

Brussels, 24 April 2008

OPEN DAYS 2008: 'Regions and cities in a challenging world'

'Regions and cities in a challenging world' is the theme of OPEN DAYS 2008, announced today by Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy, and Luc Van den Brande, President of the EU Committee of the Regions. The sixth edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities, OPEN DAYS, will be held in Brussels from 6 to 9 October. This year, 217 regions and cities from 32 countries have signed up as partners, and participants are expected from many other countries. There will be 120 events in Brussels and around 250 local events all over Europe during OPEN DAYS, which has become the most important annual gathering of EU and regional policy-makers, experts and representatives of banking, business and civil society groups.

Commissioner Hübner said: *"We are now in a period of reflection, discussing the future priorities of Cohesion Policy: its scope, impact and the way it can best adapt to new challenges. I am looking forward to this year's OPEN DAYS, which will be a good opportunity to involve regions and cities in this process more deeply as our ideas start to take shape. We plan to gather this work for a paper we will publish in spring 2009, with the first concrete ideas for cohesion policy after 2013."*

Committee of the Regions President Luc Van den Brande said: *"The OPEN DAYS event is now firmly established in the EU calendar as the meeting place for public and private stakeholders in the regional policy arena. It's an opportunity for regions and cities to share success stories and ideas, to highlight their commitment to delivering sustainable jobs and growth, and their willingness to work together to tackle climate change and other major challenges. You won't find all the answers in this 2km² of Brussels – we have to build Europe in partnership: I'm delighted that, as part of the OPEN DAYS, the regions and cities will organise around 250 events in the Member States and help bring this message home."*

The event will enable participants to share their first experiences of implementing 345 Cohesion Policy programmes for 2007-2013 at local and regional level, with investment of about EUR 500 billion of EU and national funds. The debate about the policy's future after 2013 is in full swing, and the Commission is expected to adopt an important Green Paper on territorial cohesion just before OPEN DAYS.

The OPEN DAYS 2008 seminars and debates will focus on four themes:

- Innovating regions: Promoting research, technological development and innovation;
- Sustainable development: Regional responses to climate change;
- Cooperation and networking: Exchange of best practice in regional development;
- Looking forward: A European cohesion policy for tomorrow.

Attracting about 5,000 regional and local experts to Brussels, OPEN DAYS 2008 is organised jointly by the European Commission's Regional Policy Directorate-General and the Committee of the Regions. Partner regions and cities from 26 Member States are represented, along with others from Turkey, Croatia, Norway, Switzerland and – for the first time – Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iceland. France has registered the highest number of partners, 22, followed by Italy and Spain (19), the United Kingdom (18), and Poland (17). In addition, representatives from other countries, including China, Russia, Brazil and Serbia are expected to contribute to the event, along with international organisations. OPEN DAYS will also be an opportunity for private companies, financial institutions and civil society organisations to get together with regional stakeholders. The European Investment Bank, Businesseurope, the European employers' organisation, Siemens, General Electric, Philips, Veolia and the European Citizen Action Service will be among organisations represented at the "Investors Café", the event's exhibition and meeting area.

For more information, see the website: www.opendays.europa.eu