



Free translation of Mr. Bénétou's speech:

During the NEREUS presentation evening at the European Parliament last November, the long lasting involvement of the European Institutions, Member States and Space Agencies in Space developments was recalled. Much has been achieved in this field, but the need to accelerate the move from scientific and technological perspectives into actual economic and social developments appears now to be most widely accepted. Operational services need to be deployed, in the broadest possible way, to generate job creations and growth prospects.

Not surprisingly, since the beginning, the NEREUS project of European regions using space technologies has focused on the European Institutions; today the project has turned into reality, and during the last NEREUS Management Board (which took place on the same day as the Parliament presentation evening) it was stressed that building relations with the States was equally important, since the States are major space policy players, and NEREUS Member Regions were invited to contact their governments.

Because the permanent representations of the Member States to the EU are in an ideal position to facilitate these contacts, we thought we should meet with you, become acquainted, explain who we are, and share our objectives with you.

The present time is indeed very important for us to join efforts. We are reaching the Lisbon strategy 2010 milestone, the EU launched a consultation for the period beyond 2010 in order to develop the "EU 2020 Strategy". We trust that the EU will want to pursue the Lisbon objectives in favour of a more innovative "knowledge economy" based on innovation and transfer of technology.

Simultaneously, a debate on the approach has been launched: should one go for a thematic approach, or should a cohesion policy (such as the current one) be pursued? Through its own specificities, NEREUS offers a positive synthesis of both approaches: the networking around space applications is complemented by the territorial approach in the implementation of the innovative economy. And, every day we see that this generates close partnerships between the European, national and regional approaches.

Here I could quote two examples of how the Europe – States – Regions dynamics can benefit all. The first one is the need to secure durable funding for the GMES and GALILEO programmes over the period 2014-2020. The second one is the need to structure the European Research Space, which – unlike in the past - should include regional dynamics. This topic is particularly dear to us, because innovation is never very far away from research, and it is with great pleasure that we have accepted the invitation of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions to bridge the gap between research and innovation. The perspectives, and I dare say the necessity, for States and Regions to work together are numerous.

Therefore, in the name of the NEREUS Member Regions, I am delighted to speak to you tonight, at the seat of both the Brussels-Capital Region and the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU. My special thanks go to Mr Jean De Ruyt, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU, and



Mr Pascal Goergen, Diplomatic Representative of the Brussels-Capital Region, for hosting us, and to Mr Benoît Cerexhe, Brussels-Capital Minister for Research, for attending tonight. We are most grateful to you because you will chair the Research Council during the upcoming Belgian Presidency, and we do not see many Region Ministers preside over a European Council.

Yesterday, together with Roya Ayazi, NEREUS Secretary General, I had a meeting with Mr Beka, Belgian High Representative for Space Policy. Unfortunately he can not be with us tonight. At the end of a most positive discussion, I have assured him that the NEREUS network will endeavour every effort to further the space objectives of the Belgian Presidency.

Back to NEREUS:

It was founded more than three years ago. In December 2006, for the first time, the project was made public at the Committee of the Regions, in the presence of Commissioner Jacques Barrot and ESA Director Jacques Dordain. We are forever grateful to the Committee of the Regions, and particularly to its Secretary General, Mr Gerhard Stahl, for the support they have extended to us. During the early period we tested and validated the project with DG Enterprise, DG Research, DG REGIO, DG Energy and Transport.

On 18 December 2007 the NEREUS Charter was adopted.

On 14 April 2008 the NEREUS network was born.

Since that date we have met on several occasions with representatives of the European Institutions. I would like to mention here that during one of these meetings, last spring, Commissioner Tajani indicated the Commission's interest for the NEREUS objectives. I am sure that his recent nomination and the scope of his duties will bring about more fruitful contacts.

Why NEREUS, and how is this new item fitting into the European space landscape?

During several GMES workshops and international conferences (the Graz Conference in April 2006 during the Austrian Presidency, the Munich Conference in April 2007 during the German Presidency) it became increasingly obvious that the development of space applications had to gain momentum, and that it concerned primarily the regions. Indeed regional territories offer the best test bed for experiments, practices, and their applications on a wider scale. And here we are back to the cohesion policy approach I was referring to a few moments ago.

Of course, other networks already existed, some of them already involved to some extent in the same topics. I am thinking of the ERASTAR Regions programme of the 6th Framework Programme, the EURISY network of spatial agencies, the ENCADRE and CASTLE networks initiated within the frame of the Innovation and Competitiveness Programme, the ESINET incubators network. But there was no regional authorities network to incorporate space technologies into the European objectives of social and territorial cohesion. This is why NEREUS came into being, to allow European Regions to exchange experience in the use of space technologies, experiments and practices, and to voice their needs.

In the earlier stage several regions had wondered about the NEREUS perimeter: should it be limited to those regions with a strong space industry potential? The answer is in the words "space applications" which indicate that NEREUS is open to all regions.



For this reason we responded in February 2009 to the Commission's consultation on a Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. In the GALILEO and GMES projects, the local actors (scientists, institutions and industry) play an essential role in fostering R&D dynamics. A large number of the space applications to be developed are still virtual, creating specific difficulties to be overcome.

To build the most efficient Innovative Economy ("knowledge economy") as defined in the Lisbon strategy, NEREUS attaches special importance to the double flow of information to and from the territories which pave the way, and the European level which makes proposals. To support this construction NEREUS thus intends to position itself as an actor of both the implementation and the development of the European space policy, at the intersection of interregional cooperation (field dynamics) and the European construction (vertical dynamics) which, on the way, will integrate the Member States' policies. Everyone knows how important a role Member States play in spatial policies.

Those founding elements have led NEREUS to structure itself in two membership groups ("colleges"). The Regions college represents the territorial governing bodies; it directs NEREUS through the traditional association tools: General Assembly, Management Board [, Executive Committee].

NEREUS is an international association incorporated under Belgian law. I chair its General Assembly and Management Board, with Vice President Iorio, President of the Italian region of Molise.

The headquarters of NEREUS are situated at the Representation of the Veneto Region in Brussels. The network is financed exclusively by membership fees which amount to 10.000EUR annually for the Regions, and 5.000 to 500EUR for the other membership categories.

The second membership group gathers the actors of the regional territories already mentioned. It casts a consultative vote in the general assemblies, and plays a major role in five NEREUS working groups:

- Earth Observation/GMES
- GNSS/GALILEO
- Telecommunications
- Education, Training, Communication
- Interreg IV c programme (soon to become "Regional Policy"?)

Today, the first "college" counts 26 Regions from 12 EU Member States. I am very happy to let you know tonight that we have two new members: French Guyana, the European space port, and the Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The second "college" comprises 24 Associate Members: 12 academic actors, 3 institutional and 9 industry members.

To ensure the smooth operation of the network and liaise with the respective bodies, since 01 February 2009 Ms Roya Ayazi has taken up the role of Secretary General, accompanied by Ms Christiane Mariotte. I sincerely thank them again for their very good work.



To reach the largest possible audience a web site “www.nereus-regions.eu” has been created. If you visit it you will see under Events & News that quite a number of events are planned for the first half of 2010.

Priority is given to the structuring of the NEREUS Working Groups and the outcome of their work. Yesterday EO/GMES WG worked on a publication which will present 26 GMES uses in the Regions. GNSS WG and Education, Training, Communication WG will organise workshops in February and March.

On 14 April 2010, during the Spanish Presidency, NEREUS will hold a meeting with the space community of Andalusia.

On 15 April, our general assembly will take place in Grenada.

On 16 April, all actors involved in the Working Groups will gather in a Symposium.

In June, NEREUS will participate in the Toulouse Space Show 2010 and present several initiatives involving regional actors.

Now, I would like to quote two examples of cooperation between NEREUS Member Regions which are representative of the growing role of NEREUS and the commitment of its members: PEGASE and DORIS.

PEGASE is a cooperation project with the GSA (GALILEO) which aims to establish a code of good conduct to better coordinate the European Institutions and the Regions. Beyond the initial objective of interregional cooperation one can see that a new role could actually be played by NEREUS: to federate the networks which are involved in various degrees in the regional territories. The DORIS project, in response to the 7FP GMES Call, aims to create a European platform to develop downstream GMES services. A project proposal led by CEON, Bremen, has been presented by several NEREUS Member Regions to implement local earth observation centres. In the coming months we will hear if the proposal has been retained.

In the PEGASE and DORIS projects, in many instances, the regions permanently cross the path of the national policies in support of innovation, research and development.

In this regard I could also quote a recent meeting I have had with Mr Von Wogau, President of the Kangaroo Group which gathers MEP’s and members of the space industry to develop the S for Security aspects of GMES, both from the civil and the military sides. Until now, we have remained outside this dual scene, but it could offer worthwhile perspectives of partnerships and new actions.

As they do it with the European Institutions, the NEREUS Member Regions ought to develop strong relationships with their national institutions, and probably make a better use of the resources offered by Permanent Representations in order for their actions to gain more transversal outreach, consistency and efficiency.

During the presentation at the European Parliament, Mr Michel Praet, of ESA, invited us to set up an informal group of MEP’s from the NEREUS regions’ territories. This excellent idea should lead us to establish links with the Sky and Space Intergroup of the EP as well as with the Space groups of our different national parliaments.



Dear friends, as you will have gathered, our size is modest yet, but our ambition is big. In the midst of the constraints imposed on us by the world globalisation, our ambition is to contribute, in our capacity of regions using space technologies, to the construction of Europe. I hope that this meeting will have been the occasion for you to discover a tool which is resolutely meant to be a Community tool. All our efforts must join together to gather, propose and lead forward.

After our presentation evening at the European Parliament, this meeting with the Permanent Representations to the EU is an important step towards achieving our objectives. I am convinced that it will help us to gain momentum and to reach our goals, and in anticipation I would like to thank you very much for this.