

Conference of the Ministers of Economy of the German Länder welcomes the ECRN's participation in the High Level Group (HLG) and asks for a bigger involvement of the European regions also in other sector-specific dialogues

At the latest Conference of the Ministers of Economy of the German Länder on 9th/10th June 2008 in Regensburg the Ministers have welcomed the participation of the ECRN in the HLG of the European Commission as representative of the regional perspective which in their view corresponds with the growing importance of the European regions concerning the aim of strengthening innovation and competitiveness in Europe. The conference members asked, however, to generally involve the European regions more in future sector-specific dialogues on European level.

Before, the Minister of Economy of Saxony-Anhalt and President of the ECRN, Dr. Reiner Haseloff, had reported to his colleagues on the interim results of the discussions within the HLG:

In his report, Mr. Haseloff underlined the aims and procedures of the HLG and then gave an overview on the results of the first three out of five meetings on different issues. He also stressed the uniqueness of a regional organization as the ECRN being allowed to participate in a sector-specific dialogue on European level and had underlined its active involvement in the HLG's debates.

After a short introduction on the HLG's purpose and aims as an advisory and not decision-making body, Mr. Haseloff presented the outcomes of the three HLG meetings which have taken place so far with special thematic focus on innovation, research and human resources (HLG meeting of 18th December 2007) and on energy, feedstock and logistics (HLG meeting on 18th April 2008). With regard to innovation, research and human resources, Mr. Haseloff stressed the common initiative of the ECRN and CEFIC for the enlargement of the European Technology Platform SusChem towards regional platforms which was presented by the ECRN within the HLG. Concerning the meeting on energy, feedstock and logistics, he underlined the ECRN's idea of a strategy for logistic coordination between the chemical regions in Central and Eastern Europe, which has been supported by the other HLG members.

With regard to the general role of the chemical regions in the HLG, Mr. Haseloff pointed out that the fact that the ECRN has been appointed to a strategy dialogue as the HLG shows a growing awareness in the European Commission concerning the role of the European regions with regard to innovation and competitiveness and concerning the fact that many decisions taken in Brussels have to be implemented and initiated on a regional, not on a national, level.

Finally, Mr. Haseloff concluded that the discussions of the HLG have been characterized so far by an open and constructive climate of debate and by the fact that the problem- und result-oriented conclusions are not exclusively directed at the European level, which raises the question of how to ensure that they will be taken into account on all levels of policymaking in the future.

Concerning the German Länder perspective, Mr. Haseloff stressed the importance of the issues raised in the HLG for the German chemical industry sites, especially with regard to the issue of competitiveness. However, Mr. Haseloff also made clear that many of the aspects covered by the HLG would need a much tighter mechanism of cooperation than a strategy dialogue can offer. Furthermore, he pointed out that regarding the fact that many of the HLG conclusions are addressed

to the regional level and by taking into account the core competences of the German Länder in the German federal system and their experiences from the administrative execution of nearly all EU legislative acts, the German Länder could serve as valuable partners for future sector dialogues on European level. How this role of the German Länder could be strengthened in European sector-specific dialogues should be discussed with the German Government.

The Conference of the Ministers of Economy concluded that it wishes to be informed on the further results of the HLG in the future.