

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Grenzregionen (AGEG)
Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)
Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
Comunità di lavoro delle regioni europee di confine (AGEG)
Europæiske grænseregioners Arbejdsfællesskab (AGEG)
Werkgemeinschaft van Europese grensgebieden (WVEG)
Associação das Regiões Fronteiriças Europeias (ARFE)
Σύνδεσμος Ευρωπαϊκών Συνοριακών Περιφερειών (ΣΕΣΠ)
Stowarzyszenie Europejskich Regionów Granicznych (SERG)
Ассоциация Европейских Приграничных Регионов (АЕПР)



Mr. José Manuel Durão Barroso

President of the European Commission
BE-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Ref.: Consultation on the Future “Europe 2020” Strategy

Gronau, 14th January 2010

Dear Mr. President,

With great interest we took note of the consultation paper on the future “EU 2020” Strategy dated 24th November 2009.

Border and cross-border regions (more than 30% of the European population, living in 40% of the EU surface) are very much interested in future European strategic developments because they are strongly affected by structural and demographic changes, social and environmental challenges, as well as climate change.

The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), representing 100 members with more than 200 regional entities all over Europe, welcomes the three priorities outlined in the “EU 2020” Strategy with the focus on sustainability, innovation and human skills, under the condition that they will be part of a real European strategy (and not a policy mix as the former Lisbon Strategy) which takes into account the territorial impact of each EU policy. This would also be in line with the principle of territorial cohesion and the need to step up regional and local impact assessment for EU legislation both foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty. The future EU-budget should reflect the importance of such a coordinated strategic approach (as it is the case of the Regional and Cohesion Policies) by its allocation of funds; and not encouraging sectoral policies and activities, neglecting territorial cohesion.

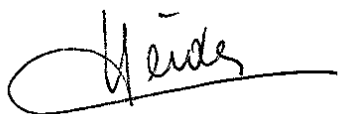
The AEBR took part in the past in the process to develop the Lisbon Strategy and many other European proposals. This has been also the case within the Structured Dialogue with the European Commission, especially regarding Cohesion Policy and Territorial Cohesion. In this sense, we assume that our opinion will be welcomed again and we can summarize our views (“AEBR Position Paper on the Future EU Strategy 2020”) with a very few core messages:

The EU Communication should give a due weight to and focus more strongly on:

- The importance of the Territorial Dimension, which means the role of regional and local authorities (following a “place-based approach”, as defined in the Barca Report).
- The implementation of a future strategy and its priorities by a shared management (taking into account Multi-level Governance, guaranteeing the Principle of Subsidiarity) instead of a top-down approach.
- The Cohesion Policy as a key for European integration and indispensable to implement this new strategy.
- The fact that the Structural and Cohesion Policy, with integrated multi-annual programmes, is one of the few European instruments which guarantee a better coordination between sectoral policies (as requested in all relevant EU-documents and public hearings) at European, national and regional levels, as well as between them.
- The European Territorial Cooperation Objective, with Cross-Border Cooperation programmes as a priority, which is mostly affected by Territorial Cohesion. If there is no cohesion along the European borders, it will be very difficult to realise the European integration and the Single Market.
- The different (and diverse) regional capacities to contribute to innovation, growth and employment.

Looking forward to seeing a stronger focus on Cohesion Policy and Territorial Cohesion as a result of this consultation,

Yours sincerely



Jean Paul Heider
AEBR 1st Vice-President
Vice-President Région Alsace



Martín Guillermo-Ramírez
AEBR Secretary General