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A “Europe of the Regions”? – Do the Actual Influence Capabilities of Regions Merit this Label?

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
AER	Assembly of European Regions
CEM	Council of European Municipalities
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CoR	Committee of the Regions
DG	Directorate General in the European Commission
EC	European Commission
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EMR	Euroregion Maas-Rhine
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
ETA	Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna
etc.	et cerera
EU	European Union
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
NUTS	Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistique
REGI	Committee on Regional Development in the European Parliament
SEA	Single European Act
SEM	Single European Market

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Executive Summary of the Main Findings

- There exists a huge amount of definitions for regions. Regions itself a very diverse and heterogeneous throughout the European Union. There is consensus that the term refers to some kind of space, may it be territorial, political, economic, social or functional.
- Despite some reversals, regions have gained greater importance over the last decades and a trend towards increased regionalism can be observed. The institutionalism of regions peaked with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991. Ever since, not much legal progress has been made for regions.
- The concept of a “Europe of the Regions” comprises two very different ideas: The first one envisions that regions will replace or even displace nation states while the second sees a Europe, in which regions gain importance and become equal actors next to the national and the supranational level.
- There are different options for regions to become active on the European level:
 - The region is at first only the object of a top-down activity of a EU (regional) policy and can later on emanate from this activity as a self-constitutive region.
 - The region represents itself on its own on-site, i.e. in Brussels and is thus a unity of action for itself, e.g. with the help of an information/ representation office.
 - Regions align with each other in horizontal networks with a common sphere of activity.
 - Regions align with each other, but choose – in contrast to 3. – one common actor to represent their interests on the European level.
- There are horizontally and vertically acting regions.
- Horizontally cooperating regions mainly act in their own created sphere of activity and thus act less on the European level than regional organisations or bottom-up institutions as the CoR. Examples are the Euroregions.
- Top-down measures of regional policy with their strong economic focus as well as bottom-up institutions with only advising roles in the European decision-making process encounter a lot of difficulties. An important consequence which can be deduced from the examples is that a “Europe of the Regions” cannot solely be built out of passive regions which are only the object of regional policies.

- In contrast to horizontally action cooperations, which often lack a collective actor who can represent the networks on the European level, European regional organisations have exactly this at their disposal.
- When looking at vertically acting regional organisations it can be observed that there is a huge amount of organisations which all represent local or regional interests. Thus, the question arises if not one organisation representing regional and local interests would in fact be more powerful and more seriously taken by the EU institutions and thus also more assertive than a whole bulk of organisations.
- It is difficult to foresee the future development of the allocation of competencies in the EU. An increase of power of regions cannot be observed at this point, but on the other hand a positive long-term development of regional competencies cannot be precluded altogether as the historic development and slow gain of competencies show.
- Thus, it can be stated that the actual influence of regions nowadays does not completely merit the label of a “Europe of the Regions” but might in the future if some development were met.

1. Introduction

Conceptualisations like „nation“ and „state“ seem to become less and less important nowadays. However, in times of increasing globalisation two main trends can be observed. On the one hand, more and more transnational companies gain greater importance and influence and thus, the states' ability for control and governance decreases, especially in the economic and social area. Regions within the states on the other hand tend to become more and more important due to societies' alteration towards a service economy. Regions gain importance as they are places where political decisions as well as the implementation take place (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p.7).

In the European Union (EU) terms like “Europe of the Regions” and the subsidiary principle are often used as a counterbalance when the “democratic deficit” and the inefficiency of EU- decisions are criticised. The new Constitution¹ in general seems to take full account of the regional and local dimension within EU governance but has on the other hand failed to comply with the expectations to strengthen the role of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in decision-making, e.g. by introducing a suspensive veto in some cases of mandatory consultation.

The **main research question** of this thesis is:

“To what extent does the actual influence of regions in the European Union merit the label of a “Europe of the Regions”?”

In order to answer the main research question, the following **sub-questions** have to be answered:

1. What is a region?
2. How has the role of regions in Europe developed over the last decades?
3. What is the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” about?
4. What is currently the actual influence of regions on EU decision-making outside of the EU institutions?

The paper is mainly based on desk research, i.e. the review of literature. For the part dealing with the Committee of the Regions an interview with an expert, in this case

¹ Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007: http://bookshop.europa.eu/eubookshop/FileCache/PUBPDF/FXAC07306ENC/FXAC07306ENC_002.pdf (viewed 6 June 2008).

the representative of North-Rhine Westphalia to the Committee of the Regions², Mr. Werner Jostmeier, will deliver additional information and adjuvant assistance for the assessment of the current situation and it might also help to give an outlook on possible improvements that would have to be made in order to increase the regions' influence on decision-making processes in the EU.

² The complete interview can be found in Annex IV.

2. Introductory Remarks

2.1 Definition(s) of the Term “Region”

First of all, the question arises, what exactly is understood by a “region”. Repeatedly, you can hear talks about the Baltic Sea Region³, the region North Rhine-Westphalia⁴ or the region of the Middle East⁵. However, what do these –admittedly quite taperedly chosen – regions have in common? Contrary to cities, countries etc., a region does not seem to have fixed borders and thus seems to be freely definable. So far, no uniform definition of the term “region” can be found. First of all, the region in the sense of a geographic area is just an unspecific term of space, but this is not the definition used in the following. A more suitable definition of a region is that it is a cultural, economic, social or administrative space that is a governmental administrative unit most of the time (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p.136). A region can also be defined as a sub national entity, which includes regional as well as local authority (Groß, 1994, p.11).

There is consensus that the term refers to some kind of space, may it be territorial, political, economic, social or functional. “A region is the result of the meeting of various concepts of space.” (Keating, 1998, p.11)

2.2 Vertical Heterogeneity of Regions

An attempt for a more precise or all-embracing definition would easily run the risk of randomly excluding many facts. Actually, the intentionally quite loose and manifold nature of the above listed definitions reflects the reality of regional diversity and heterogeneity, which has many dimensions. This is also true for the European Union⁶. The diversity starts with the member states as they are different in a variety of facts themselves, e.g. in population size⁷ and density, in area, economic performance and development, in the wealth of the population⁸, in the population’s cultural com-

³ See for example: <http://www.baltic-region.net/> (viewed 18 May 2008).

⁴ See for example: <http://www.regional-climate.eu/index.php?id=611> (viewed 18 May 2008).

⁵ See for example: UN News Centre, News by Region:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/region.asp?Region=MIDDLE+EAST> (viewed 22 May 2008).

⁶ Map of all European regions: http://www.a-e-r.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PressComm/Publications/Tabula/Tabula2005/Tabula2005.jpg (viewed 1 June 2008).

⁷ EUROSTAT: Population size of European regions:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=de&product=Yearlies_new_regio&root=Yearlies_new_regio/F/fa/faa/faa10000 (viewed 18 May 2008).

⁸ See Annex II.

position, i.e. cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity, as well as in the political structure of the state (März, 2006, p.169). The diversity in the political structure can be observed in the different existing forms of state or government, i.e. there are unitary, federal and quasi-federal states. Examples for unitary states are Portugal, France or the Republic of Ireland. Federal states are Germany, Austria or Belgium. Quasi-federal states or those with non-uniform limited regional autonomy are e.g. Italy or the United Kingdom. According to these different specifications, there is also a different allocation of governmental activities between the central government and the regional units. In fully federal states e.g. in Germany governmental activities are divided between the centre (the “Bund”) and the regional units (the “Länder) in such a way, that each level has the authorisation to make final decisions in some policy fields. In unitary states on the other hand political power may be transferred to the regional units but the central government preserves the right to recall the delegated power. This fact alone shows, that one can easily observe huge variations in Europe’s regions and their importance in the respective member state. Besides the degree of political organisation and/or autonomy and “their status with regard to central state institutions, regions also differ in their economic development, their historical basis or lack of it, their cultural distinctiveness” (Johne, 2000, p.75) and so forth. Table 1 summarises the possible differences in state forms and the consequences for regional competencies.

Central Unit/State form	Regional Unit(s)	Competencies of regional units	Examples
Federal State	Regionally elected entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent legislative authority • Constitutional sharing of power • Institutionalised right to participate in decision-making-processes on the central level 	Germany, Austria, Belgium
Unitary States			
a) Regionalised states	Regionally directly elected entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide-ranging autonomy and legislative powers but only in defined policy areas • No or only very weakly developed rights to participate in decision-making-processes on the central level 	Italy, Spain
b) Devolving states	Subordinate, intermediary entities above the local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited autonomy • No or only certain degree of legislative powers • Regions merely get executive tasks 	France, Portugal, the Netherlands
c) Classic unitary states	Two-tiered structure of decision-making between central and local level → no regional level; regional structures may exist for administrative purposes		Denmark, United Kingdom, Sweden, Greece, Luxembourg

Table 1 State forms and consequences for regional competencies

Source: Own depiction on the basis of Bullmann, 1997, p.5 ff.

According to Article 2 No.2 of the statute of the Assembly of European Regions (AER)⁹ the term region “covers in principle local authorities immediately below the level of central government, with a political power of representation as embodied by an elected regional Assembly”(AER, 2002). Despite this definition, it was not possible to set up universally valid criteria for precisely defining regions in the EU. That

⁹ See 3.4

is why the EU has set up a system, mainly for statistical purposes¹⁰, with three levels. This system is called Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistique (NUTS). This system has already been set up by Eurostat in 1999 but has been replaced by regulation 1059/2003 of the European Parliament on 26 May 2003¹¹. In order to identify the relevant NUTS level, average sizes of population have been set up as follows:

Level	Minimum	Maximum
NUTS 1	3 million	7 million
NUTS 2	800 000	3 million
NUTS 3	150 000	800 000

Table 2 Overview of NUTS levels

Source: Regulation (EC) No.1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003.

Although the NUTS system gives concrete criteria for identifying different regions, it is still not sufficient to mirror the diversity and heterogeneity of the European regions as the NUTS levels are not identical with the actually existing regions¹². It merely serves statistical analyses and is therefore geared to the comparability of population size. As the focus of this thesis lies on the political role of regions and their decision-making and enforcement capabilities in the EU, the following criteria will be the foundation of the understanding of the term “region”:¹³

- A region is a territorial unit between the municipal and the central entity of a state, which possesses a certain deciding-power;
- The decision-maker(s) must be politically accountable towards an assembly that has either been directly elected by the region’s population or is at least consisting of a representation of municipalities of the region;
- The status of a regional authority is existent;
- It is about those regions directly residing below the European and national level.

¹⁰ It is also the initial point for the selection criteria for regional sponsorship.

¹¹ Regulation (EC) No. 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:154:0001:0041:EN:PDF> (viewed 16 May 2008).

¹² An overview of all NUTS regions incl. a portrait can be found on: <http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/regportraits/info/data/en/index.htm> (viewed 18 May 2008).

¹³ Following Engel, C.: *Regionen in der EG. Vielfalt und integrationspolitische Rollensuche*. Bonn 1993.

3. Change in the Significance of Regions in the Last Decades

“...there is and there can be no Europe other than the Europe of the states – except of course, for myths, fictions and pageants.” (Pinder, 1991, p.11)

This position of the former French president Charles de Gaulle, expressed on a press conference on 15 May 1962, can be considered representative for the thinking of that time. Still, it can be observed, that the importance of regions as considerably grown since the peak of state centralism in the World War II period, regional policy-wise as well as regionalist-wise. A line-up of factors has been crucial for this development: Unequal economic development of different member states and within the member states respectively, decentralisation tendencies in some member states, threats to regional languages and/or cultures, and “more recently the impact of globalisation and European integration” (Ammon, 1994, p.26). A gross overview of the regionalist development and the role of regions in the course of community building shall serve for better comprehension of recent developments and actual influence capabilities, which will be dealt with in the 5th chapter.

3.1 1950s: European Coal and Steel Community and Localism

In the post-war and reconstruction period politicians like the French Foreign Minister Schumann, German Chancellor Adenauer and the Italian Foreign Minister¹⁴ Alcide de Gasperi have been the leading and predominant representatives of the biggest Western European states, which were compliant to European integration. They were bonded by a common “regional traditional way of thinking” (Schulz, 1993, p.173.). None of those politicians was in favour of the centralised nation state and all of them were coined rather federally and relegated the “national principle” into a rather moderate role. On the one hand, a regional rootedness and from this a commitment to regional diversity could be observed. On the other hand, states showed their willingness towards European integration and thus towards an integration reaching beyond the regional and national community. A consequence was the clearly regional coinage of European politics, which could most strongly be observed for Adenauer and Schumann (Schulz, 1993, p.176). This avowal is also expressed in the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was signed in Paris

¹⁴ At times also Italian Prime Minister.

on 18 April 1951 and entered into force on 24 July 1952.¹⁵ Although a regional principle is not explicitly enunciated in the treaty, the economic sectors coal and steel clearly determined a macro regional dimension, which was the foundation of a trans-national economic core region. This region lacked a regional interest representation, so that the space was no more than a national sphere of activity. In the 1950s hardly any organised groups with interests in the protection of small groups and/or minorities existed. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms set up by the Council of Europe in 1950 referred to individuals only and thus not to groups representing regional interests. Still, some local activists, i.e. a group of European mayors, managed to gather in the Council of European Municipalities (CEM)¹⁶, which was accredited by the Council of Europe in 1951. Its goals have been to “promote a united Europe that is based on local and regional self government and democracy”¹⁷. CEM was the first and for a long time continued to be the only official representation of sub national entities on the European level. The claims of the CEM have been in accordance with the claims of the supporters of the principle of subsidiarity.¹⁸

3.2 1960s: Social Movement and Impacts of the European Economic Community

In the 1960s municipalities turned out to be too small entities in order to become part of the inspiring idea of a “Europe of the Regions”. Impulse for the remobilisation of regional powers in the form of social movements in whole Western Europe was a renationalisation of politics through Charles de Gaulle starting in 1958. As it can be seen in the initial statement of this section, de Gaulle insistently advocated the idea of a Europe of the states. The unifying element in the social movements that were building up in the regions was - most of all - the economic disadvantages that these regions suffered from but also a general criticism on the political systems, which were perceived as too authoritarian. Especially the democratic deficit and the lack of participation possibilities were bashed. Some movements felt politically so powerless that they were erred to terrorist activities, e.g. the Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)¹⁹ in the Basque Country, Spain. Actions of regional policy have been identified as essen-

¹⁵ For further information see: http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/ecsc_en.htm

¹⁶ In 1984 the Council opened its rank to the regions and the name was changed into Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

¹⁷ See: Official website CEMR: http://www.ccre.org/presentation_en.htm (viewed 29 May 2008).

¹⁸ For further information about CEMR please see chapter 5.2.3.

¹⁹ Basque for “Basque Homeland and Freedom“.

tial in the Treaty on the European Economic Community (EEC) of 1957.²⁰ The problem was – similar to today – an economic concentration on agglomeration areas. This fact exacerbated the tapping of the full potential of border regions. The instruments of regional policy were at that time only interpreted in an economic way, as the preamble of the EEC Treaty shows: The participating member states were “Anxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions...” (EEC, 1957). From a regionalist point of view the 1960s are often called “a period of stagnation” (Bullmann, 1997, p.2).

3.3 1970s: Noticeable Increase in the Importance of Regions

Until the 1970s it can be asserted, that not regions as sub-national entities have been the political actors, but primarily local authorities which were organised in the CEM and/or the first Euroregions along the Dutch-German border (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p.27). The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe was also primarily dominated by local authorities but still first signs for transnational regionalism were in the offing. For example the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)²¹ was founded in 1971 and was aimed at improving the legal and organisational environment for cross-border co-operation. Further achievements out of a regional point of view have been the establishment of the Directorate General for Regional Policy and Cohesion²², DG XVI, in the European Commission (EC) and of the Committee on Regional Development²³ (REGI) in the European Parliament (EP).

In general, it can be observed, that in the 1960s and 1970s some states, e.g. the UK, contributed to putting regional economic development on the political agenda. They did so by first of all defining problematic regions²⁴. The central state then tried, but failed, to solve the problems of these regions. In this time, central states were still setting the agenda. As they failed to succeed, the lead was more and more taken over by and within the regions themselves.

²⁰ Treaty establishing the European Community 1957:

<http://www.interreg3c.net/sixcms/media.php/5/EC+Treaty.6806.pdf> (viewed 7 June 2008)

²¹ For more information see: <http://www.aebr.net/index1.php?lc=en>

²² http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm

²³ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/regi_home_en.htm

²⁴ In the UK this was e.g. Central Scotland.

3.4 1980s: Single European Act and Assembly of European Regions

The 1980s are often described as a decade of decentralisation and regionalisation in the member states of the EC. Intrastate structures have been thoroughly reconsidered in many states and in two of them – France and Belgium – this has even led to a complete change in the structure of the states. The Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 and the programme for a Single European Market caused a shift of the regions' attitude (Engel, 1994, p.146). In order to be able to exert influence on decisions, which often heavily affected the regions, many regions established a regional office in Brussels²⁵. The Assembly of European Regions (AER) was founded in 1985 as a European umbrella organisation, i.e. a pressure group for the regions. According to a self-description the AER is “the political voice of the regions and the key partner for the European and international institutions on every issue of regional competence”²⁶. Additionally, a number of “stronger sub-national authorities met from 1989 in several Conferences on a “Europe of the Regions” which were initiated by some of the Minister-Presidents of the German Länder (...)” (Bullmann, 1997, p.4). Still, none of these initiatives could substitute an institutionalised and/or contractually arranged participation of regional entities in the decision-making process of the EC. Although these achievements could not be made in the 1980s, this decade is often seen as the decade in which regions have managed to change from the object of European politics into actors with the right to a say in European matters and where many devolution processes have been initiated²⁷.

However, despite some reversals and difficulties the main trend since the 1960s has obviously been towards an increased regionalism. Before the 1970s, Germany was the only major Western European country with elected regional governments.²⁸ Even in Germany some centralisation of power took place and federalism was at times getting weaker (Newman, 1996). The SEA and the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992²⁹ have considerably contributed to the situation, in which nation states were no longer able to defend their key position, but more and more fell under “enormous pressure

²⁵ Especially the German Länder

²⁶ AER (2008): <http://www.a-e-r.org/about-aer/vocation.html> (viewed 15 May 2008).

²⁷ CoR: Overview of devolution processes:

<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/DocumentTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=25f1f879-bb3b-4e63-944f-fb74b782ccbc&sm=25f1f879-bb3b-4e63-944f-fb74b782ccbc> (viewed 23 May 2008).

²⁸ With the exception of Northern Ireland.

²⁹ Treaty on European Union (1992): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11992M/htm/11992M.html> (viewed 22 May 2008).

from above and from below” (Bullmann, 1997, p.2). The “institutionalization of regions in the European Union peaked with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991” (Lynch, 2004, p.172.).It can be noticed that regions have been upgraded in some way since the 1990s, especially in administrative ways. The European level as well as the national levels has become more and more aware of the regional one, but the development of the regions’ competencies and powers seems to be on hold since the Treaty of Maastricht (Urbanowicz, 2005, 154). The regions’ claims for more participation and better possibilities to protect their own interests was finally reflected in the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”, which will be looked at more closely in the following chapter.

4. Europe of the Regions

4.1 Definition and Introductory Remarks

First of all, it is important to distinguish between the normative and the empirical elements of this topic. While chapter 3 has shown, what has really happened to the regions' position and significance in Europe in the last decades, this chapter will deal with the concept of a "Europe of the Regions", its development and its current status in the EU. The concept is mainly normative, i.e. it comprises ideas about a European Union and how regions ideally - for the supporters of this regionalism project - ought to be positioned within it. "In fact, behind the idea of a "Europe of the Regions" lies the thought that subnational entities have little by little acquired greater protagonism in the political, economic, social and cultural arenas to the detriment of nation-states" (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen, Rodríguez-Pose, 1994, p. 27).

It is essential to distinguish between two different meanings of the concept: The first one being very euro sceptical as regions replace nation states (Margedant, 2006, p. 162) and the other one following the principle of subsidiarity and being in line with European integration (see C. Jeffrey, 2002).

The latter meaning of the term "Europe of the Regions" stands for a political concept, which is supposed to bring the regions of the member states forward and support their regional "independence". Within the scope of this concept a variety of activities and programmes exists, which support economic, cultural and other networks between European regions or especially the foundation of cross border regions, so-called Euroregions³⁰. The concept is especially supported by those endorsing European integration, who also campaign for a federal structure of the EU and those who try to diminish the democratic deficit by establishing a more decentral and with that more citizens-friendly system (Ruge, 2003, p.281).

The other version of the concept of a "Europe of the Regions" is a vision of regions and regionalism replacing nation states and nationalism. Visions like the "death of the nation state" (Anderson, 1995) and the "end of territorially based sovereignty" (Anderson, 1996) have been adopted and proclaimed by supporters of this concept. In weaker versions of the concept these ideas are only implied or the rise of regions accounting of the role of the nation states is seen as a long-term development.

³⁰ According to the Council of Europe a Euroregion is "a form of transnational co-operation structure between two (or more) territories located in different European countries" (http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/local_and_regional_democracy/areas_of_work/transfrontier_co-operation/euroregions/WhatIs_Euroregion.asp#TopOfPage (viewed 16 May 2008).

However, only few member states have independent regions at their disposal, which are endowed with political democratic institutions as e.g. the German Länder. Political resistance evolves, because an increase of the regions' competencies would on the other hand mean a decrease in national competencies.

4.2 Development of the Concept of a “Europe of the Regions”

The concept of a “Europe of the Regions” is not only a recent occurrence. It can already be traced back into the late 1950s, when Leopold Kohr published “The Breakdown of Nations” (Kohr, 1957). Kohr saw the source of modern problems, especially social ones, in the bigness of states. The idea of a “Europe of the Regions” has again been mentioned in the 1970s (see for example Rhodes, 1974), but the debate did not become prominent before the late 1980s and early 1990s, when “the integration process itself gathered considerable new momentum through the passing of the Single European Act of 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992” (Bullmann, 1997, p.2).

The concept of a ‘Europe of the Regions’ was partly designed as an ideology of integration and legitimation for the EU, i.e. it should serve to minimise some obvious problems of the Union. The EU suffered from a legitimacy crisis in the early 1990s as it aspired to accelerate integration. The directly elected body, the EP, was perceived to be weak compared e.g. to the Commission and thus the EU seemed to lack legitimacy.

The Chef de Cabinet to the Regional Commissioner expressed in 1991: “The Europe of the regions is already a cultural reality and in the new European single market there will soon be an economic one. Why not turn it into a political reality too?” (Harvie, 1994, p.146) The idea was that both the regions and the European Union would gain legitimacy by working together more closely. The normative ideology behind it was taken over by regions themselves in order to push forward existing interests within the regions. The hope was that a “Europe of the Regions” would be conducive to autonomy or even independence of some regions³¹ and regionalism would be spread into all member states. For example Jacques Delors, who served two terms as the president of the EC between 1985 and 1995, propagandised the idea

³¹ For example in the UK, there have been substantial changes in the 1990s: The Labour government's programme of constitutional reform has involved, among other things, the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly. Additionally, the Belfast Agreement has established a devolved parliament in Northern Ireland.

of a “Europe of the Regions” and was – amongst others - supported by John Hume³², who was in favour of a “Europe which is much more comprehensive in its unity and which values its regional and cultural diversity while working to provide for a convergence of living standards” (Hume, 1988, p.48). It was often predicted that the 1990s would be the decade where the nation state would break up and as a result there would be “a European federation of equal regions” (Kearney, 1988, p.8). In reality, the situation did not even come close to this image. In the preparation phase for the Treaty of Maastricht, regions were “envisaged both as an institutional building block for EU constitutional debates, and as mechanisms for reconnecting the citizen with Europe” (Jeffery, 2002, p.1). The regional lobby was strongly represented in the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on the Political Union³³ and - due to successful insertion - could count 3 main achievements in the Treaty of Maastricht:

1. The creation of the Committee of the Regions “under Article 198a which involved local and regional representatives in the policy process in a consultative capacity” (McCarthy, 1997, p. 439).
2. The Treaty formally incorporated the principle of subsidiarity.
3. Ministers of the regional level were now able to lead their country’s delegation in the Council of the European Union.

The Treaty of Maastricht was not only seen as a “decisive breakthrough” (Hoppe; Schulz, 1992, p.33) for the regions but also as a first step towards a fully-fledged, three-level Union (Memminger, 1992, p.143). However, this anticipation has not been fulfilled. At the following IGCs no ambitious regional agenda was presented and so, no progress can be observed on this field.

4.3 Current Status and Interim Conclusion

The Treaty of Maastricht was not only seen as a “decisive breakthrough” (Hoppe; Schulz, 1992, p.33) for the regions but also as a first step towards a fully-fledged, three-level Union (Memminger, 1992, p.143). However, this anticipation has not been fulfilled. At the following IGCs no ambitious regional agenda was presented and so, no progress could be observed on this field.

³² Northern Irish Member of the European Parliament

³³ Which culminated at Maastricht.

The reasons for the failure of a successful continuation of regional lobbying shall not be discussed in this context. The reasons, why regional power could not be increased in the years after Maastricht shall be summarised as follows:

- The political context of Maastricht was fast-moving and open-ended. The regions have never encountered such a favourable political context again in the following years.
- The regions have not been able to generate a common voice for their interests, partly due to a lack of a leading role, which was mainly taken over by the German Länder at Maastricht.³⁴

So, what does this mean for the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”? The return to the traditional model of a ‘Europe of nation states’ seems improbable considering the increase of regionalism in the last decades, as well as the establishment of central institutions on the European level. On the other hand, states seem to maintain the power and have the major say in European integration. States also continue to condition regionalism as they define the regions and most of the time define the limits in which regionalism is possible. On the other hand, there is the challenge of the great diversity of regions and the resulting heterogeneity of interests, which is often a problematic basis for cooperation on decision-making on common policies.

The next chapter shall now clarify, in how far the actual options of regions to influence the European decision-making process live up to the expectations of a “Europe of the Regions”, even though hardly any institutional progress has been made for them since Maastricht.

³⁴ For a more detailed description of factors, see: Jeffery, C. (2002).

5. Options of Regions to Influence Decision-Making on the European Level

The following chapter will show, in which kinds of way regions appear in the decision-making process of the EU in order to protect their interests and codetermine their own development. There are different options for regions to become active on the European level:

1. The region is at first only the object of a top-down activity of a EU (regional) policy and can later on emanate from this activity as a self-constitutive region.
2. The region represents itself on its own on-site, i.e. in Brussels and is thus a unity of action for itself, e.g. with the help of an information/ representation office.
3. Regions align with each other in horizontal networks with a common sphere of activity.
4. Regions align with each other, but choose – in contrast to 3. – one common actor to represent their interests on the European level.

The last two forms of action on the European level will be looked at more closely in this chapter.

5.1 Horizontally Cooperating Regions

Horizontally cooperating regions mainly act in their own created sphere of activity and thus act less on the European level than regional organisations or bottom-up institutions as the CoR³⁵. The question arises, in how far this existing transnational cooperation merits the label of a “Europe of the Regions” (Ogi, 1994, p. 77). This question shall be clarified in part 5.1.7 after illustrating financial, judicial and economic problems by some examples. The cooperation’s potential can be measured by the solving capacity for the following problems or shortcomings (Groß; Schmitt-Egner, 1994, p.85 ff.):

- Political shortcoming: Border regions have normally been spheres of interstate conflicts.

³⁵ The borderline between regional networks and regional organisations is often blurred.

- **Economic shortcoming:** Concentration on national centres has often left border regions no other chance than to become structurally lagging regions.
- **Cultural shortcoming:** The predominance of a national way of thinking in cultural, societal and political matters has inflicted a surpassing loss of identity in border regions.

5.1.1 Cultural and Financial Barriers

The cultural and financial barriers shall only be illustrated very shortly. Financial barriers that constrict cooperation are simply the lack of material equipment needed to finance projects. In many of these cases the aid money which subsidises the planned cooperation with up to 80% has not been enough (Groß; Schmitt-Egner, 1994, p.104). Cultural barriers that restrain cooperation can be different attitudes towards work, different mentalities, historic dead hands or – more often – everyday problems such as language barriers.

5.1.2 Judicial Barriers

Judicial barriers for regions mainly result from the vertical relationship towards their national centre. As shown in chapter 2.2 regions in decentralised states dispose of a smaller frame for possible self-development than regions in federal states. Secondly, when cooperating, regions have to find a form of organisation, which all partners can arrange with their national law. On 31 May 1980 the Council of Europe tried to solve this problem by initiating the “Framework Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation by Local or Regional Authorities”. According to Article 4 of the framework convention, all states will strive towards solving problems of judicial, administrative, or technical nature, which could hamper transnational cooperation (Groß; Schmitt-Egner 1994, p.35).

5.1.3 Types of Cooperation

When looking at the diversity of different forms of organisations, the implementation of the framework convention seems to be only in its infancy. In general, forms of organisation without any legal obligation or commitment exist as well as organisation forms with contractually bound structures. The latter can be composed of different forms of public or private law. The diversity of existing forms of organisations

can be illustrated by naming some possible examples out of the wide range of legal forms: associations with legal capacities, administration unions, working groups, interest groups, cooperations, unions and associations that are based on treaties from either public or private law (Ammon, 1994, p.105). The diversity of the legal forms is also reflected in the diversity of organisational structures. At least one branch office exists, where planning, coordination, public relation and the initiation of projects take place. Decision-making based on democratic principles, e.g. the election of a collective actor, does not exist on the other hand (Groß; Schmitt-Egner, 1994, p.79). Instead, decisions are often made by the executive of involved regions that is in many cases controlled by the national government (ibid.). The following examples shall clarify the mentioned forms of organisation as well as possible barriers of interaction and the political, economic and cultural shortcomings.

5.1.4 Example: EUREGIO Maas-Rhine

The EUREGIO Maas-Rhine (EMR) was founded in 1976 as a working group. It is a cooperation of Belgian, Dutch and German regions.³⁶ The directorate of the EMR is - according to the charter of 1991 – the highest body in the Euroregion.³⁷ Subordinated to the directorate are the Secretariat and the four permanent commissions.³⁸ The most important advisory body is the EUREGIO Council, whose members are nominated by political, economic and societal entities of the partner EUREGIO Council. The EMR represents parts of three countries, three languages, five different cultures and approx. 3.9 million people.

5.1.5 Example: EUREGIO Gronau

The EUREGIO Gronau was founded in 1958 and is the oldest cross-border cooperation between regions in the Netherlands and Germany. The Euroregion covers parts of the provinces Gelderland, Overijssel, and Drenthe on the Dutch side and the Münsterland, the county Bentheim, the city and the rural district of Osnabrück and parts of the southern Emsland on the German side. The EUREGIO Gronau is a registered association and has a rather loose form of organisation. 140 German and Dutch

³⁶ For a detailed, structural overview of the EMR please see Annex III.

³⁷ For further information, see: EMR: Official website: http://www.euregio-mr.org/emr_site/site_de/emr/vorstand.php (viewed on 12 July, 2008).

³⁸ The Commissions deal with the topics 1) Economy, tourism, technology, education, qualification and labour market; 2) Environment and transportation; 3) Youth, culture and euroregional identity; 4) Health, social and societal issues and security.

cities, communities, districts and regions are members of the Euroregion. Work is coordinated by 30 employees in the branch office in Gronau at the Dutch-German border. The aim is to strengthen the economic structure of the region and facilitate the access into the labour market both on the Dutch and the German side of the border.³⁹

5.1.6 Example: Saar-Lor-Lux

A good example for possible problems or shortcomings which have been looked at more closely at the beginning of this chapter is the Saar-Lor-Lux region. In this region cross-border cooperation exists between four partner regions at the French-German border, i.e. the regions Saarland, Lorraine, Trier- Western Palatinate and Luxembourg. From a historical point of view Lorraine and Saarland have had great military importance and thus were regions with a high potential for interstate conflicts. A political shortcoming which is due to the historical background can clearly be observed (Ehrenberg-Silies, 2006, p. 166). Another shortcoming of this region is obviously one of economic nature. Statistics of the annual steel production show that the region produces 12.1 million tons of steel each year, the rest of Germany without Saarland produces 0.8 million tons more (World Steel Production Report, 2004). This leads to the conclusion that the region possesses a huge economic potential which could be compared to that of the Ruhrgebiet. Apparently, the (former) existence of borders has led to an enormous economic shortage in this region. Today, the cooperation of these regions tries to cope with the structural change in the region which is coined by the second sector, i.e. coal and steel. In the 1960s a network for the exchange of information was created, composed of working groups from the German, French and Luxembourgian government dealing with topics like transport, environment, cultural exchange, economy and urban and regional planning (Groß; Wille; Thull, 2006, p. 97). This network did not have its own budget or any binding authorities. In the 1980s, a lot of public and private cooperations came into being, e.g. a common council of ministers of the executives of Saarland and Lorraine and private initiatives like an interregional committee for the environment and others. All these actors have ever since tried to overcome the above mentioned problems of the region. The Community initiative Interreg, which aims to stimulate interregional cooperation, has motivated the actors of the regions to establish their own interest

³⁹ For further information, see: EUREGIO Gronau: Official website: <http://www.euregio.nl/cms/publish/content/showpage.asp?themeid=23> (viewed 12 July 2008).

representation on the European level in order to gain financial support from the EU for different kinds of projects in the region (Groß; Wille; Thull, 2006, p.43).

All forms of cooperation can be observed in these examples, ranging from private initiatives over legally quite loose frameworks to legally registered associations. While regional organisations like the EUREGIOS are formally highly structured and organised, private cooperation or cooperation without contractual agreements lack their own legal entity, staff and democratic control of a common body, which could also e.g. devise projects for the structural programme Interreg.

5.1.7 Interim Conclusion

Considering the given examples and trying to clarify the question in how far the existing transnational cooperation merits the label of a “Europe of the Regions”, it has to be said that top-down measures of regional policy with their strong economic focus as well as bottom-up institutions with only advising roles in the European decision-making process encounter a lot of difficulties. An important consequence which can be deduced from the examples is that a “Europe of the Regions” cannot solely be built out of passive regions which are only the object of regional policies. Regions should rather - not only out of economic but also out of cultural reasons and for the protection of their identity – create and formulate themselves. More precisely this means that regions can often solve political, economic or cultural shortcomings on their own due to more experience, knowledge of place and also often greater commitment. Furthermore, according to the European Charta for Border and Cross-Border Regions (AEBR, 2004) there are many tasks which can better or only be taken over by the regions themselves, including the overcoming of “scars of history”, the protection of ethnic and national minorities, the abolishment of economic barriers and imbalances etc.

In order to be able to tap the full potential, some conditions have to be met (as seen in the examples):

- The (border) regions do not see themselves as a meeting place for national conflicts but rather see themselves as an intercultural link for communication and cooperation.
- The transnational relations do not endanger the identity of participating regions and do not rebel against the nation state(s).

- The cooperation works on the basis of an open and partner like conflict resolution.
- All partners accept these conditions as the basis of their cooperative work aiming at the solution of (regional) problems. (Groß; Schmitt-Egner, 1994, p.34).

Thus, regions have potential to solve regional problems within the region itself. Measures of cultural exchange like the establishment of bilingual kindergartens and school material, common media like radio stations, language courses and exchange programmes for government employees etc. are definitely appropriate instruments for horizontal cooperation and integration. Measures like these stabilise the vertical integration from below and may be a solid basis of a “Europe of the Regions”. The limited judicial framework in which these measures have to be implemented might be problematic in the long run. The regions can only cooperate with other regions after getting the permission from the state-level. They have no legislative or executive rights and only partially the possibility to participate on the European level. Thus, a “Europe of the Regions” cannot solely be composed of horizontally cooperating regions. The potential of vertically acting regions and regional organisations will thus be illustrated in the following part.

5.2 Vertically Acting Regional Organisations

In contrast to horizontally action cooperations, which often lack a collective actor who can represent the networks on the European level, European regional organisations have exactly this at their disposal. As a variety of vertically acting organisations exist, which represent regional or local interests, only three of them, i.e. the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Committee of Regions (CoR) will exemplarily be examined in this chapter. In contrast to other cooperating regions, the German “Länder” have managed to implement some measures to secure some rights for themselves. They can deploy them without having to cooperate with other regions and thus clearly are a special case, which will now very shortly be illustrated.

5.2.1 German Länder

After the introduction of the SEA in 1987, the German Länder felt that competencies that had originally belonged to them had been transferred to the European level

without their explicit consent (Saller, 1999, p.187). By using their unique status they have achieved the following measures preventing from yet another transmission of competencies:

- Rights to participate in the decisions on new treaties on European integration as the approval of a treaty can only be given if the Bundesrat – the upper house of the German Parliament – agrees to it. The Länder have a guarantee of this right as it is laid down in the German constitution.
- According to the German Constitutional Court, the Bund may only act as a trustee for the Länder when they are affected on the European level. If the Länder are of the opinion that the Bund has exceeded its competencies they can ask the Constitutional Court for scrutiny.
- The Länder originally asked for an indirect possibility to participate in treaty negotiations, like those of Maastricht. Their pressurising medium was the announcement of a possible refusal of the whole treaty in the Bundesrat. In the end, the Länder even reached a direct participation in the treaty negotiations (Saller, 1999, p.159).

5.2.2 Structure of European Regional Organisations

Regional organisations differ from horizontal networks that have been illustrated in the last chapter as they have a collective actor and internally vertical decision-making processes, from which e.g. the collective actor gets his legitimisation through elections. Regional organisations can themselves be further distinguished by their structure as the comparison of the Assembly of European Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the Committee of Regions will show. Distinctive features for this are

- Regional proximity: Either only neighbouring regions work together or those who are not neighbouring (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p.29).
- The interests: The organisations either represent public interests and thus the interests of all regions or they represent private interests. Private interests can themselves further be divided into geographical, sectoral or geopolitical interests (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p. 33). A sectoral interest is e.g. represented by cooperating winegrowing regions.
- Direct or indirect character: Organisations representing public interests can either be of direct or indirect character. Those organisations with a direct character try to enforce interests of the regions they represent while indirectly

acting organisations only try to enforce interests that have been communicated by the nation state in the first place (Schmitt-Egner, 2000, p. 30).

AER and CEMR are direct regional organisations and so are independent in the assignment of their members and their objectives. Members of the CoR on the other hand are designated by the nation states and the interests can only be represented within the legal scope, e.g. the areas in which the CoR has to deal with legislative proposals are fixed in the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam. That is why the CoR is only a regional organisation in the broader sense. More precisely, the CoR is a bottom-up institution of European regionalism, i.e. set up by European policies and not by an autonomous fusion of the regions themselves.

5.2.3 Example: Council of European Municipalities and Regions

The CEMR is a Europe-wide organisation of local and regional government. Its members are 51 national associations from 37 countries representing approx. 100.000 municipalities, cities and regions. Thus, the CEMR is the largest organisation of local and regional government (CEMR, 2008a). It does not belong to the European Union but is an institution of the Council of Europe. The organisation has two political bodies, the Executive Bureau and the Policy Committee. Both bodies usually meet twice a year. The Policy Committee is the main governing organ for most matters. Its members are national representatives who elect the president of CEMR and other members of its presidency. The Executive Bureau is a smaller body which takes decisions between meetings of the Policy Committee.

According to its 2008 work programme, CEMR has the following objectives:

- “to strengthen the role and contribution of local and regional governments in European governance, active citizenship and the development of democracy;
- to influence legislation and policy, and to promote good practice on European policy issues;
- to strengthen the contribution of Europe’s local and regional governments in the international arena, for democracy, development, peace, and understanding and
- to strengthen CEMR as an effective organisation on behalf of its members associations, representing the interests of Europe’s local and regional governments” (CEMR 2008b).

CEMR has working groups for many policy fields, e.g. committees or working groups on environment, transport, energy issues, employment and social policy etc.⁴⁰ These working groups try to influence European policy and European law at the earliest stage possible, i.e. to influence draft EU legislation, in order to make sure that concerns and interests of regions and municipalities are taken into account in European decision-making.

5.2.4 Example: Assembly of European Regions

In contrast to CEMR, the AER only represents regions. It was established in 1985 and today is the largest independent network of regions in Europe. Its members are 260 member regions from 33 countries and 13 interregional member organisations, of which 10 are geographical interregional organisations and 3 are sectorial interregional organisations. The AER's ruling bodies are the General Assembly, the Bureau and the Presidium. The General Assembly is composed of political representatives from the participating regions. It is the main body of the AER as it decides on the political strategy as well as on budgetary matters. It is also in charge of accepting new members, electing the President and the Members of the Bureau. The Bureau meets twice a year and is in charge of the coordination of work of the different working groups and committees. Its members are nominated by the regions and then elected in the General Assembly. The Presidium is formed by the President, two Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer and the Presidents of the committees. The Presidium can make decisions in between the Bureau meetings and by delegation. AER's objectives are to:

- “organise and develop dialogue, consultation and cooperation between all Regions of Europe, while respecting the Constitutions, laws and regulations, and treaties in force in the States, as well as respecting and promoting cultural plurality within Europe;
- promote regionalisation in Europe and encourage the application of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity between the local, regional, national and European Institutional levels;
- promote the institutional participation of the Regions in the decision making process and in order to do this increase their active role in the construction of

⁴⁰ For a complete overview of CEMR's fields of activity, please see: Official Website of CEMR: http://www.ccre.org/champs_activites_en.htm (viewed 12 June 2008).

Europe, especially in the work of the Council of Europe, of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and of the European Union;

- cooperate with the European associations representing local authorities;
- cooperate with and support activities within the Interregional Association-Members or Organisations which could later join the AER;
- run its own programmes or participate in programmes organised by third parties in order to realise or pursue its objectives” (AER, 2002, p.1).

Additionally, a long-term goal is the creation of a regional chamber next to the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council.

5.2.5 Example: Committee of the Regions⁴¹

The CoR has been created as a political body in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. In the course of the negotiations for the treaty, the claim for a real regional body was especially initiated by the German Länder, Belgian and Italian regions and the autonomous regions of Spain. States with centralised structures on the other hand were worried of a growing influence of regions and the long-term development of the EU to a federalised state. Thus, their interest was to limit the political power of such a regional body. The Treaty of Maastricht is a compromise between these contrary opinions. The CoR was created and the principle of subsidiarity was fixed but the CoR had very little competencies. In the beginning, only five areas, i.e. economic and social cohesion, trans-European networks in the field of transport, energy and telecommunications, public health, education and youth and culture, were subject to mandatory consultation. These areas have been extended in the Treaty of Amsterdam for another five areas, i.e. employment, social policy, environment, vocational training and transport. According to the official website, the CoR addresses two main issues: Firstly, it wants to have a say in new EU law as three quarters of EU legislation is implemented on the regional or local level and secondly it should “close the gap” between the EU and its citizens as representatives of the CoR are from the level of government that is closest to the citizens. When looking at the self-portrayal, the real competencies on the other hand seem to be rather moderate. In the end, the CoR’s role in the decision-making process of the EU is only a consultative one and

⁴¹ The structure and organisation of the CoR will not be illustrated in this part. For information concerning these topics, please see: Official website of the CoR: <http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/PresentationTemplate.aspx?id=1ecf7abe-35e4-4c9e-a9ee-5bd5aa83a173> (viewed 11 June 2008).

“the committee has to rely on persuasion” (Hooghe; Marks, 1996, p.75). Thus, it can only try to exert influence on other EU-institutions involved in the decision-making process. The CoR’s opinions are not binding for the Commission, the Parliament or the Council. Outside the above mentioned areas of mandatory consultation, the European institutions have the option to consult the CoR whenever they feel the necessity. When the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) delivers an opinion, the CoR is able to do so as well. Another possibility for the CoR to put issues on the EU agenda is to bring in an opinion on its own initiative.

When looking at the CoR’s development since its establishment in 1994, it can be observed that the Treaty of Amsterdam has increased the CoR’s competencies the most as it has doubled the areas of mandatory consultation. Concerning the procedure and the possibilities to influence EU legislation in favour of regions, not much progress has been made ever since (Mietzsch, 1998, p. 48). The Treaty of Lisbon – when it enters into force – has failed to comply with the expectations to strengthen the role of the CoR by e.g. introducing a suspensive veto in some cases of mandatory consultation. On the other hand, it allots a right for the CoR to sue before the European Court of Justice. Additionally to these external hindrances, there are also a lot of internal conflicts or cleavages within the Committee itself. One of these is the composition of the CoR as it provides representation for regional as well as for local authorities (Christiansen, 1996, p.97). The representatives’ competencies vary enormously from country to country (Van der Knapp, 1994, p.92). The heterogeneity of sub-national authorities is so wide that even “the term of “sub-national authorities” is an extremely general descriptor, an umbrella under which many diverse authorities fall” (Scherpereel, 2007, p.26). Other lines of conflict are e.g. between urban and rural territories with completely different interest. The interviewed expert stated that in his view the three following points severely weaken the CoR and its work (Annex IV, p. 41):

1. Presence of the members: In most meetings never all members are present as they are too busy with their other tasks, being e.g. ministers, secretary of the state etc.
2. There is a great discrepancy between talking and actually doing: It would be better to concentrate on essential issues rather than to put everything on the agenda and never come to persuasive results.
3. There are too many other organisations which follow more or less the same goals as the CoR and which all want to have a say in EU legislation.

Thus, the CoR seems to have too many internal problems at this time to act as a consistent, credible body on the European level.

5.2.6 Assessment of Vertically Acting Regional Organisations

Generally, it can be observed that all three demonstrated examples strive for more or less the same goals. Especially the CEMR and the AER show many similar characteristics reaching from their objectives to their internal structure. Thus, the question arises, if not one organisation representing regional and local interests would in fact be more powerful and more seriously taken by the EU institutions and thus also more assertive than a whole bulk of organisations. An institution like the CoR, which is already affiliated in the institutional arrangement of the EU, could possibly take up this task. However, the CoR itself does not seem to be an organisation without any problems. The CoR forfeits power because of the fact that regional structures throughout the EU's member states are so diverse. Additionally, although the CoR was created to close the gap between EU and citizens, the CoR itself still seems to be "too far away" from the people. The estimation of Mr. Jostmeier shows, that only very few issues discussed in the CoR actually reach the people (see Annex IV, p. 38). Despite all restrictions in the competencies of the CEMR, the AER and the CoR, which all have a merely appellative and consultative character, the organisations are still important elements of European regionalism. They do not have great legal or political power, but have still assisted regionalisation in Europe in a decisive way. The CEMR has e.g. initiated over 13 000 town twinnings and has thus helped cooperation between different regions and/or countries of the EU. The AER has been a crucial actor for the establishment of the CoR. The CoR's opinions are not binding for the EU institutions but it could be observed that many of them had very concrete impacts on EU legislation (Saller, 1999, p.203). The designated right in the Treaty of Lisbon for the CoR to be able to sue before the European Court of Justice is another indicator that the CoR's acceptance is increasing, even if this has happened only very slowly since its establishment in 1992.

6. Conclusion

Concluding, I would like to come back to the main research question “To what extent does the actual influence of regions in the European Union merit the label of a “Europe of the Regions”?” and clarify, in how far the influence of regions on EU decision-making could be enhanced in order to live up to the idea of a “Europe of the Regions”?”

It is obvious that the answer to the main research question heavily depends on the definition of a “Europe of the Regions”. The two different definitions of this concept have been illustrated in detail in chapter 4 and thus it shall be sufficient to only reiterate them very shortly at this point. The first image of a “Europe of the Regions” envisions that regions will replace or even displace nation states while the second sees a Europe, in which regions gain importance and become equal actors next to the national and the supranational level. When answering the main research question in the light of the first image, the answer is quite simple. In this case, the actual influence of regions does not merit the label of a “Europe of the Regions” at all as nation states next to the supranational institutions are clearly still the main actors in EU decision-making and EU legislation and the regions have not displaced the nation state.

When it comes to the second image, the question cannot that easily be answered. At the moment, the CoR is possibly the most influential institution representing regions, which itself has not even the possibility to “co-decide” in cases of mandatory consultation, but is merely consultative as far as its opinions are being considered by the EU institutions. This procedure could be expanded into a veto-right as it exists in Germany in the Bundesrat. This procedure would urge the European institutions to take local and regional interests into account right from the beginning of a legislative procedure. However, this expansion to a veto-right is not provided in the Treaty of Lisbon and thus such a development is not foreseeable in the short run. In order to realise this expansion, first of all some internal problems of the CoR would have to be abolished like the inconsistent definition of a region in the different member states. It would have to be ensured that the CoR is a representative assembly in order to become a fully-fledged body of the EU.

Legislative functions with a self-determining character, i.e. the competence to pass laws for the regional or local sphere of activity, are largely inexistent as well. However, this competence might not even be desirable as often uniform decisions that are

valid for all member states are necessary. A report commissioned by the CoR gives a good overview of the competencies of regions, which are not to be disesteemed in all cases (CoR, 2002). The report points out, that regions only very rarely have legislative rights and that the nation state at least purports the legal framework, but that regions are on the other hand assigned with many executive tasks depending on the vertical frame of reference. Thiemo Eser has developed a concept which contains different modes of allocation of competencies (Eser, 1991, p.9 et seqq.). He has developed six different scenarios for a possible allocation of power in the EU:

- Central Thesis: The EU takes over most functions as a central European government. The other levels lose importance.
- Big-Belly Thesis: The national governments take over all functions. The other levels lose importance.
- Local's – Great Thesis: The third level dominates the EU from “below”.
- Double-Pressure Thesis: The EU and national governments have all power and decide in a federal structure that is similar to that of Bund and Länder in Germany.
- Sandwich Thesis: Nation states lose power in favour of the regional and the European level.
- All-same-Weight Thesis: All three levels are poised.

It is difficult to foresee the future development of the allocation of competencies in the EU. An increase of power of regions cannot be observed at this point, but on the other hand a positive long-term development of regional competencies cannot be precluded altogether as the historic development and slow gain of competencies show.

Thus, it can be stated that the actual influence of regions nowadays does not completely merit the label of a “Europe of the Regions” but that the following development could lead to a further approximation:

1. The rights of regions of co determination are expanded through the CoR to a certain extent. The extent will especially be dependent on how the heterogeneity of regions will be dealt with within the CoR itself, how the CoR increases the

acceptance and respect from the EU institutions⁴² and on in how far nation states would be willing to transfer more powers to the CoR. Especially for the last point, no development can be observed but this might also be a rather long-term development.

2. In those cases in which no legislative powers can be transferred to the regional level, at least executive tasks and competencies should be transferred from the national to the regional or local level. Many problems can even with executive rights rather be solved on this level as there is better knowledge of matter and place.
3. Transnational vertically acting cooperations account for the degradation of cultural shortcomings of border regions and thus also horizontally stabilise European integration. Secondly, there is the possibility to establish a proximity to European citizens by letting them be active in creating their region in dialogue with other citizens. Thus, these cooperations are closest to the citizen and should further be promoted and supported by the EU.

There seems to be no rapid development towards a real “Europe of the Regions” in the short run, but regions rather seem to act in line with the motto of a “constant dripping wears away the stone” with which regions constantly try to push forward their interest on the European level a bit more.

⁴² Acceptance, respect and the CoR’s reputation have already increased over the last years (see Annex IV, p. 41)

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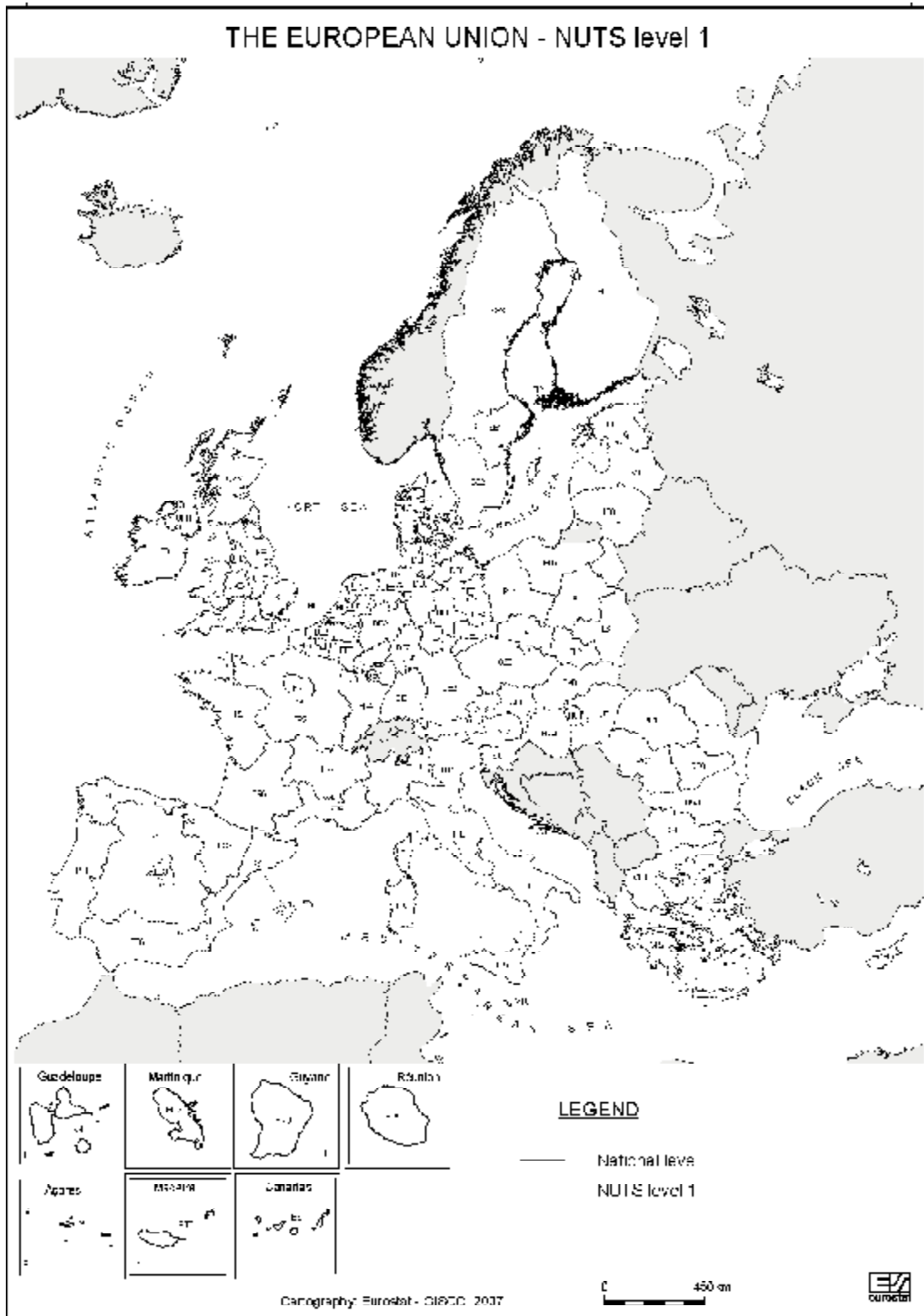
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Annex

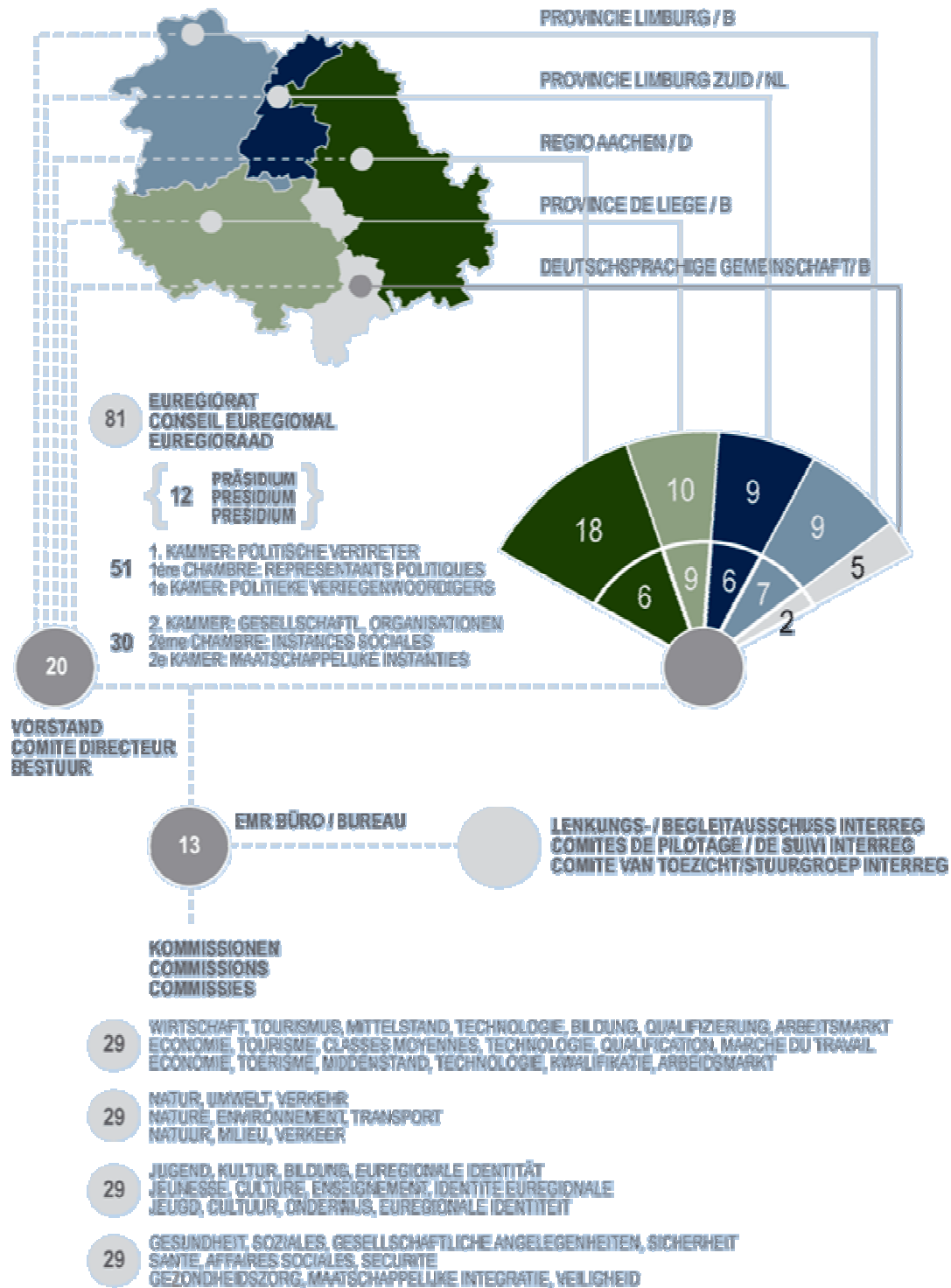
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Annex I: European Union Nuts Level 1



Source: EUROSTAT, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/nuts/pngmaps/eu1.png> (viewed 3 June 2008).

Annex III: Structural Overview of the Euroregion Maas-Rhine



Source: EMR: Official website of the Euroregion Maas-Rhine: http://www.euregio-mr.org/emr_site/site_de/emr/uebersicht.php (viewed 12 July 2008).

Annex IV: Interview with Werner Jostmeier from 1 July, 2008 (9.30 a.m. – 9.55 a.m.)

I. Persönliche Daten des Interviewten

- 1.1 Name: Werner Jostmeier
1.2 Funktion: Mitglied des Landtages NRW (MdL); Repräsentant des Landes NRW beim Ausschuss der Regionen (AdR)
1.3 Nationalität: Deutsch
1.4 Parteizugehörigkeit: CDU

II. Funktion / Aufgabe im AdR

Zunächst stelle ich Ihnen ein paar einleitende Fragen, die wahrscheinlich relative kurz zu beantworten sind:

2.1 Was genau ist Ihre Funktion oder Ihre Aufgabe im Ausschuss der Regionen?

Ich bin Vertreter des Landes Nordrhein- Westfalen auf der Seite der Landesregierung im Ausschuss der Regionen. Die Funktionen sind folgende: Ich bin Mitglied der Verfassungskommission CONST, ich bin Mitglied der CAFA, the Committee of Administrative and Financial Affairs, also die Finanz- und Verwaltungskommission, bin Mitglied in der Türkei-Arbeitsgruppe, bin Mitglied geworden in der Kontaktgruppe „Ziel 2009“, die die Verfassungsziele den Bürgern näher bringen will und schließlich bin ich in der so genannten Monitoring-Group zwischen dem ESWA, dem Europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschuss und dem AdR, der die gemeinsame Verwaltung leiten soll.

2.2 Wenn es um die Kompetenzen geht, also z.B. zu Abstimmungssachen: Inwiefern sind Sie da eigenständig und können das eigenständig vor Ort entscheiden bzw. inwiefern wird das vorher in NRW auf der Landesebene schon abgesprochen?

Ja, das hängt jeweils von den Themen ab. Ich sage mal in den kleineren Gruppen wie CAFA, die die Finanzen, die Verwaltung, die Geschäftsordnung zu entscheiden hat, da sind es nur 7 Personen, ich bin der einzige „schwarze Deutsche“ jetzt in diesem Fall, also da hat man durchaus im Kreis der Diskussionen durchaus Einwirkungsmöglichkeiten, die nicht unerheblich sind, zumal in dieser ganzen Organisation ja auch sehr viele häufig fehlen. Also wir sind ja selten in den einzelnen Arbeitsgruppen vollzählig und dann haben Sie also schon Einflussmöglichkeiten.

Die stärkste Einflussmöglichkeit habe ich zurzeit – ich bin also betraut worden von der Verfassungskommission mit einem Bericht über die europäische Einwanderungspolitik. Basis ist ein, sind mehrere Richtlinien, Entwürfe und Mitteilungen der Kommission, eingebunden auch das Parlament. Und diese offizielle Stellungnahme, die der AdR ja ständig zu politischen Vorhaben gibt, diese Stellungnahme zu dem ganzen komplexen Themenbereich, der auch einer der Schwerpunkte der französischen Ratspräsidentschaft sein wird, das liegt federführend bei mir. Und ich werde das am 18. und 19. November im Plenum vorstellen. Zwei Mal habe ich es in der Arbeitsgruppe bzw. in der Verfassungskommission bereits vorgestellt, die Entwürfe liegen vor und die Region ist in sofern beteiligt als aus den beteiligten Ministerien, insbesondere dem Sozial-, Arbeits- und Familienministerium mir Fachleute bei dieser Thema-

tik zuarbeiten, damit wir auch die NRW- und die deutsche Position entsprechend deutlich in diesem Papier darstellen.

2.3 Wenn Sie die Arbeit des AdR als Überblick sehen, inwiefern korrespondiert dann die Arbeit, die Sie im AdR machen, tatsächlich mit den Dingen, die Sie in NRW betreffen? Können Sie das vielleicht sogar in % ausdrücken?

Ja, ganz genau über diese Frage habe ich mir sehr viele Gedanken gemacht. Tatsache ist ja, dass etwa bei den Themen Ernährung, Landwirtschaft, Forst 90 oder zum Teil 100% der Vorgaben bereits von der Europäischen Union kommen und somit auch jeden Bauern, jeden Gärtner oder jeden Menschen durch die Umsetzung seitens der Landesregierung und der lokalen Ebene betreffen. Wenn ich aber frage, welche Themen ich behandelt habe oder behandle oder bei denen ich um meine Meinung gefragt worden bin, das sind zum Beispiel das Grünbuch zur Europäischen Verkehrspolitik, das der Franzose Barrot, der Kommissar, vorgelegt hat, wo ich nun mit einem Spanier sehr frühzeitig um die Meinung des deutschen Bundesrates gebeten worden bin, die ich auch sehr deutlich dargestellt habe, nämlich mit der Zielrichtung, dass es eigentlich nicht Sache der Europäischen Union ist, vorzuschreiben, wie wir unsere Buslinien auszuschreiben haben, sogar die Art und Weise der Gestaltung der Wartestellen/Wartehäuschen an den Bussen oder ÖPNV-Linien, das ist nicht Sache der Europäischen Union. Das zweite Thema ist die ganze Asyl- und Einwanderungspolitik, ein weiteres Thema ist die Arbeitsmigration, die Gesundheitspolitik, eine gemeinsame Energiepolitik, alles so die Kern-Aufreger-Themen, die wir zu Zeit haben, die die Menschen aber leider nicht mit der Europäischen Union verbinden, sondern das ist alles für sie weit weg. Die Frage ganz konkret: In der Arbeit der Kommissionen, die ich beim AdR habe, würde ich sagen 20-30% meiner konkreten Tätigkeit betreffen auch konkret meine Region. Wenn die Frage lauten würde, wie viele der Themen, die Sie überhaupt im Rahmen der EU behandelt werden, betreffen mittelbar oder unmittelbar die Bürger der Region, dann würde ich sagen zwischen 60 und 80%.

2.4 Wenn es um die Region selber geht, gibt es natürlich sehr große Unterschiede auch im AdR. Sie vertreten eben NRW, was ja an sich eigentlich schon aus vielen Regionen besteht, wie eben dem Ruhrgebiet oder dem Münsterland. Wie ist es denn da überhaupt möglich, das als eine Einheit zu vertreten?

Ja, Sie haben völlig Recht damit, unsere Regionen „Münsterland“, „Ost-Westfalen-Lippe“, „Rheinland“ wären für sich genommen schon eine viel größere Region als die meisten Regionen in der Europäischen Union sich darstellen. Aber, jedes Land definiert seine Regionen selber und die Zahl der Vertreter im Ausschuss der Regionen sind zur Zeit für die großen Länder, Deutschland, Frankreich, Italien, Großbritannien auf 24 begrenzt. Das heißt, zunächst definiert jeder das selber und zum Zweiten entscheidet dann auch jedes Land, welche Organisation sie als Vertreter in den Ausschuss der Region entsendet, bei uns sind es die 16 Bundesländer. In einer Mandatsperiode dürfen jeweils 3 Bundesländer 2 Vertreter schicken, wie das zur Zeit ja bei uns in NRW bis 2009 der Fall ist, dann dürfen die 3 kommunalen Spitzenverbände, Städte- und Gemeindebund, Landkreistag und Städtetag jeweils noch 1 Vertreter entsenden.

III. Einschätzung der Arbeit des AdR

Dann kommen wir nun zu Ihrer Einschätzung generell der Arbeit des AdR.

3.1 Sind Ihrer Meinung nach große Regionen wie z.B. NRW irgendwie bevor- bzw. vielleicht sogar benachteiligt, wenn es um die Interessenvertretung oder die Erreichung von gewissen Zielen geht?

Also es gibt 2 Seiten: Es ist natürlich immer die Tendenz der kleinen sich gegen die jeweiligen großen zu verbünden. Das ist wie überall in der Politik, das haben Sie in der deutschen Medienlandschaft so, dass sich da alle gegen den WDR verbünden, auf der anderen Seite weiß man auch, man kann ohne ihn nicht.

Das ist häufig auch ein Thema des persönlichen Kontaktes. Ich lege sehr viel Wert darauf, mit möglichst vielen, auch Vertretern gerade der kleineren Länder, der baltischen Länder, der südeuropäischen Länder, der Dänen, der Schweden, Finnen, sehr viel guten persönlichen Kontakt zu haben. Dann erreichen Sie auch, wenn Sie Mehrheiten brauchen, vieles. Es ist allerdings auch so, dass man bei bestimmten Personal- oder Sachentscheidungen, sagt „ja, gegen die Deutschen oder gegen ein Land wie NRW können wir nichts entscheiden.“

3.1.1 Falls "ja": Gibt es ein konkretes Beispiel hierfür?

Die Tatsache, dass ich Mitglied, obwohl völliger Frischling, Mitglied geworden bin in der CAFA, der Finanzkommission, eine sehr mächtige Gruppe dort, hängt unter anderem damit zusammen, dass ich der Vertreter der stärksten Region in ganz Europa bin.

3.2 Was sind für Sie persönlich die größten Schwierigkeiten der Arbeit im Ausschuss der Regionen?

Ich würde das in drei Teile unterteilen. Ich faxe Ihnen da nachher mal einen Bericht, Frau Röttger, vom 17. März, den ich dem Minister geschickt habe, da kommt Positives und Negatives unter anderem in diesem Punkt vor.

Das erste nachteilige ist die Präsenz: Viele bei uns fehlen, viele sind Minister, Staatssekretäre, die aus anderen Ländern kommen und haben dann wenig Zeit. Das ist bei mir nicht so, ich bin in der Regel da, was dann auch einen entsprechenden Mehrwert und eine entsprechende Wirkung hat.

Das zweite: Die Diskrepanz zwischen Reden und Tun ist beim AdR oder in vielen europäischen Gremien, aber auch beim AdR zu groß. Die Ansprüche sind Gott-Weiß-Wie hoch, dass man die Verhältnismäßigkeit wahren will, dass man sich als Wächter des Subsidiaritätsprinzips versteht usw. und die Texte, die dann zufälliger Weise - mehr Zufallsmehrheiten - im Plenum finden, sind dann teilweise so schlecht oder so wenig überdacht, verstoßen zum Teil sogar gegen geltendes europäisches Recht oder gegen den Vertrag von Maastricht, wenn es um Erweiterungsdinge geht, dass wir uns häufig fragen müssen, weniger wäre manchmal mehr und wenn wir das, was wir dann auch tatsächlich beschließen, auch mit mehr Vehemenz, mit mehr Konsequenz in den Regionen umsetzen und vertreten würden.

Und Punkt 3 ist, der nachteilig ist, wir oder die Europäischen Institutionen verfasern sich zu viel, es gibt zu viele Organisationen, die für sich beanspruchen, die Städte und Gemeinden, die Regionen zu vertreten. Das ist im Europarat, das ist über die Europäische Union hinaus der VRE, die Vereinigung der Regionen Europas mit 350 Teilnehmern, das ist der ESWA, der Europäische Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschuss, der überflüssig ist wie ein Kropf, das könnte

ich jetzt durchaus begründen, muss da aber ein bisschen vorsichtig sein, die haben es tatsächlich auch geschafft, bei Frau Merkel im neuen Verfassungsvertrag da erwähnt zu werden. Dazu könnte ich vieles sagen, aber das sind die wesentlichen 3 Dinge, die die Wirkung des AdR schwächen.

3.3 Dann kommen wir nun zu den Stärken, welche gibt es da Ihrer Meinung nach?

Ich sage mal, es gibt im Wesentlichen 2 Stärken:

Der erste Punkt ist, man darf nicht unterschätzen, dass die Tatsache, dass sich Bürgermeister, Regionalvertreter, Landräte usw., um in der deutschen Sprache zu bleiben, von ganz Europa, mit Themen beschäftigen, die die Kommission auf den Weg bringt oder der Rat oder das Europäische Parlament und schlicht überlegen, welche Auswirkungen hat das für meine Stadt in Griechenland oder meine Region in Nordschweden oder für uns in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Das bringt europäische Themen den Regionen und den lokal Handelnden nahe.

Das ist der eine Punkt, der zweite Punkt: Ich würde auch die –jetzt ist das ein dickes Wort, aber– die friedensstiftende Wirkung, die man einfach dadurch hat, dass man sich mit einem polnischen Bürgermeister, ob man will oder nicht, ob einem der sympathisch ist oder nicht, an einen Tisch setzen muss und muss über die Art und Weise der Finanzierung des AdR verhandeln. Der einfache zwischenmenschliche Kontakt mit den lokalen Entscheidungsträgern vor Ort bei einer Truppe von 324 zurzeit, die ständig wechseln, weil ständig irgendwo irgendwelche Wahlen sind, also das hat schon einen menschlichen, friedensstiftenden, sozialisierenden Wert an sich und der ist –meine ich– auch sehr groß.

3.4 Wenn wir nun von der persönlichen Ebene einmal zu den EU Institutionen kommen, wie hoch ist da Ihrer Erfahrung nach das Ansehen des AdR, also wie ernst werden tatsächlich die Meinungen/Stellungnahmen genommen?

Das ist eine sehr gute Frage, eine Kernfrage sogar. Der AdR steigert seine Reputation, er wird mehr wahrgenommen als in früheren Jahren, er ist in dem Konzert der europäischen Entscheidungsträger nach wie vor aber einer derjenigen, neben vielen anderen erst recht, die man nicht so besonders groß ernst nehmen muss. Es gibt bestimmte Politikbereiche, wo wir zu hören sind, es gibt weitere Politikbereiche, wo wir freiwillige Stellungnahmen abgeben können. Also, die Bedeutung steigt, je mehr wir uns auf das Wesentliche konzentrieren und je mehr vernünftig und politisch durchdacht ist, was wir zu Papier bringen und je mehr wir auch präsent sind. Auch das ist ein Punkt: Der AdR kann wie viele andere auch als Sachverständiger in den Fachausschüssen teilnehmen und wie ich höre bleiben die Stühle von diesen Organisationen, unter anderem vom AdR, in der Regel leer. Wir könnten also auch davon mehr machen, wenn wir wollten.

3.6 Wenn man sich die Entwicklung des Ausschusses der Regionen seit 1994 anschaut, ist ja wenn man von den Verträgen ausgeht, nicht viel passiert, was die Kompetenzen angeht. Was ist da Ihrer Meinung nach oder was sind die Gründe, dass es einmal diesen riesen Sprung gab zur Schaffung des AdR, aber dann danach nicht mehr viel passiert ist?

Der Ausschuss der Regionen ist nicht zuletzt aufgrund der Deutschen geschaffen worden und hier kann ich Namen nennen, das war ein Wunsch von Helmut Kohl und des damaligen Bundespräsidenten Johannes Rau, die sehr viel dazu beigetragen haben, die föderale Struktur nicht nur für Deutschland sondern den Europäern nahe zu bringen. Und das hat 2 Folgen

gehabt: Es gibt zahlreiche Regionen in Europa, Länder, Staaten, die zwar Probleme mit der deutschen föderalen Struktur und der Entscheidungsfindung haben, weil wir sehr viel Zeit brauchen, aber denken Sie an die Katalanen, denken Sie an die Schotten, denken Sie an die Iren, denken Sie an Wales, denken Sie an bestimmte südeuropäische oder Balkanstaaten: Die Regionalisierung und Föderalisierung hat durchaus seine Wirkung.

Das zweite: Es ist nicht ganz so, dass wir seit '94 nicht sehr viel hinzugewonnen haben. Also gerade durch den Verfassungsvertrag, wenn er denn jetzt wirksam wird, wird die Stellung des AdR noch mal sehr gestärkt, es ist ein Klagerecht expressis verbis enthalten vor dem Europäischen Gerichtshof und auf Bundesebene hat man sich vor 2 Wochen – das ist ganz frisch – verständigt, dass der Bundesrat jeweils (nur dadurch geht es ja), eine Entwicklung und Stellungnahme an den AdR bzw. an die Kommission bei einer Gesetzesvorlage weitergeben muss, wenn eines der 16 Bundesländer, der 16 Regionen also im Sinne der Europäischen Union, sagt, das tangiert uns, das bricht in unsere Kompetenzen ein, das kann so nicht bleiben und dabei ist es gleichgültig, ob das ein Land wie Bremen ist, das sich beim Bundesrat meldet, oder ob es ein Land wie Nordrhein-Westfalen ist. Also, die Kompetenzen sind durchaus schon wesentlich stärker geworden.

IV. Europa der Regionen

4.1 Dann kommen wir nun zu dem Konzept eines "Europa der Regionen". Das ist ja zu Beginn der 1990-er Jahre sehr populär geworden. Darin war vorgesehen, dass auf jeden Fall die Regionen in Europa einen großen Sprung machen, was eben Kompetenzen und die Bedeutung angeht. Wie würden Sie denn die Rolle von Regionen in Europa heute einschätzen?

Ich bin fest davon überzeugt, dass die Rolle der Regionen in den vergangenen Jahren bereits gestiegen ist und demnächst noch wesentlich mehr steigen wird. Das mag verschiedenen, national denkenden Leuten nicht in den Kram passen, das ist aber eine zwangsläufige Folge. Ich will Ihnen 2 Beispiele geben: Es hat in früheren Jahrhunderten das, was wir heute als Weimarer Dreieck bezeichnen, gegeben: Die wirtschaftlichen Verflechtungen zwischen Böhmen, Mähren, Sachsen und Bayern, Ostbayern, waren extrem stark mit Schlesien sogar. Da spielten damals schon die Staatsgrenzen weniger eine Rolle, weil halt die wirtschaftlichen Verflechtungen so hervorragend zum Wohle der Bürger liefen. Das gleiche beobachten wir heute. Gucken Sie sich zwischen Bayern und Tirol, auch Südtirol, gucken Sie sich an, was zwischen Bayern und Österreich läuft, gucken Sie sich jetzt insbesondere an, was zwischen Nordrhein-Westfalen und den Benelux-Ländern läuft mit Hilfe der EuRegios. Die Grenze ist de facto nicht mehr vorhanden und das Zusammenarbeiten auf wirtschaftlichem, auf kulturellem, auf verwaltungsmäßigem Gebiet wird immer mehr zunehmen. Das geht so weit, dass wir auf der nordrhein-westfälischen Euregio-Ebene, also was den westfälischen Teil betrifft, wir haben einen gemeinsamen Parteivorstand mit der holländischen CDA und der Bezirks-CDU des Münsterlandes. Also wir bereiten sogar auf Parteischiene schon mit gemeinsamen Gremien bestimmte lokale Entscheidungen vor. Die Bedeutung der Regionen wird de facto stärker werden.

4.2 Wenn ich das jetzt richtig herausgehört habe, heißt das aber auch, dass Sie das gutheißen, dass die Regionen stärkere Positionen erhalten in der Zukunft!? Was für Politikbereiche denken Sie denn sind besonders wichtig, in denen Regionen mehr Mitspracherecht bekommen sollten?

Die Frage ist schwierig. Wenn ich nach der Verfassungslage gehe, dann ist es zurzeit so, auch nach dem neuen Verfassungsvertrag wird das gelten, dass alles, was Innenpolitik und J&M, was Innen und Justizpolitik ist, bleibt in der Kompetenz der Länder bzw. der Staaten. Bei uns bedeutet das ganz konkret, ein ganz konkretes Beispiel: Die Frage ob und unter welchen Kriterien wir Asylbewerber oder Arbeitsmigranten oder mit Hilfe der Blue Card hochqualifizierte Fachleute ins Land lassen, ist immer noch eine Entscheidung der Länder, der Staaten selber. Das wird es auch bleiben. Der Druck allerdings der gesamten Europäischen Union, der Südländer, diese Dinge mehr zentral zu regeln, zentrale Vorgaben zu machen, wird steigen. Der ganze Bereich der Sozialpolitik, der Zusammenarbeit auf Krankenhaus-Gebiet, auf Kindergarten-, auf Schulgebiet, der Verbund der Energieversorger, also alles das, was unser tägliches Leben in einem großräumigen Maßstab betrifft, wird zunehmend von den Regionen gemeinsam mit den Nachbarregionen organisiert und dadurch wird die weitere Verflechtung stärker werden.

V. Ausblick

5. Was müsste Ihrer Meinung nach noch an institutionellen Veränderungen geschehen, um wirklich die Rolle der Regionen zu festigen und dauerhaft zu stärken in der Europäischen Union?

Ich würde sehr dafür plädieren wollen, dass alles das, was an weiteren Organisationen kreucht und fleucht, das man das reduziert, sogar abschafft, wie zum Beispiel den Europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschuss, der ist 1957 geschaffen worden bereits durch die Verträge. Die haben nichts anderes zu tun als die Kirchen, die Verbände, die Arbeitgeber, die Gewerkschaften, die Organisationen, die Zivilgesellschaft bei der Gesetzgebung zu vertreten. Inzwischen haben wir aber in Brüssel mehr als 5000 Lobbyisten und Büros dieser verschiedenen Organisationen, die genau das machen. Also wir brauchen nicht noch den ESWA, der die gleiche Struktur hat wie der Ausschuss der Regionen, der die gleiche Struktur hat personalmäßig und von den Aufgaben wie wir. Wir behindern uns gegenseitig und könnten wenn wir uns stärken auch mit Hilfe des Städte- und Gemeindebundes auf den Ausschuss der Regionen. Dann könnte er tatsächlich so eine Art zweite Kammer möglicherweise des Parlaments später mal werden.

Vielen herzlichen Dank für die Beantwortung der Fragen, Herr Jostmeier!