MILLAN, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, may I first, on behalf of the Commission; also congrat- 
ulate Mr Melis on his report. It is clear from some of the 
contributions in the debate this afternoon that it has not 
been at all easy to get consensus on some of the issues 
which arise from the establishment of the Committee of 
the Regions. But I think on one thing at least there is 
unanimity – or near unanimity – in this chamber, namely 
that the establishment of the Committee of the Regions 
represents a very important step forward in the democratic 
decision-making of the European Union. Admittedly, 
the Committee does not have a direct part in decision-
making, and I note what has been said by a number of 
Members this afternoon: that it would be undesirable for 
the committee to be turned into a kind of second chamber 
of this European Parliament. Nevertheless, it will have an 
important influence on the decision-making in the Com-

munity, both in terms of the legislation, not only the 
legislation which under the Treaty will have to be 
referred to it, but I think a wider legislation and wider 
issues as well. And if it uses the opportunities available 
it in the Treaty to take initiatives of its own, it should be 
a very important influence on the development of the Com-

munity.

Speaking for myself as well as the Commission, I very 
much welcome this development, and as regional policy 
Commissioner I very much appreciate how important it is 
to involve the regions and the local authorities in the 
development and implementation of policy. I can also say 
that where they are fully involved, which unfortunately is 
not true everywhere in the Community, we get better 
results in the utilisation of structural funds in my 

opinion than we do elsewhere. So from my point of view this is a very important development indeed. It is, as a 

number of Members have pointed out, the first time that 
the role of directly elected bodies below the Member 
State level has been recognized in the Treaty. Although 
the actual provisions in the Treaty are not exactly in line 
with what the Commission recommended – and I will 
come to one or two of these points in a moment – it is, I 
think; another illustration of the importance of the subsi-
darity principle. I would say that of course I fully take 
the view that subsidiarity is not something that stops at the 
Member State level. It has to come below that level. 
Some Member States are having some difficulty in 
accepting that concept, but that is certainly the concept 
that the Commission has of subsidiarity and I know it is 
also the concept that is held by the House.

Of course we want to see the committee established as 
soon as possible, and I certainly would have hoped that 
the first meeting of the committee could take place before 
the end of this year, given all the delays we have already 
had on the Maastricht Treaty coming into operation. But 
there are some practical difficulties in that. Incidentally I 
should say that the establishment of the committee and its 
meetings and so on are not matters for the Commission. 
This is not a body which is beholden to the Commission. 
We are not responsible for its organization. It is the 
Council which will have to get it going, but once it is 
going it will have a very large degree of independence.

One of the problems is that in Portugal there are regional 
and local elections in the middle of December and the 
Portuguese Government – I think quite rightly, and this 
point was raised by one of the contributions this after-
noon – has taken the view that it would be best to put 
forward its nominations after the results of these elections 
are known rather than now, when there could be some 
doubt about who would then be the legitimate representa-
tives of the local authorities in Portugal. That practical 
problem means that the first meeting of the committee 
will not be held until some time in January, but the House 
will have noted that at the summit meeting in Brussels the 
other day the heads of government said that the first 
meeting should be held before 15 January and the way in 
which the Council is operating at the moment should 
allow that to happen.