



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

SUMMARY BRUSSELS ACTIVITIES for the NSC

- Plenary session Committee of the Regions (CoR) 28-29 November 2007
- Blue Planet Forum 27-28 November 2007
- Plenary session Committee of the Regions (CoR) 06-07 February 2008
- President CoR welcomed adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament recognising the Committee's role in monitoring the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs

Find below the most important themes discussed at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels in November.

Three Commissioners were among the main speakers at the Committee of the Regions' plenary session on 28-29 November; Vice-President **Margot WALLSTROM** (Institutional Relations and Communication), Commissioners **Joe BORG** (Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) and **Jan FIGEL** (Education, Culture and Youth).

This time the topics on the agenda were the fourth cohesion report, climate change, satellite navigation applications, health and safety at work, culture in a globalising world, education and awareness-raising promoting sustainable development, and ageing well in the information society.

The meeting, chaired by President Michel DELEBARRE took place alongside a '[structured dialogue](#)' with regional associations on the [Commission's legislative and work programme for 2008](#) and the [Blue Planet Forum](#) on EU maritime policy.

Commissioner Borg took part in a question-and-answer session on the Commission's maritime policy 'Blue Paper', which proposes a bolder EU strategy to encourage innovation in the sector and promote sustainable use of the seas.

The intervention by Commissioner Figel was linked to an opinion on 'culture in a globalising world' by **Gerd HARMS**, Representative of the region of Brandenburg for Federal and European Affairs (DE/PES), and a video presentation on the 2011 European Capitals of Culture (Tallinn, Estonia, and Turku, Finland).

Structured dialogue

The second day of this session was dominated by the structured dialogue with European and national associations of local and regional authorities. Vice-President **WALLSTROM** presented the Commission's work programme and answered questions on its main political themes

Participants were, a part from the four political groups in the CoR, **Izaskun BILBAO**, President of Spain's Basque Parliament (representing CALRE, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Parliaments), **Claudio MARTINI**, President of Tuscany, Italy (for the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions), **Ronan DANTEC**, Vice-President of Nantes Metropole, France (Eurocities), **Jens NILSSON**, Mayor of Ostersund, Sweden (representing the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy), and **Henning JENSEN**, Mayor of Nestved, Denmark (Local Government Denmark).

The second part of the dialogue focused on the detail of the work programme with contributions by **Anders KNAPE**, Mayor of Karlstad, Sweden (representing the Council of European Municipalities



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

and Regions), **Onno HOES**, Deputy for the Province of North Brabant, Netherlands (for the Assembly of European Regions), **Andrea MASCARETTI**, Deputy Mayor of Milan (ANCI, National Association of Italian Municipalities) and **Alessandro TESINI**, President of the Regional Assembly of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Conference of the Presidents of Italian Regional Assemblies).

Blue Planet Forum 27-28 November 2007

The Blue Planet Forum was a meeting of local authorities and maritime professionals after the publication of the Blue Paper¹ on "An integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union". The aim of the Forum is to raise general awareness of the impact of sustainable and efficient management of the sea. While the European Commission is presenting proposals for using maritime resources to accelerate sustainable economic development, those attending the Planet Blue Forum submitted their contributions to the Commission, which is to draw up a White Paper in 2008 containing proposals for Community action.

Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of the Regions, has said that the sea is a key interest and concern for all European decision-makers, and affects all of us. Thus the Blue Planet Forum² addresses the need to manage joint European maritime resources in a coordinated way.

Joe Borg observed that coastal regions, which represent 40% of Europe's GDP, provide access to the sea and to the rest of the world.

The Blue Planet Forum consisted of three events, a political conference, technical workshops led by experts from most of the European Union partner countries and an information event comprising a series of exhibitions and a European forum for young people, who will be invited to discuss maritime issues, sponsored by the World Ocean Network³ (aquarium managers, scientists, associations, teachers, etc.).

Political representatives from the coastal regions invited to speak include **Claudio Martini** (President of Tuscany, Italy, and of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions), **Saima Kalev** (mayor of Jõgeva, Estonia) and rapporteur for the CoR opinion on the Blue Paper, **Uwe Döring** (Minister for European Affairs in the government of Schleswig-Holstein and CoR rapporteur for maritime policy), **Konstantinos Tatsis** (President of the Prefectural Local Authority of Drama-Kavala-Xanthi and CoR member), **Sinikka Bohlin** (member of the Swedish parliament and of the Nordic Council of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference) and **Brad Watson** (Vice-Chairman of the Arc Manche Assembly). The northernmost representative, **Aqqaluk Lyngø**⁴, from Greenland, will speak on behalf of the Inuit people from the Arctic Circle region.

Thanks to the support of the **World Ocean Network** and the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions**⁵ this event included experts on maritime issues such as **Philippe Valette**, director-general of Nausicaä, the French National Sea Experience Centre, **Casey Walther** (UNESCO's Intergovernmental

1 http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/index_en.html.

2 <http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/activities/forums.htm>.

3 www.worldoceannetwork.org.

4 <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?ID=62&Lang=En>.

5 <http://www.cpmr.org/en/index.php?act=>



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

Oceanographic Research Commission), **John Richardson** (European Commission Maritime Policy Task Force), experts from NGOs such as the **WWF** and **Greenpeace**, and **Jacques Rougerie** (a maritime architect).

Find below the most important themes discussed at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels in February 2008.

On Wednesday 6 February, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) elected a new President to serve for the second half of its current four-year term, which runs to February 2010. The CoR's has also elected a new First Vice-President, 27 Vice-Presidents of the national delegations and other members of the Bureau. Current First Vice-President **Luc Van den Brande**, Belgian senator, former Minister-President of Flanders and a member of the Flemish Parliament (EPP/BE) has been succeeded **Michel Delebarre** as President.

European Commission President **José Manuel Barroso**, Vice-President **Günter Verheugen** (enterprise and industry), Commissioner **Mariann Fischer Boel** (agriculture and rural development) and **Ivan Žagar**, Slovenian Minister for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy, have been invited to address the members.

President Barroso focused on the importance of maintaining strong ties between the Commission and the CoR, particularly in terms of reinforcing the involvement of regions and cities in the policy areas where they can make the biggest impact in delivery of the [climate change action and renewable energy package](#), [Lisbon Strategy](#) (jobs and growth), and [communication](#).

Vice-President Verheugen talked about the new [Enterprise Europe Network](#), a CoR-backed initiative aimed at providing SMEs with information on policies and funding opportunities so that they can develop their full potential.

Regional Policy Minister Ivan Žagar will discuss the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU: he is expected to emphasise the importance of partnership and cooperation, as well as highlighting the new European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), an EU instrument aimed at facilitating the management of cross-border, transnational and regional projects.

Commissioner Fischer Boel's intervention was linked to the vote on the CoR's opinion on the Common Agricultural Policy "Health Check".

The resolution for the Spring European Council reflected the findings of a new CoR report, requested by EU leaders in 2006, on the effects of the revised Lisbon Strategy and outlook beyond 2008. Members are expected to ask the Council to mandate the CoR to regularly report on the issue. They looked into the 'Lisbon paradox' as well, which shows that whilst regions and cities are fully engaged in achieving growth and jobs objectives, a majority of them feel that their involvement in the achievement of these objectives is underestimated.

President CoR welcomed adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament recognising the Committee's role in monitoring the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

February 21, 2008

Luc Van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), has welcomed the adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament recognising the Committee's role in monitoring the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. The resolution on the 2008 Spring Council, adopted by MEPs in Strasbourg on 20 February, highlights that the CoR will deliver a report to EU leaders at the summit on the effects of the revised Lisbon Strategy and outlook beyond 2008. The report, drawn up by the CoR's Lisbon Monitoring Platform at the request of the Council in 2006 and based on feedback from 104 EU regions and cities, assesses the impact of the strategy and examines the extent to which Structural Funds' expenditure is helping to achieve innovation and environmental goals. President Van den Brande remarked: "The Lisbon Monitoring Platform is a significant asset, because it is focused on results and ensures that the Lisbon Strategy is implemented in the optimum way."

Referring to the recently adopted CoR resolution on the role of regions and cities in the implementation of the Strategy he urged Member States to involve local and regional authorities more systematically at all stages of the Lisbon policy cycle and called for greater cooperation between different government levels for more coordinated and effective policymaking. "Too many regions, cities and local authorities are still dissatisfied with their level of involvement in national reform programmes," he added.

In its report, the CoR stresses the need for local and regional authorities to be fully involved in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes, and highlights the EU's Cohesion Policy as one of the key tools for delivering the Lisbon goals on the ground.