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FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS, THE REGIONS ARE LEFT OUT OF THE SIX-MONTH PRESIDENCY'S INITIATIVES

The Czech Presidency of the European Union has invited neither the CPMR nor the other organisations of Regions and Cities to the **informal meeting of ministers in charge of regional development** to be held in **Mariánské Lázně (CZ)** on 23 and 24 April 2009.

The aim of this ministerial meeting will be to analyse the principles and main objectives of future cohesion policy and to present the forecast results of the public debate on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion.

The participation of regional networks in these types of informal meetings began back in 1999 on a proposal from the German Presidency. *"Over the past ten years this tradition has never been broken,"* stated **Xavier Gizard, Secretary General of the CPMR**. *"It is a real sham that this time we are not included in the discussions. It is also thanks to this initiative that Europe is able to come closer to its citizens by strengthening multi-level governance."*

The CPMR submitted a response to the European Commission's consultation on the Green Paper on territorial cohesion and has also taken part in the major public debates that have been held throughout the consultation process. *"We are the only regional organisation to have been invited on 2 December 2008 to the public hearing at the European Parliament organised by the Regional Development Committee,"* added **Xavier Gizard**, *"and our President, Claudio Martini, played a key role at the Conference on territorial cohesion and the future of cohesion policy organised by the French Presidency on 30 and 31 October 2008 in Paris. This exclusion deprives the EU Presidency of the Regions' expertise with regard to the new programming for cohesion policy 2014-2020. This does not bode well in terms of the need to step up multi-level governance in Europe."*

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