

Speech of Commissioner Hübner at the Alpeuregio press conference in the context of the two seminars on "Eco-Innovation" and "Cluster Life Cycle Analysis"

(10 October 2006)

Dear President van Staa,
Authorities,
President Michel Delebarre,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I wish to thank the authorities of the three regions and provinces of Land Tyrol, South-Tyrol and Trentino for the kind invitation to participate to this press conference.

I thank in particular Presidents Herwig van Staa, Luis Durnwalder and Lorenzo Dellai.

The "Open Days" event has become a "*Treffpunkt*" or "Punto d'incontro" for the actors of regional policy, i.e. regional and local authorities, financial institutions, the business community, the Commission. It is an ideal framework for all stakeholders to share experiences and best practices, to reflect on opportunities for cooperation and partnerships, which would be the key for the architecture and the results of the renewed regional policy.

I know that for your three regions this is the first active participation to the Open Days, and I should congratulate you for this. We need initiatives like yours. Indeed, you are here to listen, but also to speak up. Regional policy is not a top-down expression of a political will. It is just the opposite: it comes from the cooperation between the various levels of governance, and it is based on the analysis of concrete needs and opportunities at local and regional level. And, of course, we need your creativity and your commitment.

I therefore praise ALPEUREGIO and the other participating regions (*Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Carinthia, Istria, Navarra,*

Timis County and Central Moravia), for the organisation of these two seminars. Initiatives like these, which I imagine have required great efforts from your representatives, particularly those working in your offices in Brussels, will certainly be beneficial today and tomorrow.

The topics that you have chosen, "**Eco-Innovation**" and "**Cluster Life Cycle Analysis**" are at the heart of the new generation of the European regional policy.

Clusters provide a favourable environment for sharing knowledge, acquiring partners and thus for generating new ideas and innovative products, technologies and services. This is exactly what Europe needs.

The competitiveness of a region can be measured by the ability of its economy to provide its population with high and rising standards of living and employment on a sustainable basis. And competitiveness and growth very much depend on innovation, which – as President Barroso recalled yesterday – is the backbone of European economy.

In this respect, Trentino, Süd-Tyrol and Land Tyrol represent success stories of sustainable economic development and, on the basis of active cooperation between them, a prosperous economy. But to be able to sustain this performance in the long term, in a world that is changing, continuous efforts are needed. And what I appreciate is that you look forward.

Local initiatives, through regional policy, are essential to create growth and jobs. Furthermore, we need to elaborate programmes capable to attract and raise private capital and to build public-private partnerships (PPP).

But policies cannot be effective without the people and the personal commitment of leaders. That is why your role, as local and regional authorities is essential in addressing the challenges of the future and devising coherent strategies, capable to promote innovation and sustainable growth.

I very much encourage you to continue the fruitful cooperation, of which today's gathering is a tangible example.

Thank you for your attention.