



regleg

REGLEG Contribution to the Public Consultation of the European Commission about the 5th Cohesion report



Presidency 2011 of Regleg

Brussels-Capital Region

73 regions with legislative power

Austria (9)

Burgenland, Kärnten, Niederösterreich, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg, Wien.

Belgium (5)

Brussels-Capital, German-speaking community, French-speaking community, Vlaanderen, Wallonie.

Finland (1)

Åland Islands

Germany (16)

Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thüringen.

Italy (20)

Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Piemonte, Puglia, Sardegna, Toscana, Trentino-Alto Adige – Südtirol, Sicilia, Umbria, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto.

Portugal (2)

Açores, Madeira.

Spain (17)

Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Cantabria, Castilla - La Mancha, Castilla - León, Catalunya, Comunidad de Madrid, Comunidad Foral de Navarra, Comunidad Valenciana, Extremadura, Euskadi, Galicia, Islas Baleares, La Rioja, Murcia, Principado de Asturias.

United Kingdom (3)

Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales.

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1. What is REGLEG ?

REGLEG is an informal network that brings together 73 regions with legislative powers within the EU.

These kind of regions are present in 8 Member States of the EU: all Spanish autonomous communities, regions of Italy, the Länder of Germany and Austria and regions and linguistic communities in Belgium. In addition, there are other countries that participate in REGLEG such as: the United Kingdom and its three regions with legislative powers (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), Portugal with Azores and Madeira, and even Finland, with the Åland Islands; they all enjoy a recognized autonomy. Regions with legislative powers elected directly their parliaments and governments that elaborate their own laws.

These regions with legislative power represent together roughly half the population of the EU. They have responsibilities comparable to those of Member States for transposing and implementing the European legislation in the matters that they are responsible for and, in some cases, they participate in the work of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission through their Member State delegations.

2. Aims of REGLEG

The network aims at securing active participation in important debates affecting the EU as well as drafting and presenting concrete proposals that defend and strengthen the constitutional and democratic roles of regions with legislative power.

3. REGLEG Political Statement about the 5th Cohesion report

3.1. Introduction

Seventy-three regions spread across eight Member States of the European Union have governments and directly elected parliaments with law-making powers. More than two hundred million European citizens, almost 45% of the EU population, rely on these regional governments to develop and deliver environmental, economic and social benefits that the EU provides. They are responsible for transposing and implementing EU legislation and policies, and in some cases constitute the only level of government in a Member State, which has such powers. Some regions with legislative powers take part in the work of the EU Council of Ministers as part of their Member State delegations. Some bear a part of the financial contributions to the EU paid by their Member States.

The estimated total amount of the budget that these authorities have to Administer (1) is more than five times the EU 2010 budget (2) and more than twice the allocated amount for the Cohesion Policy for the period 2007-2013 (3).

3.2. Added value of regions with legislative powers: legitimacy, effectiveness proximity and expertise

Regions with legislative powers hold legitimate competencies that are the result of the political and constitutional structures of the Member States which they are part of. So that these regions can comply with the obligations that emanate from their constitutional rules, they need to be involved directly in the legislative process. For this reason, their participation in the EU policy-making process, which take place when new legal proposals are prepared, is crucial. REGLEG also believes in the effect of a multilevel governance that involves European institutions, Member States and regions. In this way, a more effective European Union can be achieved, which would have direct and positive effects for its citizens and their perception of the work made by the EU.

Regions with legislative powers constitute the level of government closest to the citizens and whose active role increases transparency, allows for better governance and offers opportunities for the democratic involvement in public policy-making. The Governments of these regions hold both political and technical expertise, available for collaboration in the strengthening of EU policies. In this sense, the regions with legislative powers pro-actively accept their responsibilities and are prepared to work with Member States and EU institutions to produce and, where appropriate, implement effective policy devised in the interests of the citizen.

3.3. Cohesion Policy post 2013 and EU 2020 Strategy

Cohesion policy, from a regional approach, contributes considerably to the implementation of the renewed Lisbon strategy. Regions falling under the 'Convergence' objective and regions under the 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment' objective have an important role in the promotion of innovation and competitiveness in the EU. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that the current Cohesion objectives are maintained under Cohesion policy post 2013.

REGLEG welcomes the Fifth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion presented by the European Commission, particularly its intention to involve all levels of government to overcome the economic crisis.

(1) 820.806.041.703 €, estimated total amount - Budgets of REGLEG partners. Data compiled in November 2010 by the Aragon Presidency in collaboration with the REGLEG's Coordination Committee members.

(2) 141.400.000.000 €, EU Budget 2010

(3) 347.000.000.000 €, amount of the Cohesion Policy for the period 2007-2013.

REGLEG also agrees with the report's acknowledgement of the key role that EU cohesion policy plays in translating the Europe 2020 targets into practice, although Regleg would like to insist on the importance of maintaining the Cohesion policy main objective which is the reduction of wealth gaps between regions. On the other hand, REGLEG partners share the concerns expressed by the Committee of the Regions in its 'Contribution of Cohesion Policy to the Europe 2020 Strategy' related to the negative effect of the multiplication of sector-specific EU funding programmes and are also in favour of keeping the European Social Fund in the cohesion policy framework.

REGLEG wants to underline **five important issues** for the future:

(a) Cohesion Policy has to remain an European Policy due to the fact that this policy has proven its **European added value** ;

(b) Regleg wants a Cohesion policy post 2013 **for all regions**. It is important that these investments will not drop drastically and that they will not damage the advances achieved in the field of cohesion, which increase economic activity and reduce social disparities. **Concentration, integrated approach, flexibility and effectiveness of this policy** should be the key words in the next legislative package.

(c) All EU common policies including regional policy have to **contribute to the goals of the EU 2020 Strategy**. Synergies and coordination between the EU policies and cohesion policy are in this respect very important ;

(d) **Simplification and limited administrative burden** are key elements for the future.

(e) The cohesion policy is regional, so in regions with legislative powers **the managing authority, the certifying authority and the control authority** should be the responsibility of the Regional Government and Devolved Administrations in the respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

3.4. Application of the Treaty of Lisbon : Subsidiarity and Multigovernance

REGLEG has worked consistently over 10 years to contribute to the process that eventually resulted in the Lisbon Treaty. This journey began at Laeken and ended, finally, in Lisbon.

REGLEG welcomes the Lisbon Treaty and commits to monitoring its effectiveness for citizens. In particular Regleg will monitor the effectiveness of the provisions relating to subsidiarity and will judge, over time, whether this delivers results for national and regional parliaments and citizens.

REGLEG congratulates the Trio EU Presidency for the launch of the institutional changes established by the new Treaty, and for the boost of the **European regional dimension**.

REGLEG advocates for this boost to be continued by the forthcoming Presidencies and they wish for **a closer cooperation with the European institutions** to achieve these objectives. This could be translated in an increased involvement of regions with legislative powers in the policy formulation and in the decision-making process, as REGLEG is being requesting from its beginnings and as the Partner Regions concept encapsulates.

In this context, REGLEG looks forward to the results of the current trio of presidencies of the EU - Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian on a 'roadmap' with the aim of 'making a qualitative leap in the participation of local and regional bodies' in defining and developing the policies of the EU, particularly the proposals related to the empowerment of the Committee of the Regions and to the mechanisms to put in place multilevel governance as conceived in the Committee of the Regions White Paper on the matter.

Multilevel governance together with the institutional cooperation mechanisms should address the need for of a coordinated action of the EU, Members States and regional and local authorities in the application of EU policies in order to build Europe in partnership.

Subsidiarity is a key part of multilevel governance, and a crucial factor to bring Europe closer to citizens, given that EU decisions must be taken as closely as possible to its people. At the same time, the network demands a coherent implementation of the new principle of **territorial cohesion** established in the Lisbon Treaty which should become a guiding principle of the EU policies.

Political Statement based on the Zaragoza Declaration and approved by the CoCo

Brussels, 28 January 2011

Jean-Luc Vanraes
President of REGLEG 2011

MEMBERS OF THE REGLEG CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Åland Islands (*Finland*) – Aragon (*Spain*) as 2010 Presidency - Baden-Württemberg (*Germany*) - Bayern (*Germany*) – Brussels Capital (*Belgium*) as 2011 presidency - Catalunya (*Spain*) – Euskadi (*Spain*) - Extremadura (*Spain*) - Friuli Venezia Giulia (*Italy*) – Galicia (*Spain*) – Madeira (*Portugal*) - Nordrhein-Westfalen (*Germany*) – Piemonte (*Italy*) Rheinland-Pfalz (*Germany*) - Salzburg (*Austria*) - Scotland (*United Kingdom*) - Sicilia (*Italy*) - Wien (*Austria*) - Toscana (*Italy*) - Vlaanderen (*Belgium*) - Wales/Cymru (*United Kingdom*) - Wallonie (*Belgium*)