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Editorial

Mattia Crosetto

Dear readers,

On February 12th, 2008, we had a useful meeting at the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU for presenting our philosophy and approach to the Semester of Czech Presidency to the EU Council.

As you know, the Czech Republic will hold the Presidency of the EU Council from January to June 2009. The Semester of Czech Presidency clearly represents a unique opportunity for the Country as a whole and for its local communities too for directly expressing a vision about the future of the European integration process. The strategic value of this opportunity is even raised by the historical moment in which it will take place, as at the beginning of 2009, the new Treaty of Lisbon should enter into force. In fact, the Lisbon Treaty brings one cycle of the EU integration to an end and opens a phase totally new.

On the basis of the inputs collected within the Zlín Region, and taking into account also the considerations formulated by the Association of the Czech Regions, the initiatives proposed for the Semester of Presidency in Brussels have a twofold aim: 1. the durable promotion of the Czech Regions at the EU level, throughout events that can leave long-lasting outcomes among the European partners ; 2. the highlighting of critical issues for the Regions in the EU perspective, and notably the role that the Regions can play in cooperation with the national and European Authorities in areas such as the cross-border cooperation, the future of the Cohesion policy, the completion of the Single Market and the services to the local communities.

On these basis, we have prepared a program that includes „technical“ events, such as seminars and conferences with the EU Institutions on specific topics, such as for example, the financing of transport infrastructures in the Regions, cultural and promotional events for our partners and the wide public. Now, we will see the reaction from the „unit“ for the Presidency and we will inform you about next steps.

Sincerely,

Mattia Crosetto
The Head of Office
Zlín Region in Brussels

WHAT'S NEW IN BRUSSELS?



"Let's build Europe in partnership"
 This is the slogan of the newly elected President of the Committee of the Regions, Belgian ex-Minister Luc Van den Brande. The Zlin Region in Brussels was present at the election and at the first speech addressed to the Plenary Session on the 6th of February 2008. A good start for an important Presidency that will last also during the Czech Semester at the EU.

The Committee of the Regions elected a new President, Mr. Luc van den Brande, who succeeds to Previous President, Mr. Michel Delebarre

On February 6th, 2008, Belgian politician Luc Van den Brande was elected President of the EU's Committee of the Regions at its 73rd plenary session in Brussels. Mr. Van den Brande is the eighth President of the political assembly which gives local and regional government representatives a voice in European decision-making.

Mr Van den Brande, who has been a member of the CoR since its creation in 1994, will serve for two years in the post. He succeeds to Mr. Michel Delebarre, Mayor of Dunkirk, in France, who switches roles to become First Vice-President of CoR. The plenary session also saw the election of 27 Vice-Presidents proposed by the national delegations and the other members of the Bureau.

A lawyer by background, Luc Van den Brande started his political career in 1977 after being elected to the Belgian House of Representatives. He became a member of the forerunner of the Flanders Parliament in 1980 and was designated as a Community Senator in 1999. In 1988-92, he served as Federal Minister for Labour and Employment, before becoming Minister-President of Flanders, a post he held until 1999

Addressing the plenary after his election, Mr Van den Brande set out his vision and priorities for the next two years. Partnership was the main theme of his address, in which he stressed the need for EU institutions to work more closely with Member States and local and regional authorities. He said a multi-level approach was essential in order to respond to the issues which matter most to the public, including affordable housing, jobs, education, lifelong learning, affordable and accessible healthcare, and solidarity between the generations.

The priorities of the new Presidency at CoR

Mr Van den Brande listed seven priority areas where he sees the CoR bringing added value:

- 1) the reform of the European budget
- 2) energy policy and climate change
- 3) the Lisbon strategy
- 4) cohesion policy and the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
- 5) cultural diversity
- 6) neighbourhood policy
- and 7) multilevel governance and subsidiarity

During his speech, Mr. van den Brande President recalled that the CoR would celebrate its 15th birthday next year and it would be an ideal opportunity to re-consider the CoR's mission statement and core tasks.

"I intend to conduct an in-depth and wide-ranging debate, based on an analysis of our strengths and weaknesses, our opportunities and limitations, and how, essentially, we are perceived by the outside world" he said. Finally, he said the CoR should strive to give symbolic expression to European integration. "I want to take the Committee to the places where Europe was made (Strasbourg), wounded (Dresden/Ieper) and transformed (Gdansk), to the places where Europe is being called into question (Prague) and is in demand (Croatia), to the places where Europe is in the process of renewal."

The Committee of the Regions

Around two-thirds of EU legislation is implemented by local and regional authorities in Member States. The Committee of the Regions was created in 1994 to give representatives of local government a say over the content of these laws. The CoR organises five plenary sessions a year, where its 344 members vote on reports, known as opinions, issued in response to proposed legislation. The European Commission, which initiates EU laws, and the Council of Ministers, which determines the final content of the legislation (usually in tandem with the European Parliament), are obliged to consult the CoR on a wide range of policy areas including the environment, employment and transport.

Marco Polo Program EU funds for the freight transport services

The European Commission has published the second call for proposals for the creation and upgrade of freight transport services under the Marco Polo II programme.

Companies across the European Union and beyond are invited to submit proposals in the second Marco Polo program. The Program finances initiatives that should fight congestion on European roads and improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system, two main objectives of the EU transport policy.

The general aim of the Program is to help companies during the high risk start-up phase of new services or significantly upgraded ones for shifting freight off the road and on to short-sea shipping, rail and inland waterways. The top-ranked projects in the competitive evaluation process will be offered grant contracts of up to six years. However, only projects capable of demonstrating sustainable non-road freight transport services – i.e. projects that can survive on the market even after they cease receiving EU financial support – have a chance at receiving a grant.

The call is open to applications for five types of actions:

- Modal shift actions which will shift freight from the road to short sea shipping, rail, inland waterways or a combination of modes of transport;
- Highly innovative catalyst actions which are aimed at overcoming structural barriers in the freight transport market in the European Union, such as the low speed of freight trains or technical interoperability problems between transport modes;
- Common learning actions which will improve cooperation and optimise working methods and procedures between actors in the freight transport chain.
- Motorways of the Sea actions which shift freight from road to short sea shipping or a combination of short sea shipping and other modes of transport, offering a very large-volume, high-frequency intermodal maritime transport service.
- Traffic avoidance actions which integrate transport into production logistics in order to reduce freight transport demand by road.

The budget for the 2008 call has been increased to € 59 million compared to € 57 million in 2007.

The full call text including information on how to apply for a grant is available on the Marco Polo website:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/guide_proposers/index_en.htm

More about Marco Polo II (2007-2013)

On 15th July 2004 the European Commission presented a proposal to establish a second, significantly expanded "Marco Polo" Program from 2007 onwards.

Relying on the proven mechanisms of the previous edition, Marco Polo II includes new actions such as motorways of the sea and traffic avoidance measures. The Program, which has a budget of €400 million for 2007-2013, has been extended to countries bordering the EU. The Commission estimates that every €1 in grants to Marco Polo will generate at least €6 in social and environmental benefits.

For any further information, you can contact the national responsible:

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FOCUS ON EU PROGRAMMS



Special Section on Innovation

Within this section, you can find some examples of successful projects realized in the field of innovation. A good source of inspiration for new initiatives in the Region.

CASE 8 **Efficient public transport?** **Phileas rises to the challenge**

Named after the famous character in the work of Jules Verne, Phileas is bringing new and innovative solutions to the public transport needs of urban areas. It is promoting the role of public transport while providing a national and European example of efficient mobility that respects the environment.

One of the challenges of urban development, in addition to the limited building space, is excess traffic and the resultant problems.

This is especially true in densely populated conurbations such as Eindhoven, in Noord Brabant. To rectify the situation, the promotion of public transport and the organisation of free flowing traffic coupled with an ad hoc policy of improving available sites, are the goals of the public and private partners involved in the Phileas project for high-quality public transport.

The route in question lies in the 'western corridor', a zone of new activities lying between the central station and Eindhoven airport. With homes, offices, shops and leisure facilities, the full range of urban functions are found along this corridor and Phileas has been specially designed to ensure flexible traffic. There are three strands to the project: a dedicated bus lane with electronic guidance, the Phileas vehicles and measures to make public transport more attractive.



The cases presented in this special section, have been selected among those published by the EC in "Regions for Economic Change". The first sheet has been published in the edition of 31 of October 2007.

The Phileas link to Meerhoven and Veldhoven is the first section in a network that will ultimately extend to the whole region. Along the route, bus shelters and high-quality equipment in a recognisable style will highlight the role of public transport in the city. Platforms at the bus stops are designed to ensure there is no change of level when getting on or off and the electronic guidance system ensures smooth stopping and starting. The presence of a driver on board nevertheless ensures that any unforeseen circumstances can be dealt with. The frequency (every 15 minutes) and speed (less than 25 minutes between the city centre and airport) will make the often poor reputation of public transport a thing of the past.

The Phileas buses themselves combine an ultramodern design and great comfort with excellent suspension, air conditioning and ample space for luggage as well as buggies and wheelchairs. The wide doors also facilitate travel for disabled people. The buses are powered by LPG engines that consume 90 % less than an ordinary bus as well as batteries that enable them to travel a limited distance with zero pollution.

Finally, passengers are given precise details of departure times, routes, stops and journey times.



Details of the project

Project: Demonstration project for high quality public transport Eindhoven Region

Programme: Zuidoost Noord-Brabant Stimulus Programme (Objective 2, 1999-2004)

Total cost: EUR 96.000.000

EU contribution: EUR 9.000.000

Fund: EU Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Contact

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SHORTS FROM BRUSSELS



Have you something to say about the future of Europe? Would you like to share your opinion with colleagues from all over the 27 Member States? The European Commission offers you the opportunity to do that!

The European Commission is open to debate the future of EU

Is the EU going in the right direction? Does it make a difference where it really counts? Is it being too much in some sectors and not intervening enough in others?

Whatever your opinion, you can freely sign in and have your say on the new interactive Debate Europe website.

The EC Commissioners Stavros Dimas, responsible for environment, Andris Piebalgs, in charge of energy policy, and Margot Wallström, responsible for communication and other commission staff launched the debate on the 29 of January 2008 during a on-line open consultation.

To ensure all discussions are followed up and there is a real exchange between the EU Institutions and the general public, commission representatives will also join in the debate on a regular basis.

For now, discussion will centre on three topics: the future of Europe, energy/climate change and intercultural dialogue. A fourth thread allows you to discuss any EU-related topic you like. More themes will be added in the coming months.

The original Debate Europe site was launched in 2006 as part of Plan D (Dialogue, Debate and Democracy) and received over 1.3m hits in total – some 2 000 per day. In recognition, it won the European eDemocracy award for 2006. The new site is easier to use and more focused on key issues. It hopes to relaunch debate and help the EU engage in constructive dialogue, giving the public a chance to help shape the way Europe faces its current and future challenges.

Open Days 2008: Zlin Region in Brussels partner of the Capital of Europe

For the Open Days 2008, the Zlin Region in Brussels launched to its partners in Europe the proposal of building up a conglomerate focused on the management of health-care services at the local level. In the Europe of the future, the Regions will be surely faced with problems such as the financing of the hospitals, the training of doctors and complementary human resources, the quality of the services provide. It is important to start cooperating in all these fundamental issues.

The idea immediately raise the interest of both the EU partners of the Region, as well as of the Committee of the Regions. The conglomerate inspired by the Zlin Region in Brussels is now composed by Valencia (Spain), Veneto (Italian), Westmidlands (UK), Olomouc (Czech Republic), Opolske (Poland), Trencin (Slovakia) and Picardie (France).

On the occasion of the second meeting of the Open Days partners, the Zlin Region in Brussels has received the request of adhesion from the Region of Brussels Capital. Brussels has been always present at the Open Days within a conglomerate of EU Capitals (London, Prague, etc.). This year they would like to change as the topic proposed by the Zlin Region in Brussels is of the highest interest in a European perspective. Brussels is welcomed, but a final decision will be taken by all partners in the next weeks.

This is a clear demonstration of the importance of the job realized by the Zlin Region in Brussels and of the opportunities the Representative Office can provide to the Zlin Region in Europe.

The Zlin Region in Brussels has edited a new report on the cooperation between EU and Asia

The European Commission has launched a new generation of cooperation Programs with the partner countries of Asia, India and China included. Two new Programs – Central Asia Program and Switch Asia – have now taken the place of the previous "Asia Invest" and "Asia Pro Eco".

The new initiatives target both the public sector, for the transfer of know-how in industrial policy, and the SMEs, supporting sustainable production and consumption.

The Zlin Region ion Brussels has prepared a report presenting the two initiatives, clarifying objectives, financial opportunities and procedures of participation for all interested parties.

Calls for proposals

Education	Cooperation Programmes with the United States of America and Canada in the fields of higher education, training and youth (Atlantis) Deadline: 02. 04. 2008 11. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:013:0051:0051:EN:PDF
Education	'Youth in the world': cooperation with countries other than the neighbouring countries of the European Union Deadline: 15. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:038:0008:0009:EN:PDF
Education	Tempus IV — Reform of higher education through university international cooperation Deadline: 28. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:031:0014:0015:EN:PDF
Media 2007	Development of interactive works on all platforms both online and off line Deadline: 15. 04. 2007 / 15. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/c_204/c_20420070901en00090009.pdf
Media 2007	Support for the transnational distribution of EU films and the networking of distributors - The 'selective' scheme Deadline: 01. 04. 2008 / 01. 07. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/c_311/c_31120071221en00200020.pdf
Culture Program	Support for bodies and cultural actions, cooperation and networks Deadline: 01. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/cs/oj/2007/c_184/c_18420070807cs00090010.pdf
COST	European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research Deadline: 28. 03. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/cs/oj/2007/c_289/c_28920071201cs00190020.pdf
Transport	Call for proposals under the new Marco Polo II Program Deadline: 07. 04. 2008 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:031:0013:0013:EN:PDF



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CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

25-26. 02. 2008

Regions for Economic Change
International conference
European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

26-27. 02. 2008

4th Annual Brussels Climate
Change Conference
European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

MARCH

04-05. 02. 2008

IV International Conference
on the implementation of the
EU Funds
Institute of Public
Administration
Milan, Italy

17-19. 03. 2008

3rd International Annual
Symposium on EU Funds 08
European Academy for Taxes,
Economics and Law
Berlin, Germany

Vacancies in Europe

European Environmental Agency

• Web Content Manager

Project officer

Vacancy notice: EEA/CA/2008/1

Grade: Contract agent

Place of work: Copenhagen, Denmark

Deadline: 06. 03. 2008

Info: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/organisation/jbs/index.html>

Office for the Harmonization of the Internal Market

• Member of the Boards of Appeal

EU Law Experts

Vacancy notice: VEXT/08/566/AD/BoA

Grade: Temporary agent

Place of work: Alicante, Spain

Deadline: 14. 03. 2008

Info: <http://oami.europa.eu/en/office/admin/vacan.htm>

European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions

• Deputy Director

Temporary agent

Vacancy notice: EF/TA/07/03

Grade: AD13

Place of work: Dublin, Ireland

Deadline: 25. 03. 2008

Info: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/about/vacancies/index.htm>



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Form closed:
14. 02. 2008

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