takes into consideration the particular problems of every maritime region and every island. Personally, I think that if CPMR had not been so active during the editing of this document, probably this Green Paper would not have had such a wide view as it has at the moment.

Further to nine Regions joining the Conference last year, two new Regions, East Midlands (UK) and Skåne (SE), were welcomed as members on the occasion of the Malta Political Bureau meeting. Why it is so important for a peripheral region to be a member of CPMR?

Every year we have an increased number of members that proves that since 1973, the year of CPMR conception, this organisation has been moving in the right direction and at the right moment!

As regards my experience in CPMR, I can say that we are like a little family which takes into account every problem of its members; we learn a lot from each other and not only on technical issues, but also other regional experiences, which is beneficial for our own daily, administrative work. So I do encourage other regions and islands to join CPMR, because as we say, "Safety in numbers". Europe needs its regions and owing to CPMR, it can look at its citizens that we represent so closely.

Enrico Mayrhofer
Director



REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES IN THE HEART OF THE eTEN PROJECT OF THE YEAR 2005

HEALTH OPTIMUM (<http://www.healthoptimum.info>), HEALTHcare delivery OPTIMisation throUgh teleMedicine, is a Market Validation Project funded by the European Union under the eTEN Programme.

The Project aimed to demonstrate that when telemedicine services are introduced in an existing healthcare context with a strategic vision and they are seen by Regional Health Authorities as an enabler for an in-depth organisational and process reengineering, major benefits can be released for all the stakeholders (the Regional Health Authorities themselves, Local Health Authority and Trust Managers, health professionals and citizens).

Of course, for the business model to be sustainable, it was essential to demonstrate that the benefits released by the introduction of the telemedicine services and the consequent reorganisation of the healthcare delivery services can at least offset the cost for deploying and running the technical infrastructure and the services.

In the context of the Market Validation four basic telemedicine services (tele-counselling, virtual referral, tele-laboratory and tele-care) have been applied to a large number of clinical specialties and settings.

What makes HEALTH OPTIMUM a project well above the pack is that it addresses one of the major problems that most European States have to face: how to keep delivering high-quality healthcare within an ever-shrinking budget to an increasingly quality-aware and demanding population.

Experience has demonstrated that making cutbacks in individual components of the healthcare system (e.g. pharmaceuticals or hospital care) merely backfires by increasing costs in other sectors. Therefore, the only way to cope with such a dramatic imbalance between demand and financial resources available is to rethink the way healthcare systems are organised.

Telemedicine can be a trigger and an enabler for such a change but for in-depth changes to be implemented in practice there is a need to have the full support by those who have the responsibility of the healthcare budget and organisation.

The HEALTH OPTIMUM Consortium has adopted the motto "think big" to achieve its goal: the three participating regions - **Veneto (Italy)**, **Aragón (Spain)** and **Funen (Denmark)** - were all represented at Regional Government level, i.e. by those who manage the healthcare budget and have authority and control on the organisation of healthcare in their region. The involvement of the Local and Regional Health Authorities was of significant importance for the pilots to test how to optimise their size, their workflows, the quality and the geographical distribution of their specialty teams on the basis of the expected needs of the population to assist rather than on the basis of physical proximity to citizens.

In **Veneto**, tele-counselling and tele-laboratory services have been implemented between healthcare centres in six local health authorities. Tele-counselling is used in neurosurgery while tele-laboratory is applied to homecare settings.

In **Aragón**, tele-counselling and virtual referral services have been implemented between the Barbastro Hospital and the Primary Care Centres of Castejón de Sos and Fraga for oncology, haematology and nephrology.

In **Funen**, tele-endocrinology and tele-cardiology services have been implemented between the SHF Funen Hospital, Svendborg and the SHF Aeroskobing Hospital, Aero. Tele-consultation between the hospitals is a way of redistributing workload between physicians and nurses.

The bet was won by the Consortium: the Market Validation phase has convincingly demonstrated through life size trials that the HEALTH OPTIMUM healthcare delivery model is sustainable in three different public health systems.

Among the major results of the HEALTH OPTIMUM project Veneto has increased the number of patients treated entirely at the hospital without a neurosurgical department by 430% and also reduced the time needed to obtain laboratory results from about 24 hours to less than 10 minutes, using tele-laboratory. In Funen, owing to the HEALTH OPTIMUM services, the doctors can save between 15 - 20 minutes per consultation and can thus have more patients in the day. In Aragon the waiting list in the Nephrology Department has been reduced from 34 to 25 days and for the Haematology Department from 52 to 14 days.

Visitors of the eTEN website have elected HEALTH OPTIMUM as the eTEN project of year 2005. By winning the election, HEALTH OPTIMUM was the eTEN project that communicated best about the e-Services it was validating.

The European Community eTEN programme (<http://europa.eu.int/eten>) is designed to accelerate the deployment of eServices with a trans-European dimension. eTEN has a budget of ~ 45M€ per year to the end of 2006 and supports two phases of eService preparation in the form of “market validation” and “initial deployment” projects. Projects address the thematic areas of: eGovernment, eHealth, eInclusion, eLearning, Trust and Security and services for SMEs.

Dr. Claudio Dario

HEALTH OPTIMUM Project

Coordinator - C.E.O. of Treviso Local Health Authority - Veneto Region