

# Trans2Care in pole position to implement Innovation Union

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*First of all, I would like to thank the University of Trieste in the person of Prof. Passamonti for this most welcomed invitation to attend the launch event of the Trans2Care project in my city, Trieste, where unfortunately I can only rarely return because of work commitments in Brussels.*

*I greet you, the University of Trieste and all the participants in the name of the Italian Ambassador to the EU, HE Ferdinando Nelli Feroci.*

## NOTES ON THE PERMANENT DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION OF ITALY TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Let me begin with a brief presentation of the role of the Permanent Diplomatic Representation of Italy to the European Union, where I am honoured to serve as a regional expert, appointed by the Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The EU institutions cannot know the often-changing internal structure and internal distribution of powers of each Member State. For this reason the "Permanent Representations of the Member States" are a collector or a "funnel" for all EU communications at any level of the Member State government (central government, regions and municipalities). The same process happens in the other direction: the European institutions must be sure that official communications sent to them are attributable to the Member State and cannot be subsequently disregarded and the only way to achieve this is to send them through the permanent representations, usually through an electronically encrypted e-mail system. The Permanent Representation of Italy ensures this flow of official information in both directions (a different thing is of course the flow of unofficial communications, where many other actors are involved).

It is also worth mentioning, that the direct participation of the Regions in the ascending phase of Community law (the one where one decides the new "European laws") is now possible as a result of the reform of the Constitution and acts that have followed (the so-called La Loggia Law and the State-Regions agreement of 2007), but have not yet been implemented for Italy. Thus far the ascending phase is the exclusive prerogative of the Representation of Italy in Brussels, which is assisted by experts in various subjects, usually from ministerial background, which is why it is important to be there.

## THE ‘TRANS2CARE’ PROJECT

But let me immediately move on to the Trans2Care project for which we are here today: this project encompasses the virtuous model of the triple helix, where universities (higher education and research), public administrations and enterprises interact; it represents Europe2020 aimed at a smart, sustainable, supportive and inclusive growth, and of course there is the cohesion policy, in particular the territorial cooperation, presently under the Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013 Programme, but already projected in the next 2014-2020 programming period.

No wonder then that this project has been selected and I am sure it will be a big success: better health for longer periods, rationalization and sustainability (including financial) of health services, research and innovation spin-offs are also the goals of the Pilot partnership on healthy and active aging initiative launched by the Council of the European Union in February 2011 as part of the newly founded partnerships for innovation, in order to facilitate the achievement of the Union for Innovation, one of EU2020 flagship initiatives.

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ‘PILOT PARTNERSHIP’

On November, 7th - exactly two weeks ago - the strategic plan for the implementation of this pilot partnership was approved. The plan aims to reduce barriers to innovation in the field of ‘good’ aging and promote a more efficient use of European funds, through a first series of concrete actions to be launched in 2012, among which I will mention only two:

- Disseminate and promote innovative models of integrated care of chronic diseases of the elderly, such as remote monitoring. A number of EU regions will take the lead in this field, according to the steering group which includes three Commissioners (for Health, ICT Technology and Research, development and innovation);
- Develop interoperable ICT solutions (in particular within the so-called AAL - Ambient Assisted Living) to help older people to stay independent, mobile and active for longer periods of time. In this regard, I would like to remember that the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, through the Liaison Office in Brussels I was responsible for over the past five years, is part of CORAL or Community of Regions for Assisted Living.

Also in 2012, the European Commission will launch the calls for broadening stakeholders’ involvement, beyond those already involved in the steering group, in order to implement with them the priorities and actions identified in the Plan. It goes without saying that ‘Trans2Care’ and its partnership should be in ‘pole position’ to play a leading role.

## THE OUTLOOK FOR THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

We have said that “Trans2Care” was created in the current programming period, but in many ways it looks even more at the next 2014-2020 period. Therefore, we should briefly comment on the prospects for the next programming period on the basis of what we know today.

Firstly, we should keep in mind the increasing integration of European policies: EU2020, national reform plans, stability and convergence programs (and the so-called “European semester”), review of the EU budget, regional policy, strategic framework for research, development and innovation (Horizon 2020), agricultural policy, development cooperation and financial perspectives are all strongly correlated with each other.

In particular, with regard to the future of the cohesion policy, there are some aspects of the proposal currently under discussion that we like more and among them the cohesion policy for all European regions as a catalyst for EU2020, preserving the competitiveness (thanks to the strong lobbying efforts at EU institutions - the European Commission in the first place - made by 174 European regions, including the FVG through the Liaison Office in Brussels), the proposed financial budget made by the European Commission, etc. But there are also some aspects that we like less, or rather we are concerned about, such as the ex-ante performance indicators (not the ex-ante conditionality), the external conditionality (or macroeconomic conditionality) linked to national performance with respect to the Stability and Growth Pact which is obviously beyond the control of individual regions; the partnership agreements to be signed with the EC (here the role of the regions is not clear). But there is also reason for concern given by the EU Financial Perspectives for the 2014-2020 period (i.e. the level of contribution of the Member States in terms of GDP percentage).

## MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, co-founder of a wide-area strategy ahead of its time - the ALPE ADRIA Working Community - could be left out from all macro-regional strategies, i.e. the Baltic (obviously), the Danubian, the Adriatic-Ionic and the Alpine, while our neighbours are already playing across the board.

Of the three no’s that the European Commission needed to digest the macro-regional strategies (no new institutions, no new laws, no new funds), the last one is the one that convinces us less, since macro-regional strategies could play an important role in the next programming period, not only for the greater ability of virtuous regions to spend and perform, but also for their recognized role in territorial cooperation (the former Objective 3), in particular in transnational cooperation.

That’s why we have begun to take action with respect to existing and future macro-regions with initiatives such as the promotion of the Baltic-Adriatic transport axis based on a partnership of 14 regions along the former Iron Curtain, which already has considerable success due to the inclusion of new Corridor no. 1 in the Trans-European transport networks), the promotion and visibility of the Conference of Rectors of Alpe Adria and Danube Universities for the development and implementation of the

third pillar of the Danubian strategy aimed at developing the Society and Economy of Knowledge, and finally a reorientation of the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions) to the eastern Mediterranean - that is, the Adriatic-Ionian area - rather than just to the western Mediterranean, and in this context, a more equitable balance between a North-South and a West-East axis.

## **EGTC (EUROPEAN GROUPING FOR TERRITORIAL COOPERATION)**

It's hard not to mention it, seen the industry within which the "Trans2Care" project is settled: health, which will probably become the priority area of cooperation and integration, together with transport, within the EGTC. It is important to emphasize that after 2013 non-EU subject will be able to participate to EGTCs. This will represent an opportunity to relaunch the Euroregion project called "Without Borders," in which Trans2Care may already be part of.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Europe2020 strategy is not - and especially should not be - an unclear strategy for a selected group of experts in Brussels. It's a compulsory handbook for Europe and to become successful it needs to be known, understood, accepted and implemented at all levels.

Whether we like it or not (but we have to like it: we have no alternative, as it has become clear in recent months, when we thought we had seen it all, but we had not seen anything yet - think about the political earthquakes in Greece, Italy, Spain and even France), it will provide the guidelines for all European policies from now on to 2020. The project that begins here today goes exactly in this direction and I am sure we will illustrate it in Brussels as a best practice at European level and beyond.

*Brussels-Trieste, November 2011*

## **CONTACT INFO**

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