

INTERVIEW

OMRs ILLUSTRATING HOW TO IMPLEMENT TERRITORIAL COHESION

Margie Sudre is a Regional Councillor for La Réunion (FR) and Member of the European Parliament, sitting on the Regional Development and Fisheries Committees. She formerly served as State Secretary for the French-speaking Community under Alain Juppé's government (1995-1997), and is currently Chair of the French delegation of the EPP-ED and Chair of the European Parliament's Tourism Intergroup.



Enrico Mayrhofer: Mrs Sudre, why is this lengthy debate on territorial cohesion, initiated by the European Commission and presently under discussion at the Parliament, so important for the Outermost Regions?

Margie Sudre: The Lisbon Treaty, which is still in the process of adoption by the twenty-seven member states, defines economic, social and territorial cohesion as one of the Union's priorities. The territorial dimension is something new, a concept destined to take on increasing importance and rolled out in EU policies. However, neither the Council nor the Commission has so far managed to give it a concrete definition. It is generally understood that "territorial cohesion" consists in ensuring the smooth development of all territories throughout the EU and helping their populations turn the characteristics specific to each European Region to their best advantage. I consider this idea to be particularly relevant for taking special account of the OMR, so as to secure their sustainable development by enhancing their assets.

EM: Are you satisfied with the van Nistelrooij report?

MS : The draft report by Mr van Nistelrooij is a little timid, less ambitious than the positions previously expressed by the European Parliament on this subject (notably in the report by my honourable friend Ambroise Guellec). For several years now, the EP has effectively been urging for territorial cohesion to be applicable as soon as the Lisbon Treaty comes into force, and consequently for its details to be outlined as early as possible. In my view the rapporteur is not critical enough with regard to the Commission's indecisiveness. I believe that our work in the Regional Development Committee will consist in "beefing up" this text, and I am certain that the report eventually adopted by the European Parliament will be stronger and more substantial.

EM: Our Secretary General, Xavier Gizard, affirmed at today's hearing that cohesion policy could draw its inspiration from the integrated vision of maritime policy. Do you agree?

MS: It is effectively a good example. Generally speaking, it is vital to coordinate the territorial impact of all EU sectoral policies within a given territory. The aim is not to play down the importance and autonomy of regional policy. An integrated approach should help to maximise the impact of structural interventions on the ground and create benefit for Europe's citizens. In this respect, after studying the Commission's Communication entitled "The outermost regions: an asset for Europe", published at almost the same time as the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, it seems to me that the whole set of recommendations on improving governance in the area of cohesion policy is being applied to the outermost regions. The EU's policy for OMRs is perhaps the first illustration, somewhat anticipated, of how to implement territorial cohesion...

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ARTICLE

JOE BORG PARTICIPES IN THE CPMR ATLANTIC ARC COMMISSION POLITICAL BUREAU

The President of the Region of Basse-Normandie and the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, Laurent Beauvais, will host the next AAC Political Bureau on 12 February 2009 in Caen (FR) in the presence of a notable guest, as the European Commissioner for fisheries and maritime affairs, Joe Borg, will attend this meeting. The arrival of Commissioner Borg coincides with what is currently a very busy time for maritime policy issues.

As the Green Paper on the future of the common fisheries policy (CFP) will be published shortly, Commissioner Borg will be invited to outline the paper's major guidelines. The publication of the Green Paper will represent a starting point for a large public consultation which the Atlantic Arc Commission will participate in.



This meeting will also be an opportunity for the Atlantic Regions to enter into a discussion with the Commissioner on the implementation of the action plan which accompanies the European Maritime Policy Blue Book and especially on the recent roadmap for Maritime Spatial Planning. In addition, the discussions will relate to the implications that the new maritime policy approach by geographical area will have for the Atlantic Arc.

Finally, this meeting will enable the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission to put forward its contribution to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion. This document is the result of a wide consultation between the Regions, cities, economic and social councils, universities and chambers of agriculture in this area. The Atlantic stakeholders believe that the concept of territorial cohesion should have explicit recognition among the EU priority objectives and be applied to all EU policies including maritime policy.

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INTERVIEW

AN EXAMPLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

Climate change does not only concern the Arctic countries. Abdelkebir Berkia, President of the Region of Rabat-Sale-Zemmour-Zaër and Secretary General of the International Association of French-speaking Regions (AIRF), is witnessing climate change related problems on the African continent too, especially in Morocco.

CPMR: *Mr Berkia, how important are the Regions in the fight against climate change at global level?*

Abdelkebir Berkia: Up to now, governments have met only on the basis of state interests, ignoring the realities on the ground. Regional leaders on the other hand are in contact both with the grassroots and the top level and take into account the concerns of the general public. This is where world summits of Regions come into their own, like the one in October in Saint-Malo which analysed the issues specific to different citizens within their territory. This means that information can be channelled from the bottom up to the highest level!

CPMR: *How do you think you will manage to get your voice heard by the States?*



AB: United we stand! The fact of having international associations such as FOGAR or nrg4SD with regional leaders, some of whom have already been ministers, parliamentary chairs or heads of international organisations, constitutes a very important network. It also has more weight than individual action or action taken by a single Region or association of Regions at national level. In my view, the global networks of Regions will become very strong and powerful in order to convey their message to all levels, even the United Nations. However, at present, I believe that we need a contribution from all sides. We have the same preoccupations and we need to look together at this phenomenon which is raising concern the whole world over...

CPMR: We always think of tragic events related to climate change being in the Northern countries or the Arctic. But some effects of climate change are also worrying in hot countries like Morocco...

AB: Absolutely. And we should not forget that our problems often also have repercussions where you are, in Europe. Owing to its geographical situation, Morocco, which lies at the gateway to Europe, is a political, human and natural bastion for your continent. I can give as an example the problem of the cork-oak forest surrounding the Kingdom's capital. It used to regenerate naturally before, but with all the droughts that Morocco has experienced over the past few years, this forest has diminished in surface area from 165,000 hectares to 105,000 hectares. This is a very worrying observation... This forest has always acted as a barrier against all the bad weather conditions coming up from southern Africa... This means that our Moroccan forests constitute a wall of defence for Europe. If all these forests were to disappear, then this would be worrying for Europe and the whole of the Mediterranean.

CPMR: How can we reconcile the financial crisis with the fight against climate change?

AB: It is true that we're talking about money and material resources. But the crucial issue I believe is to raise awareness! We need to develop the idea of "saving water" among the general public and try to use nature wisely: in many cities, waste water is discharged out into the wilds, whereas it could actually be used in more arid places for agriculture and plantations. For example during the rainy seasons, we could introduce a system for recuperating water... We can also imagine awareness campaigns leading to bigger savings... Finally, technical development that exists in Europe, with waste water treatment plants and desalination, could allow developing countries to efficiently save natural resources. This is why I believe that global networks, with their technological development and different experiences, can provide benefits for all.

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EVENTS

22 January 2009, ICT Infodays, Budapest (HU)

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/budapest_2009/index_en.htm

23 January 2009, CPMR Political Bureau, Aarhus, Midtjylland (DK)

<http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=6,1>

2-5 February 2009, European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg (FR)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/plenary/agenda.do?language=en>

12 February 2009, CPMR Political Bureau of the Atlantic Arc Commission, Caen (FR)

<http://www.arcatlantique.org/index.php?act=1,4,1,47,,,en>

13 February 2009, Financial Management of EU Structural Funds, EIPA, Maastricht (NL)

<http://www.eipa.eu/en/activities/show/&tid=2981>

12-13 February 2009, CoR Plenary Session, CoR, Brussels (BE)

<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/EventTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=87402c77-d94a-4381-95b0-5ee5b3ec2d2d&sm=87402c77-d94a-4381-95b0-5ee5b3ec2d2d>

18-19 February 2009, European Parliament Plenary Session, Brussels (BE)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/plenary/agenda.do?language=en>

27-28 February 2009, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee meeting, Oulu (FI)
<http://www.balticseacommission.org/ExecutiveCommitteedec08.html>

3 March 2009, 4th Aquamarina Plenary Session, CoR, Brussels (BE)

5-6 March 2009, European Summit of Regions and Cities, Prague (CZ)
<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/EventTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=02089ed9-9456-43db-9a1e-7d764028ef40&sm=02089ed9-9456-43db-9a1e-7d764028ef40>

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