

**Resolution of the Committee of the Regions to be submitted to the European Spring Council 2008
on ‘The Strategy for Growth and Jobs — Handling the “Lisbon paradox”’**

(2008/C 105/07)

Whereas the 2006 Spring European Council asked the Committee of the Regions to deliver a summary report in support of the Partnership for Growth and Jobs for its 2008 Summit, to assess the effects of the revised Lisbon Strategy on the local and regional level, and to provide an outlook beyond 2008.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. **welcomes** this request as Europe’s Regions and Cities play a major part in the delivery of the Lisbon Strategy. In fact, they are the key actors in the area of innovation, research and education policies; they deliver more than 66 % of all public investment in the EU; they are increasingly focusing the Structural Funds expenditure on growth and jobs goals;

2. **recalls** that the EU Reform Treaty adopted in Lisbon adds territorial cohesion as a third objective of the European Union, alongside social and economic cohesion as a consequence, addressing territorial disparities that affect the overall competitiveness of the EU’s economy becomes a priority, making the role of Regions and Cities more crucial than ever;

3. **welcomes** the European Commission’s Strategic Report on economic reforms across Europe, which includes an assessment of the Member State’s progresses with related country-specific draft recommendations, a proposal for substantial confirmation of the integrated guidelines and for a new Community Lisbon Programme 2008-2010. This Strategic Report basically shows that the Lisbon Strategy has proven its worth by creating an overall objective for more growth and jobs in Europe. Refers in this context to the establishment of several cooperation associations between regions whose activities are also geared to the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy; these include, for example, the Innovation Alliance, a cooperation association of approximately 20 European regions who are already successful in the area of innovation and a number of whom already fulfil the Lisbon criteria;

4. however, **stresses** that not all the Member States are implementing reform programmes at the necessary pace, and that much more has still to be done to push ahead with reforms;

5. **welcomes** the decision of the 2006 European Council to engage the CoR in delivering the Partnership for Growth and Jobs through the provision of a report on the effects of the revised Lisbon agenda on the local and regional levels, and **asks** the Spring European Council to mandate the CoR to regularly report on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and its follow-up on the local and regional levels;

6. **considers** that the Lisbon Strategy can only be successfully delivered if local and regional authorities are fully involved in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes, and **reiterates** its commitment to contribute to the realisation of the Strategy for Growth and Jobs on the ground;

7. **firmly believes** that there needs to be a European strategy to foster Europe’s competitiveness also beyond 2010, setting an EU-wide coordinated and inclusive policy of economic reforms for growth and jobs and for better addressing the global challenges which all levels of governance in Europe increasingly face;

8. **offers** its support to the European Commission to organise a European-wide awareness campaign to bring attention and backing for this strategy now and into the future;

The ‘Lisbon Paradox’ and the Ownership of the Lisbon Agenda

1. **welcomes** that one of the key changes of the revised Lisbon Strategy adopted in 2005 is the concept of ‘going local’, aimed at stressing the role of the local and regional levels;

2. **observes** that, while Europe’s regions and cities are engaging in virtually all the growth and jobs objectives of the Lisbon strategy, a majority of them feel that the contribution of this Strategy towards the achievement of these objectives is of low importance;

3. **regrets** this ‘Lisbon Paradox’ and **recalls** that increased ownership of the growth and jobs agenda, as requested in the 2005 revision of the Lisbon Strategy, can be achieved only if the different levels of government (the EU, national, regional and local) work together to meet the task;

4. **therefore** calls for greater cooperation between the different government levels according to the subsidiarity principle allowing for more coherent, coordinated and effective policymaking and increasing the ‘added value’ of having an EU-wide jobs and growth strategy;

Implementation gap — Regions and cities in the governance cycle

5. **recalls** that local and regional authorities are highly committed to the Lisbon objectives, and that many see a potential to step up their role in the implementation process; **notes** a prevailing dissatisfaction with their involvement in the implementation, which shows that, in spite of some improvements, an implementation gap persists which has to be tackled in the next governance cycle;
6. **recommends** that the Commission's annual monitoring and country specific recommendations should include information on the involvement of all stakeholders in a systematic way;
7. **reiterates** its calls that Member States involve more systematically local and regional authorities at all the stages of the Lisbon policy cycle, in accordance with their respective constitutional provisions;
8. **asks** to be invited to the Lisbon Methodology Working Group of the Economic Policy Committee;
9. **recommends** that Eurostat be charged to deliver all relevant statistical data at Regional level which would enable the compiling and publication of a structural monitoring report on achieving the Lisbon strategy targets;

The Cohesion Policy Makes an important contribution to the implementation of the strategy for growth and employment

10. **sees** in the European Cohesion Policy as one important instrument for enabling the regions and cities in Europe reach the objectives of the Strategy for growth and jobs on the ground. The cohesion policy is the most important accompanying policy in the regions, which are lagging behind for strengthening competitiveness and employment;
11. **observes** that the earmarking requirement in the new Cohesion policy programming period 2007-2013 introduced relevant and major changes in spending plans for regions and cities, mainly leading to an increase in innovation expenditure. Furthermore **considers** and welcomes that earmarking contributes to the alignment of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies with the key mission of the Cohesion Policy and **expects** that the Commission provides proposals after the evaluation of the experience made in the current programming period, on how the cohesion policy can contribute to the Lisbon strategy in the future;
12. **shares** the European Commission point of view ⁽¹⁾ that the new 'Cohesion policy 2007-2013 has created the basis for a more strategic approach to investment planning based on the Lisbon strategy and for greater ownership of the strategy on the

⁽¹⁾ Communication 'Member States and Regions delivering the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs through EU Cohesion policy, 2007-2013' of 11 November 2007, p. 11-12, Conclusions.

ground through the enhanced decentralisation of management and the greater role for the partners'. **Regrets** however, that the Commission limits itself to 'working closely with the Member States using the systems and procedures that have been put in place for monitoring, evaluation and the adjustment of the programmes to changing circumstances and priorities'. **Encourages** the Commission to give due recognition to the key role that regions and cities could play in this context;

13. therefore **asks for** mechanisms for better coordination between the different levels of policy-making in order to develop an effective strategy involving all authorities aiming to reach the Lisbon goals at regional and local level. The Committee of the Regions, in cooperation with national and European associations of local and regional authorities, is willing to give its contribution for such a coordinated and participative approach;

14. **highlights** the new opportunities created by the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which allows national, regional and local authorities to develop a stronger territorial cooperation, for a better, coherent and more effective implementation of the Lisbon objectives in a given area, by developing concrete projects in cross border regions and implementing projects under transnational and interregional cooperation;

15. given the legal basis on territorial cohesion of the new Lisbon Treaty, it **calls** on the EU to make concrete provisions and implement appropriate actions which will meet the specific needs of the outermost, island, mountain and coastal regions;

16. furthermore **believes** that the forthcoming EU Budget Review will help increase awareness that for specific territorial needs, challenges and opportunities of Europe's regions and cities can only be achieved by a strengthened EU Cohesion Policy beyond 2013;

17. **recalls** the need to further enable and facilitate a horizontal coordination between Structural Funds and other relevant European funding programmes, such as the: Competitiveness & Innovation Programme (CIP), the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7) and the Lifelong-Learning Programmes (LLL), to maximise the added value of European funding towards the achievement of the Lisbon goals;

18. **stresses** that economic dynamism in the highly competitive 21st century must be at all levels — EU, Member States, and regions/localities — so as to build a stable, prosperous society for all of Europe's territories. **Recognises** that local and regional authorities can facilitate the conditions that encourage enterprise growth within their areas. **Believes** that the future of Europe's territories cannot be shaped only on the basis of purely competitive dynamics;

Future priorities in local and regional development policies

19. **urges** the EU and its Member States to take into account the priorities of regions and cities in their respective development programmes;

20. **believes** that the Lisbon Programme is an important lever to raise the awareness for the growth and jobs agenda

and the added value it brings to national, regional and local policy-making;

21. **instructs** its president to submit this resolution to the Slovenian Presidency of the EU and to the 2008 Spring European Council, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Brussels, 7 February 2008.

President
of the Committee of the Regions
Luc VAN DEN BRANDE
