

## INTERVIEWS

### 15 BILLION EUROS FOR PROJECTS OF EUROPEAN INTEREST

**Antonio Tajani** has been Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of transport policy since June 2008.

Between 1994 and 2008 he was a member of the European Parliament, and between February 2002 and July 2003 he played a part in the Convention on the Future of Europe which drafted the text of the constitutional treaty.

Commissioner Tajani has been open to the CPMR's proposals aimed at boosting maritime transport in Europe, and on 21 January this year he launched the "Creation of a European maritime transport area without barriers".

*Enrico Mayrhofer: The financial crisis has brought Keynes back to the fore and is reviving projects for major infrastructures: what are the Commission's thoughts on this, and what prospects are there for partnership with the EIB?*

**Antonio Tajani:** As part of the European Economic Recovery Plan adopted by the Council at the end of 2008, the Commission has proposed a number of actions to support infrastructures. These include reinforcing the European Investment Bank's capital base by a further 15 billion euros over the next two years, which will help to support a greater number of projects of European interest. This recovery plan also includes the launch of an equity investment fund for targeted projects on infrastructures, energy and climate change. This is to be known as the "2020 fund", referring to Europe's environmental objectives. At this stage, the focus is on how such a fund is to be run and governed and on identifying in advance a portfolio of target projects.

Alongside these projects, the EIB and DG TREN are looking at what resources are available to meet the needs of the market and project developers. A number of ideas have started to be explored, in particular that of bond issues for projects from the bank.

These project bonds aim to drain investments from pension funds and sovereign wealth funds towards big infrastructure projects, the main ones being the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), with the possibility of guarantees at European level. This financial product would allow access to new sources of funding without increasing national budgets or weakening the Stability and Growth Pact. Other options, especially in relation to bank guarantees, are also being discussed with a view to stepping up the EIB's involvement in carrying out big infrastructure projects of European interest. The Recovery Plan therefore calls for wider involvement from the private sector in building the networks. In order to do this, actions will need to be taken to relax and adapt the rules concerning the involvement of the private sector, whether in terms of investment or delivery.

Finally, an exceptional call for proposals for the TEN-T is due out in the spring of 2009. With 500 million euros earmarked for large-scale projects, work should be getting under way before the year end. It should be noted that given the level of co-funding that governs the TEN-T budget, this envelope should give the possibility to concentrate almost 3 billion euros of national investments.

*EM.: Investments in ports have been somewhat forgotten in EU funding for transport, whether this be through the TEN-T budget or ERDF. The CPMR regrets this situation: what is the Commission's view on this, and how together can we convince national Transport Ministers that maritime transport needs to be encouraged?*

**AT:** It is true that the outermost regions do need maritime transport services and infrastructures to enable them to integrate properly into the single market. Although the ERDF is a financial instrument managed essentially by the Member States, the Commission is in favour of providing financial help to build new quays in the ports of the Peripheral Maritime Regions, as is the case in the Canary Islands. Moreover, the Commission's services are not

opposed to using ERDF funding to purchase vessels to transport passengers and their vehicles between islands within the same archipelago. As for the TEN-T budget, there is already a specific budget heading for promoting motorways of the sea. This new concept includes not only projects for modal shift, but also ones designed to strengthen territorial cohesion with the European Union and in the Peripheral Maritime Regions especially. The 350 million euros allocated to this budget heading are distributed on the basis of annual calls for tender.

*EM.: The Commission is preparing a Green Paper ahead of the TEN-T review: what ideas might we expect for boosting maritime transport in a context where Motorways of the Sea are having difficulty getting off the ground?*

**AT:** The Green Paper will place emphasis on improving the integration of all modes of transport (including smart transport systems) within a multi-modal network providing efficient, safe and high quality services. It will underline, as one of the main objectives of the future development of the Trans-European Transport Network, the need to contribute significantly towards reducing carbon emissions especially with the help of co-modal services and logistics for freight transport. The Green Paper will also place great importance on developing maritime transport, by focusing in particular on developing port capacity and integrating this into the logistics chains (including improved connections between ports and the rail network).

With regard to the motorways of the sea, the Green Paper refers to their potential in the context of developing "green corridors", while underlining the need for a clearer definition of their scope and objectives.

As part of the TEN-T policy review, the Commission will be initiating a wide consultation on the future of this policy in the framework of the Green Paper. For this the Commission has, among other things, taken into account recent developments in the maritime sector, and especially the awareness about the role ports play as intermodal hubs and their importance in the functioning of the European economy. In this context, Motorways of the Sea remain a major instrument. Public support for motorways of the sea should moreover be simplified, and there needs to be greater acknowledgement of the importance of connections between ports and the hinterland.

*EM.: What are your plans for improving the accessibility of the outermost regions and the islands? As much in terms of supporting port and airport infrastructures as improving the profitability of services to and from these areas?*

**AT.:** The action plan to introduce a European maritime transport area without barriers was adopted by the Commission on 21 January 2009. This action plan will simplify administrative formalities between European ports. The savings this administrative simplification will make in terms of costs and time will benefit the whole of the economic fabric and the end consumers.

With regard to customs formalities, the action plan is designed to simplify formalities for Community shipping lines between EU ports. This measure will ensure that new routes are more attractive for ship owners and that the Peripheral Maritime Regions can benefit from better links with the EU's neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, the Commission is currently working on the future guidelines on state aid for port facilities. Even though we are not yet able to say which criteria will be used, we can indicate that the Commission still intends to give special treatment to ports in the Peripheral Maritime Regions in light of the difficulties related to investment costs on the one hand, and the practically non-existent competition between peripheral ports and the other EU ports on the other.

As far as airports are concerned, the Commission does not decide on its own to initiate work, but it can grant funds upon application for the most commendable projects that guarantee an added value for EU support. For instance, last year 2,160,000 euros were granted to the Joao Paulo II Airport (Ponta Delgada - Azores) for its plans to extend and modernise its facilities and reduce the environmental impact. With regard to the profitability of air services to the outermost regions, we might refer to the public service obligations that allow States to cover the actual cost of the flights they impose in their favour.

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## TERRITORIAL COHESION, ONE OF EUROPE'S MAJOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Jean-Yves Le Drian, President of the Regional Council of Brittany, is the *Rapporteur* in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for the European Commission's Green Paper on territorial cohesion which was published last October.

Former State Secretary for the Sea and former French MP, Mr Le Drian has actively participated in the debates

held over recent months on territorial cohesion and which resulted in the adoption of a policy position ([http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/206\\_avis\\_crpm-livre\\_vert\\_cohesion\\_territoriale-en.pdf](http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/206_avis_crpm-livre_vert_cohesion_territoriale-en.pdf)) put forward in Aarhus (DK) last month.

Enrico Mayrhofer (EM): Mr Le Drian, the CoR has approved your report on territorial cohesion. What does territorial cohesion mean to Jean-Yves Le Drian?

Jean-Yves Le Drian (JYL): At the moment, territorial cohesion is one of the EU's major political objectives. The EU was initially created for economic cohesion; then social cohesion was addressed and now, with the Lisbon Treaty, territorial cohesion has been added. The principle of solidarity and equity must exist across all European territories. Growth should not concentrate exclusively on certain territories which are favoured for their geographical conditions.

Since the creation of the EU, cohesion policies have enabled a convergence of the growth of the States, however a worsening of inequalities amongst the regions is currently being observed. I believe that this must be dealt with. This is why the CPMR is highly involved and attentive in the implementation of territorial cohesion.

However, if you would like a definition, territorial cohesion is to ensure that all citizens have equal access to services and knowledge, regardless of their situation within EU territory. Territorial cohesion is therefore the way EU principles are put into practice across the territory. In addition, this application across the territory should concern the sea as much as the land! Europe's maritime zone should also be provided for in the principles of territorial cohesion.

EM: How can the guidelines put forward by the CPMR during its Political Bureau in Aarhus support your CoR report which has just been published?

JYL: The two reports have numerous points in common, in particular the hope that the Green Paper is followed by a White Paper, the "integrated" vision of territorial cohesion as well as the idea of a territorial impact assessment.

In addition, I believe that the CPMR and the CoR should work together to look into the issue in further detail. For example, what type of indicator do we have to estimate a territory's level of integration within the EU? GDP alone? Or can we use other indicators such as per capita wealth, revenue or taxation?

Lastly, I think that amongst the ideas proposed by the CPMR, the territorial pact deserves to be further developed, just as the approach vis-à-vis the financial crisis, which is changing the way we all behave and act, could open a more detailed discussion on State aid.

EM: We will not have territorial cohesion without Lisbon. Are you optimistic?

JYL: Ah yes... we will have Lisbon!

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## ARTICLE

### TERRITORIAL COHESION IS AT THE CORE OF THE CPMR

Territorial cohesion is at the core of the CPMR's involvement, which is why we have made considerable efforts in this policy area over recent years, in particular for its inclusion in the Lisbon Treaty.

The CPMR believes that territorial cohesion is a long-term process based on the key notion of equity between territories at a given scale of public action, and that it concerns cohesive dynamics to be implemented between the territories and the mechanisms underpinning this solidarity at different scales, from a legislative, budgetary and fiscal point of view. The link between territorial cohesion and all levels of government, as well as with cohesion policy and sector-based policies with strong territorial impact is currently a major challenge for us.

CPMR Regions call for the launch of a European Territorial Pact which must involve all stakeholders from the local to European level and concern all policies with a territorial impact. The CPMR hopes that this approach can be developed in the future White Paper which must be published as soon as possible.

Our official policy position in response to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion was approved by the CPMR Political Bureau at its meeting in Aarhus (Denmark) on 23 January 2009. This policy position, which calls for a political and ambitious vision of territorial cohesion, is available on the following link: [http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/206\\_avis\\_crpm-livre\\_vert\\_cohesion\\_territoriale-en.pdf](http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/206_avis_crpm-livre_vert_cohesion_territoriale-en.pdf)

This position is the result of several months' work, during which the CPMR collaborated closely with the French Presidency of the European Union. This led to the CPMR having a high level of involvement in the "Paris Conference on territorial cohesion and the future of cohesion policy" on 30 and 31 October 2008, and also being invited to participate in the Informal Ministerial meeting on spatial planning on 26 November 2008 in Marseille. In addition, the CPMR actively participated in official hearings with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and with the European Economic and Social Committee.

The CPMR Geographical Commissions are also highly involved and emphasise the aspects of territorial cohesion linked to their specific perspectives.

All CPMR Regions will continue their discussions on this policy area so as to turn this objective into a tangible reality.

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## EVENTS

**26-27 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)

<http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=6,1,2,112>

**3 March 2009**, Presentation of an Integrated Maritime Policy through the Brittany Coast Charter, CoR, Brussels (BE)

<http://www.crpm.org/en/index.php?act=6,2,2,65>

**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>

**9-12 March 2009**, European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg (FR)

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

**12-13 March 2009**, FOGAR Executive Committee Meeting, Firenze (IT)

<http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=6,2,2,64>

**26-27 March 2009**, North Sea Commission Executive Committee meeting, Vest-Agder (NO)

<http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=6,1,2,117>

**21-22 April 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>

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