Introduction

Some two weeks before the European Council meets to review the Lisbon strategy of March 2000, Danuta Hübner, the Commissioner responsible for regional policy, has invited more than 500 participants - among them the elected leaders of many EU regions, regional policy stakeholders and experts - to discuss how regions can make Lisbon work. The European Union’s 254 regions have a key role to play in a new partnership for growth and employment as recently proposed by the Commission in its re-launch of the Lisbon strategy.

Europe’s regions have much experience in promoting a more competitive economy. With the help of the EU’s Structural and Cohesion Funds, regions are already working to achieve key aspects of the Lisbon agenda. This effort must be continued in future and it is with this in mind that, in 2004, the Commission brought forward proposals for the reform of regional and cohesion policy for the period 2007-2013.

For the future, a clearer focus is needed on contributing to growth and jobs. Greater ownership of the growth and employment agenda on the part of the EU regions means a better performance of the EU economy as a whole. In this respect, Lisbon needs the regions as much as the regions need Lisbon.
Opening Speech by President Barroso and first Plenary Session
(9h20-11h00)

Between 9h20 and 9h45, President Barroso will give his introductory speech. He will be followed by speeches on the part of Commissioner Hübner, Mininster Schmit, the representative of the Luxembourg Presidency and the President of the Parliament, Mr Borrell. Each of these interventions will last 15min. This part will be followed by a debate with the floor of 30min.

Session on the Kok Report
(11h00-12h30)

On 3 November 2004, Wim Kok, the former Dutch Prime Minister, presented a mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy to the President of the Commission. The report stated that the results obtained so far are rather disappointing and better implementation of the Lisbon strategy was needed to make up for lost time. One particular problem which has been highlighted is the lack of ownership of the strategy at the grassroots. In this respect, the regional dimension is key. Regions have a major contribution to make to the implementation of the agenda. Two of the key recommendations of the report – enhancing ownership of the Lisbon strategy by EU institutions and Member States and reshaping the EU budget to better reflect the Lisbon priorities – are directly linked to the Commission’s proposals of 2004 for the reform of regional and new cohesion policy for the period, 2007-2013.

Under the chairmanship of Commissioner Hübner, interventions during this session are expected from Mr Kok, Mr. Rousset, President of the Association of the French Regions and President of the Regional Council of Aquitaine, Mr Fernández Ordóñez, The Spanish Secretary of State for Finances and Budget and Mr Hausner, The Polish Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of the Economy, Labour and Social Policy (10 min each). The session will be followed by a debate with the floor of 30min.

Questions for this session:

- In terms of the ownership of the Lisbon agenda, what are the relevant experiences of regions in constructing regional partnerships for achieving the Lisbon objectives?

- In strategic terms, how can the next generation of programmes ensure the necessary focus on the growth and jobs agenda?

- What experiences are relevant from the regional policy programmes of the current period 2000-2006?
Roundtable 1 : Competitiveness and Governance
(14h00-15h30)

Territorial disparities are often simply the reflection of strong inequalities within the regions in terms of competitiveness factors. These territorial disparities cannot be ignored, since they affect the overall competitiveness of the EU economy. EU cohesion policy has shown that competitiveness and cohesion are two sides of the same coin and the challenge is to take competitiveness and growth down to the local and regional levels.

Under the chairmanship of Commissioner Barrot, interventions during this session are expected from Ms Simsic, the Major of Ljubljana and the representative of EUROCITIES, Mr Straub, the President of the Committee of the Regions, and Mr Martini, the President of Tuscany and of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (10 min each). The session will be followed by a debate with the floor of 30min.

Roundtable questions:

- What is the role of the regions and cities in creating the conditions for economic growth and competitiveness?

- How do regions set about the task of exploiting assets and resources to generate competitive outcomes?

- How can regions achieve win-win solutions in order to reconcile growth/competitiveness and cohesion? Do they have the capacity to do this?

- What needs to be done in order to maximize the impact and added-value of the EU regional programmes in future?
The Lisbon strategy emphasizes the importance of research and development for economic growth, employment creation and social cohesion. The utilisation of the regional knowledge base, innovation potential and co-operation between businesses and universities and research institutions plays an important role in the competitive economic performance of the regions. For the regions, the utilisation of the new economic possibilities offered by the information society and the extension of their local knowledge base can be a breakout point, by increasing their innovation capacities. The strengthening of regional research and technological development capacities, with a particular emphasis on the transfer of knowledge to business, helps to generate sustainable integrated regional and local economic development by mobilising and strengthening endogenous capacity.

Under the chairmanship of Commissioner Kroes interventions during this session are expected from Mr Milbradt, Minister-President of Saxony, Mr H. Manninen, Finish Minister of Regional and Municipal Affairs (Finland) and Mrs A.-M. Sigmund, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (10 min each). The session will be followed by a debate with the floor of 30min.

Roundtable questions:

- What can regions and cities do to tap the potential of universities and major centres of research?
- What can regions do to facilitate the technology transfer from universities and research centres to business? How can regions foster a greater cooperation between firms and universities?
- What kind of regional innovation strategies are needed to promote growth and competitiveness?
Background: Contribution of the Structural Funds to the Lisbon objectives

The objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and those of the Structural Funds are largely overlapping. Economic growth is a shared objective, which in the case of the regional programmes is translated in terms of promoting convergence between Member States and regions in levels of GDP per head. In terms of the content of the programmes, complementarities are important for nearly all the Lisbon themes, thanks in part to the allocation of European Structural Funds to projects in the field of employment, information technology infrastructures, research, human capital, enterprise development, social inclusion and sustainable development. Nearly €80 billion has been disbursed since 2000 to support the Lisbon Strategy’s main aims, with the European Regional Development Fund set to invest for the period 2000-2006:

- € 60 billion to prevent and combat unemployment, develop human resources and foster social integration in the labour market
- € 5.8 billion on social infrastructure and public health (including childcare facilities and hospitals) and a further € 1.2 billion on labour market (including social inclusion and workforce flexibility).
- € 9.6 billion on research, technological development and innovation.
- € 21.6 billion on the development of SMEs and € 3 billion for risk capital financing for SMEs.
- € 6.2 billion on infrastructure in the telecommunications and information society areas.
- € 1.5 billion on educational and vocational training infrastructure.
- € 29.3 billion on transport infrastructure (including road/rail and waterways infrastructure) and a further € 833 million on renewable sources of energy. Furthermore the Cohesion Fund has spent a rough amount of € 4.3 billion and is planning to spend a further € 5.5 billion on the trans-European networks for transport.
- € 10.4 billion on environment infrastructure. Furthermore the Cohesion Fund has spent a rough amount of € 2.8 billion and is planning to spend a further € 6.2 billion on specific environmental priorities.

As part of the mid-term review of programmes in 2003-2004, an extra €8 billion from the performance reserve was allocated to successful programmes in close consultation with the Member States. The Member States and regions have used this opportunity to reinforce many areas consistent with the Lisbon Strategy (for example, completing broadband infrastructures). Furthermore, the programmes are contributing to implementing the Growth Initiative as it relates to high output networks, especially for schools and hospitals. In parallel, the new Member States are working to Commission guidelines for preparing and implementing actions under the programmes that focus on modernisation of networks, the environment, employment, research and innovation.

In general the interrelationship between regional programmes and the Lisbon Strategy is such that congruence with the Lisbon objectives is higher than 50%, though there are important differences between regions and territories. In an analysis of 11 regional and 4 national programmes the use of European regional programmes to achieve the Lisbon objectives is more in evidence for the relatively more prosperous regions (between 67% and 85%), and more limited for the least developed regions (between 18% and 33%). In the latter, the programmes tend to have an emphasis on basic infrastructure essential as the foundation for growth. In selecting projects for support under the programmes, the criteria used often refer to their potential contribution to social inclusion, gender equality, sustainability, human capital and access to information society infrastructures, which are part of the Lisbon Strategy.

More information

Lisbon website: [http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm)


[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/hubner/focus/focus_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/hubner/focus/focus_en.htm)