



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Mr Sobotka,

I would like to thank the Czech Senate for its resolution about the Commission's Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion {COM(2008)616}.

In line with the Senate's recommendations concerning preservation of biological diversity and the importance of sustainable land use, the Green Paper considers Europe's diversity as a valuable asset to build on. Furthermore, in the course of the consultation on territorial cohesion the term was often interpreted as the territorial dimension of sustainable development.

The consultation also showed a growing interest to address interdependencies of territories and further foster cooperation between them. DG Regional Policy, in collaboration with other services, has been organising seminars on 3 important aspects of urban-rural relations: territorial competitiveness, sustainable development and social inclusion. The coming months will see further expert seminars on integrated local development.

As the Senate probably knows, the Commission presented a summary of the consultation in the Sixth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion and organises follow up events on certain important issues raised (the first one for example on territorial cooperation was held on 25 September 2009).

In addition to the consultation, the ongoing debate on the future of cohesion policy is based on the independent expert report by Fabrizio Barca (*'An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy'*) and the Reflection paper on the future cohesion policy by former Commissioner Hübner both presented in April 2009.

Mr. Přemysl Sobotka
President of the Senate
of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

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In order to provide an informal platform to discuss the main building blocks of the future cohesion policy between Commission services and Member States' policy makers, DG Regional Policy has launched a high level reflection group. The first meeting took place on 2 October 2009 and focused on the mission, objectives and delivery mechanism of Cohesion policy in line with the orientations presented in above-mentioned reflection paper. It is proposed that later meetings would focus on territorial cooperation (December) and local development initiatives (first half of 2010).

DG Regional Policy will undertake a stocktaking of the Barca report and the discussion with Member States on the reflection paper in late October. This discussion will form the basis of a second reflection paper which will be presented by the Commissioner for Regional Policy in December 2009.

It is in the context of this broad debate that the ways will be examined in which territorial cohesion might be explicitly integrated in cohesion policy post-2013. The Fifth Cohesion Report due at the end of 2010 could provide an excellent opportunity for presenting this.

I am looking forward to continuing the highly valuable dialogue about the improvement of EU policies,

Yours sincerely,

Margot WALLSTRÖM
Vice-President of the European Commission