

***Danuta Hübner***

***Chair of the Committee on Regional development, European Parliament***

***Open Days 2011: Investing in Europe's future: Regions and cities delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth***

***Opening Ceremony in the European Parliament***

***Opening remarks***

***11th October 2011, European Parliament, Brussels***

With this session we open the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of one of the most important European annual events – Open Days.

I would like to welcome representatives of regions, cities and all cohesion policy stakeholders participating in the 2011 Open Days. I really look forward to have a good debate with you. I am convinced it will enrich our common vision of cohesion policy and will give us a strong impulse for further actions.

I would like to welcome:

- Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament
- José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission
- Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Minister of Regional Development, Poland, Polish Presidency
- Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions
- Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy

Dear Friends,

Each year, through the Open Days, Europe confirms the crucial importance of its local and regional dimensions, the importance of European dynamism that can only come from below – from regions, cities and towns, the importance - for smart European governance - of partnership with local and regional authorities, with civil society, businesses and academia.

Each year, between the three institutions: European Commission, Committee of the Regions and European Parliament, we select carefully the topic for our gathering. It does not come as surprise that this year we gather here to see what we can do together to generate growth which we, Europeans, so badly need.

We will look into the best ways and means of harnessing European cohesion policy to energetically mobilize public and private investment in Europe's future. We need growth that will take us far beyond what we had before the crisis hit, growth that will take us toward productivity gains and competitiveness. Europe needs sustained growth and, to be sustained, growth must be smart, sustainable and inclusive. We meet at a time when the legislative package for 2014-2020 cohesion policy has been put by the Commission on the table for reflection and agreement. Over the last two years, we, in the European Parliament, have worked closely with the Commission, which gives us a chance to find agreement rather quickly. Good working relations with the Committee of the Regions will be of great help in this process. The Parliament will co-decide with the Council on the new regulatory framework for the next edition of cohesion policy and let me express my hope that dynamism and commitment of the Polish Presidency will be taken over by Denmark and Cyprus. Regi Committee has already started its work with the Troika. Cohesion policy is an investment policy – that will be repeated time and time again during coming days. It is smart, it is sustainable and it is inclusive but the way it is designed and implemented makes it also a confidence building policy. Europe needs confidence to smartly restart growth.

European cohesion policy will continue to involve us all – academia, businesses, non-governmental organizations, towns and cities, regions, national governments and European institutions – in a common effort towards a competitive growth that will generate sustainable jobs and a better quality of life.

Now, I would like to ask Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions and then Commissioner Hahn for short welcome addresses.