



NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2010 - CPMR WELCOMES EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS INTERGROUPS!

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INTERVIEWS

CORINNE LEPAGE, EP ADVOCATE FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS

Corinne Lepage, ALDE MEP (Alliance of Democrats and Liberals for Europe), has been campaigning for an Intergroup on Seas and Coastal Affairs within the European Parliament.

The intergroup finally met for the first time on 11 February 2010 and has agreed in the coming years to look at a number of issues including marine biodiversity, the creation of a European coastguard, the development of ocean power, coastal conservation, the processing of marine waste, maritime transport and climate change.

Former Environment Minister, Mrs Lepage is a barrister and expert in environmental law. She was elected to the European Parliament in June 2009, where she is a member of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, and substitute member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

Enrico Mayrhofer: Mrs Lepage, what are the main aims of this intergroup?

Corinne Lepage: *The intergroup has two main objectives. Firstly to make sure Parliament has more influence before the Council and Commission on subjects that are already up for discussion by improving coordination between MEPs. But our aim is also and above all to bring up topics that are not on the agenda, but which MEPs believe to be a priority. We will be making sure we have the wherewithal to be a power of proposal, by working closely with all stakeholders concerned, i.e. economic groups, representatives of regional and local authorities, trade unions and NGOs.*

EM: The EU finally has its integrated maritime policy, but the challenge now lies in implementing it. Do you think that the Regions should be involved more in the territorial aspects of maritime policy?

CL: *Of course. This is indeed the whole point of the integrated approach, which constitutes a real added value in this respect by ensuring a cross-cutting vision and enabling the different stakeholders to all act towards the same goals. The intergroup corresponds precisely to this way of thinking. As politicians, MEPs are more in touch with the territories than they were in the past. This makes them efficient relays for ensuring that the regions are closely involved in defining public policies ahead of the decision-making process. It makes so sense whatsoever to shape a policy from Brussels without taking into account the needs of the regions. I see the intergroup as a means of taking the experience and ideas of regional actors in order to feed into the debate between MEPs;*

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The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), in the person of Mrs Carol Thomas, will ensure the logistical part of the secretariat in coordination with Mrs Lepage's office.

ISLANDS AT THE CORE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WORKS

Alyn Smith has been very active in promoting in the European Parliament the "Intergroup Mountain, Island and Sparsely Populated Regions" or "Intergroup Article 174" as it is also referred to because of the new article of the Lisbon Treaty on territorial cohesion. This Intergroup promotes and defends the interests of these territories and it is composed by Members from different countries and political families. Alyn Smith is Scottish and has joined the Group of the Greens-European Free Alliance. In Parliament, he is a full member of the Agriculture Committee and an alternate member of the Education and Culture Committee in addition to the Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Enrico Mayrhofer: What are the goals of this Intergroup?

Alyn Smith: *The aim of the intergroup is to promote and defend the interests of Europe's island, mountainous and sparsely populated areas at European level, to ensure that the EU institutions are made more aware of the issues and challenges facing such areas and that the provisions of Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty which state that "special attention" is to be paid to these areas are fully taken on board in future EU legislation.*

EM: How do you plan to persuade the EU Commission in inserting islands, mountains and sparsely populated areas in the future structural funds post 2013 programming?

AS: This intergroup provides MEPs with a forum for open debate and discussion on a wide range of policy issues affecting remote and peripheral areas. In this arena, debate and dialogue on upcoming legislative proposals can take place, be it with senior members and officials of the Commission, the Council and Permanent Representations, Council Presidencies, various European organisations and associations, local authorities, devolved and national governments. Having early discussions with the Commission on proposals - whether they are on changes to the structural funds programming or any other business - is crucial if we are to make sure that the specificities of islands, mountainous and sparsely populated areas are taken into account as legislation moves forward. Working together with my colleagues we can ensure that Parliament reports, amendments, resolutions, written declarations, debates, parliamentary questions to the Commission and Council take these often fragile areas into account, all of which makes it a great deal harder for the Commission to overlook these areas as the structural funds programme post 2013 comes up for review.

EM: Apart from regional policy, which other EU policies will members of this Intergroup be active in?

AS: There are a number of key policy issues on the EU's agenda which are likely to have significant policy and legislative implications for Europe's island, mountainous and sparsely-populated areas over the next few years. These include:

1/ the future shape of Europe's agriculture post-2013

2/ forthcoming changes to the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme

3/ state aid

4/ reform of the CFP and new maritime policy

5/ climate change and renewable energy

6/ transport of live animals

7/ as well as other key issues and challenges such areas continue to face regarding fuel taxation, depopulation, air and sea transport, sustainable development, competitiveness and innovation, culture.

EM: A Maritime Intergroup has also been created in the EP; do you plan to coordinate your work with their activities? If yes how?

AS: Certainly there will be issues that will fall into the remit of both intergroups and so coordinating our approaches to these topics is sensible. Sharing expertise and research will avoid duplication and will encourage a unified response from both inter-groups. As is usually the case in the European Parliament, an informal way of working tends to function best and, as such, I anticipate that this will be the basis of our relationship. Many of the MEPs involved with inter-group 174, in particular those from islands, will also have places on the maritime intergroup and, therefore, make it very straightforward to coordinate the work of the two groups.

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ARTICLE

COOPERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD INSTRUMENTS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

European territorial cooperation is 20 years old. The Community Initiative Programme (CIP) Interreg which was set up in the context of the 1989 reform of the Structural Funds, was designed above all to foster the emergence of a European conscience as close as possible to its citizens through exchanges of experiences and networking between Regions. Over the years, with the development of ever more and closer links and increasingly sophisticated projects between stakeholders working in Europe's territories, cooperation instruments too have evolved and gained credibility. The Interreg CIP was renewed twice in 1994 and 2000, and in 2007 it became an objective in its own right under EU cohesion policy¹. In 20 years, a complex and professionalised world of European territorial cooperation has come into existence.

While attracting the interest of thousands of project developers can be seen as a sign that the initial wager has paid off, deep-seated dynamics are currently at work that are changing the face of the challenges and giving new dimensions to territorial cooperation. The initial objective has not been lost. With the successive enlargements of the EU, it is now within the most recent Member States that we need to develop a European conscience and instil a custom of cooperation. However, while the Union was expanding, the world has opened up and Europe with it.

¹ For a retrospective analysis of territorial cooperation both within and outside the EU since 1989, refer to the second part of the document "EU internal and external cooperation actions", 2005: http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/24_note_coop_preparatoire_en.pdf

This offers territories cooperation opportunities that lie further beyond the European horizon. Special ties that already existed with the EU's neighbouring territories are now tending to be strengthened, while an increasing number of cooperation activities are emerging between European regions and territories in other continents. These types of cooperation are wide-ranging and may be economic, cultural or solidarity-based. Finally, in light of the complexity and interdependence of the challenges (economic, environmental, climate and energy related, social) that the European Union and its territories now need to face and which, to be tackled, need to draw on different levels of competence and therefore different stakeholders working in partnership, these cooperation opportunities are now transforming into a prerequisite for territorial development.

There is now a consensus right up to the highest European political level as to the strategic interest of cooperation. This is shown in the place it is given in the consultation document on the European strategy for 2020 published by the European Commission last November. However, in a difficult European context where ambition seems to be less on the agenda than maintaining the status quo, the debate on the instruments that need to be introduced to allow cooperation to express its full potential lacks political clout and is often confined to the technical circles of those used to working with community programmes.

In this context, the CPMR is proposing to bridge the gap between these technical discussions, which raise essential questions on the practicalities of territorial cooperation, and the political arena, so as to encourage the debate that is lacking at present. After identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current EU and neighbourhood territorial cooperation instruments², it is now developing proposals on how to develop these instruments for the post-2013 period. These proposals are based on a distinction of tools depending on the extent of cooperation involved and will draw in particular on the macro-regional approach with a view to coordinating, in a given area, different policy instruments as well as multi-regional operational programmes as introduced in France over the 2007-2013 period.

These proposals will be presented on 25 May 2009 in Valencia (Spain) at the CPMR seminar on [Territorial Cooperation in the European Union and at its borders: what contribution can be made to the EU's strategy objectives for 2020?](#) The CPMR will ultimately integrate them into its proposals on the overall architecture of regional policy that it will be tabling next June at its Political Bureau meeting in Troms (Norway).

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EVENTS

8-11 March 2010, European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg (FR)

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

18 March 2010, Conference on Research organised by the EC & the Spanish Presidency, Granada (ES)

25 March 2010, 6th Aquamarina Plenary Session on maritime employment and training, CoR Brussels (BE)

<http://www.crpm.org/en/index.php?act=6,1,2,180>

13-15 April 2010, Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions

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

15-16 April 2010, CPMR Conference on Marine Renewable Energies, Santander (ES)

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

LEGAL NOTICE

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² The CPMR is supported by two working groups for this:

- Interregional cooperation (EU dimension): <http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=13,22>
- External cooperation (neighbourhood dimension): <http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=13,26>