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Brussels, 11 May 1990

THE CHANGING EUROPEAN MAP

Extracts from a speech by Commissioner Bruce Millan
at the Eurocities Conference in Lyon, 11 May 1990

Bruce Millan, Commissioner for Regional Policies, told the Eurocities Conference in Lyon today that the cooperative network which they had set up and through which they would seek solutions to the common problems they faced, was warmly supported by the Commission. Mr Millan said that he found it "particularly encouraging that Eurocities were not only seeking cooperation from the Commission but were also offering cooperation through Eurocities to achieve wider Community goals."

Addressing the Conference at the end of a round table discussion involving the mayors of several Eastern European as well as Community cities, Mr Millan said: "The transformation of the European map is accelerating due to the cumulative effect of economic recovery, the introduction of new communications technologies and the completion of the Single Market. Whether we are looking at a map which shows the distribution and movements of population, or land use, or communications, a process of change is under way which is restructuring the European territorial space. This process cannot be ignored by those responsible for regional development, whatever the level at which they are operating - city, regional, national or Community. We may be content to respond to changes in progress simply by taking corrective measures as events happen or more positively we may seek to influence change through greater foresight and anticipation.

The informal meeting of Ministers with responsibility for planning and regional development held in Nantes last November demonstrated the interest of Member States in making a joint effort to anticipate the transformation of the Community territory and engage in consultations concerning policies, both amongst themselves and in partnership with the Commission. As a result of these discussions, the Commission now has in its work programme the preparation of a strategic document providing a picture of Europe, its regions, and its cities, in the year 2000.

The aim is not to produce a master plan for Europe nor a definitive blueprint. The strategic document should be viewed more as a reference framework which will help decision-making at the appropriate level. This will be the case not least in the field of regional policy and - more broadly - in the Community's efforts to strengthen economic and social cohesion across the Community through more balanced development.

The main inputs to the preparation of the document are horizontal studies covering the whole of the Community which relate among other aspects to demographic developments and migration, land use and communication networks. Also included are issues such as the location factors for industry and - of particular relevance to your interests - urbanisation and the function of cities.

The Commission has already initiated a considerable amount of research into the role of cities and urban issues under various headings over the past decade. In connection with the strategic document on Europe 2000, the Commission has now launched a major study which takes into account the results of previous research and will attempt to move from analysis to policy making.

The study has four interlinked elements. First, we need to examine what has happened and identify the major trends over the past 20-30 years in order to understand the cycles and dynamics of urban development.

Second, in a Community without internal frontiers we can expect to see changes in the roles cities play and the relationships between them. We need to avoid if we can unnecessary competition and acknowledge complementarity between cities. One question is whether the national hierarchies of major cities will be replaced by a European hierarchy.

Third, we need to examine how the city operates within its region including the national and international linkages at the regional level.

Fourth, we need a clear understanding of how cities themselves function. A city functioning badly probably means that its region does not work as it should and this in turn can have a negative impact at the national and Community level.

~~Our intention is to use this study to develop possible scenarios for the future of European cities and the networks which might emerge.~~

I am very conscious, especially when speaking about changes in the European map and the need to develop a strategic view of the way this is likely to develop, that we need to look at changes across a much wider territory than that represented by the Twelve alone.

Let me mention first of all our close neighbours, the 6 countries of EFTA. The Commission sent to the Council of Ministers earlier this week proposals to launch a negotiation with EFTA which would in effect extend the Single Market to these countries. Whether this negotiation succeeds or whether some of the EFTA countries are instead admitted to full membership of the Community - Austria has already applied and it is hard to see how they could be refused - no serious attempt to provide a European physical planning framework could ignore these neighbouring countries. This is particularly true of Austria and Switzerland in view of their geographical position across some important trans-European communications routes.

Eastern Europe too demands our attention. I was pleased to be here to listen to the round table discussion this afternoon involving the mayors of Crakow, Kiev, Leipzig, Lodz, Minsk and Moscow. Events in East Europe are moving incredibly fast. It makes change in the Community which we believe, not unreasonably, to be reaching record speeds - I quite pedestrian! More seriously, change in Eastern Europe is change in the Community. We cannot - we would not wish to - distance the Community from these great events. For the first time for more than half a century we can look at Europe as a whole and all work together to ensure peace and its prosperity. Recognizing that Europe is not just the Community of Twelve, we in the Community have a responsibility to live with the economic development of Eastern Europe."

Referring to the trade and cooperation agreements now being concluded between the Community and the Eastern European countries, Mr Millan said that these would be followed by "more far-reaching association agreements when the countries concerned have turned into practical action commitments they have made to political and economic reform.

In the medium and longer run, the enhanced trade and economic cooperation provided for in these agreements are undoubtedly the best way for the Community to contribute to the development of the Central and East European countries - to their recovery from 40 years of disastrous economic mismanagement. In the shorter term, the Community and indeed western nations as a whole have recognised the need for financial assistance from public sources.

The PHARE programme, launched at the Arch Summit last summer and coordinated by the Commission, involves aid from some 24 countries. It provides economic aid in various domains for Poland and Hungary and will soon be extended to the other Eastern European countries. Of particular interest to today's gathering are assisted training schemes for local administrators, especially for Poland. In addition, the Commission is considering, in cooperation with the interested countries and interregional organisations (CCRE, ARE, IULA), the establishment of a series of networks to develop mutually beneficial cooperation between regional and local authorities in the Community and their emerging counterparts in Eastern Europe.