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Discussion on European strategy for the economic and social
development of mountain regions, islands and sparsely populated areas
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For Europe, territorial diversity is an asset.

Our duty as European institutions is to ensure conditions for this asset to work for Europe, for its culture and for its economy.

The Treaty calls on the Community to take into account in its policies territories with specific features which imply particular development challenges, both in terms of problems to be solved but also opportunities to be exploited. In this context let me raise three issues.

First, territorial impact assessment. This issue has been on European agenda for years. I would like to call on the European Commission to include territorial dimension into the impact assessment procedure of European initiatives. Territorial impact assessment could be an excellent horizontal tool to effectively address the specific needs of those territories.

I would like, therefore, to strongly support the idea of territorialisation of the impact assessment instrument. Reaching out to the model of Strategic Environmental Assessment could be of help here.

Second, you spoke Commissioner on the interservice group on territorial cohesion I am convinced that in the European Commission there is still a potential to raise awareness among many relevant policy areas on the development challenges of specific territories. Through the work of DG Regio with all other relevant services, territorial sensitivity of all European policies should be identified. In particular transport and energy policies should be

territory proof. Territory proofing should become part of good practice in the Union.

Third, I would like to ask the Commission to look carefully into EU2020, and especially its Flagship initiatives, to identify priorities of particular importance for these territories with specific developmental features. Let me use this opportunity to say more generally that European citizens can only benefit from taking Europe 2020 Flagships initiatives to local and regional level.