



CRPM CPMR

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### THE REGIONS FACING THE CRISIS

A round table discussion on *The Regions Facing the Crisis* was held today in Brussels on the initiative of the President of the Principality of Asturias (ES), **Vincente Álvarez Areces**, with the participation of a number of CPMR Regions from all the major sea areas.

*"This round table represents the first stage in discussions on the crisis with an exchange of personal accounts, feelings and ideas, which is essential in order to shape more concrete and useful proposals for the future,"* stated **Xavier Gizard**, Secretary General of the CPMR.

Before going on to discuss the future of EU policies, the participants wished to address the actual impacts of the crisis in the Regions and the measures taken to tackle them, the synergies developed between the Regions and their Member States to implement recovery plans, and the use of the structural funds in helping to cope with the crisis.

During the session, the CPMR Regions also launched a manifesto, [\*Emerging Stronger from the Crisis: a European Territorial Pact\*](#), which, among other things, calls on the EC to convene a **special meeting** bringing together the European Commission, the Member States and representatives of European Regional Authorities to examine the impact of the various recovery plans on the European territories and the quest for the best possible efficiency of the resources used.

The main stakeholders in this round table were the regional representatives who are experiencing the crisis at first hand on a day-to-day basis. In addition, representatives from the European Commission, OECD and the Committee of the Regions Forward Studies Unit also took part in the discussions in order to provide a more objective view and offer a number of responses to the crisis.

*"My Region suffered a very serious recession in the 80's and 90's when we depended on coal and steel,"* stated **Vincente Álvarez Areces**, President of the Principality of Asturias (ES), *"and we managed to overcome it successfully, but this crisis is different since it has a much more global dimension to it."*

*"However, I do think that a peripheral region like ours could become a "central" region in a number of sectors by working intelligently. We have to emerge stronger from this crisis by adopting a new model for development: the fight against climate change for example which can be led without having to wait until the crisis is over."*

**Silvia Godelli**, Minister for the Mediterranean at Puglia Region (IT) also stressed the importance of climate change. *"Our Region has the biggest source of renewable energies and this sector is fortunately not affected by the crisis. We installed wind turbines, solar panels and biomass plants well before the crisis struck, and this decision is a great boon to us at present, making us convinced that we need to continue in this direction."* **Silvia Godelli** also spoke of the measures taken by Puglia to react to the effects of the crisis, such as anti-usury laws to tackle a phenomenon that risks increasing at a time when businesses are short on liquidity.

Speaking on behalf of the European Commission, **Dirk Ahner**, Director General of DG Regio, considered that *"the diversity of the impact the crisis is having on the territories calls for adapted responses that are also consistent*



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at EU level". In his view, innovation is a fundamental key to aiding recovery from the crisis, but "we need to talk about innovation in general and not just high-tech innovation".

This working day constitutes a follow-up to a survey the CPMR conducted among its Regions which, according to **Julie Gourden**, Director in charge of cohesion policy, shows that "there is not one crisis but several crises, since the situation differs greatly depending on the Region in question, and responses clearly vary depending on the Region's situation, its powers and its budgets".

Following on from this round table discussion, the CPMR will be organising a **Seminar on "European responses to the crisis: what do the Regions expect?"** on 27 November 2009 in Marseille (FR). "This will provide an opportunity," added Mrs Gourden, "to draw some initial lessons for the future in the face of this crisis and above all to propose to the Commission and European Parliament some concrete measures related to the expertise within our territories."

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