

**Dinner with 82 representatives from the Randstad region  
"Scenarios for Europe of tomorrow"**

**Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

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Chair, Committee for Regional Development  
European Parliament**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear representatives of the Randstad region,  
Honourable deputies,

The dinner that you organized certainly comes at a time which can be called interesting. At time when it is legitimate to ask fundamental questions and to question preconceived ideas.

We seem to be getting out of the recession. But I am not sure we are getting out of the structural crisis in the real economy. The financial crisis hit structurally weak European economies, that were about to enter into deep structural transformation triggered by climate change, energy concerns, and demographics.

It is legitimate to ask what should be our priorities for the next ten years; what should be the best ways to generate new sources of growth and create new jobs.

Challenges for Europe are known: sustainable growth, knowledge and innovation as the major sources of growth and change and new sustainable

jobs to cope with unemployment that can still grow. All that should work towards making European economy more competitive globally.

The essential question is how to make it happen; how to promote sustainable growth, knowledge and innovation, and create new jobs. And how to be competitive.

First, we must not disconnect the crisis, and our exit strategies, from long term growth strategies. Getting out from the crisis must be done in a way that puts the economy on the right track in terms of long-term growth and structural transformation.

Second, we do not know whether the massive, crisis-related public fiscal stimulus does its job; whether banks, once they restart credit activities, will support companies which Europe needs most. What Europe needs most is innovative, future-oriented, growth oriented companies. We must see that this is the case.

Third, this is where European regional policy enters the picture. We must engage all levels of European governance, European, national, regional, and local to pursue common European economic objectives.

We must fully mobilize regional policy to get out of the crisis stronger. Investing in climate adaptation and mitigation, in energy efficiency and renewable energy, in knowledge and innovation is crucial.

Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. The 2006 European regional policy reform has prepared regions to go this extra mile.

I remember my first visits to your provinces back in 2005-2006, when I saw the first triple-helix projects. I saw excellent cooperation and interaction between triple-helix players. Public authorities, innovation intermediaries - clusters and R&D. They all facilitated what is Europe's major weakness: bringing enterprises and research together.

European regional policy has a history of catalyzing and encouraging knowledge-innovation interactions, helping to create trust between players, using local knowledge.

The more I look at the global reality, the better I see how important it is to get local and regional levels interconnected and directly involved in the pursuit of European objectives.

We have a new Treaty now. Local and regional levels are now explicitly responsible for the delivery of European tasks.

Another Treaty innovation - territorial cohesion - gives us a chance to avoid sectoral approaches to development, and to think in terms of place based policies.

Territorial cohesion will take us towards reinforced coordination of policies at all levels, will improve multilevel governance and will assure more strategic territorial cooperation.

And let's make one thing clear - without you, the Dutch Provinces on board Europe will not be able to convert all the challenges we face into growth opportunities.