

CONCLUSIONS OF THE 3rd FORUM SARDINIA 2002

CAGLIARI 14 -15 NOVEMBER 2002

The Chambers of Commerce & Industry, members of the “Network of the Chambers of Commerce & Industry of the Island Regions of the European Union”, represented by their Presidents or by their legally empowered representatives, who have taken part in the third General Assembly and the third Network Forum “SMEs and the Handicaps of Island Status: the role of the Chambers of Commerce & Industry in the Framework of the European Union”, held in Cagliari (Sardinia, Italy) from 14 to 15 November 2002,

Having remarked that

- the *islands* are affected by undeniable structural disadvantages from the territorial and socio-economic point of view;
- the *islands* therefore require corrective measures aimed at compensating the handicaps arising from the lack of territorial continuity;
- the *islands* require measures for infrastructure upgrading, with particular regards to communications and the supply of essential resources (water, power, etc.);
- the issues raised by the INSULEUR Network in the preceding declaration of "La Palma" of 3 November 2001 presented by the Insuleur Network have not been taken into any consideration by Community institutions and the governments of Member Countries;

Taking note

- of the fact that in addition to the features common to all island regions, each island also has its own unique characteristics;

- of the need to draw up a specific social and economic cohesion policy for the islands such as to
 - compensate their lag in development
 - provide a degree of flexibility to accommodate the specific features of each island;
- of the essential role that the Chambers of Commerce are called upon to perform as representatives of the island enterprises (in many cases mostly micro-enterprises);
- of the fact that the process of enlargement of the European Union might heighten the difficulties of the most disadvantaged regions, in particular, the islands (see Article 158 of the EU treaty);

The Island Chambers of Commerce & Industry of the European Union,

Commit themselves, within the framework of the Network, to:

- **contribute to the reflection process aimed at defining** a specific, long-term objective for the islands, with a view to obtaining fair allocation of Community Structural Funds;
- **set up** permanent Observatories of the island SMEs to ensure that policies are implemented as appropriate and necessary in each territory;
- **use all available means to heighten the awareness** of Community Institutions on the specific nature of island issues so that they may be taken into account in the legislative process;

REQUEST

- 1) that the Institutions of the European Union, following the conclusions of the European Convention, recognise the specific needs of islands and, in more general terms, adopt a social and economic cohesion policy enabling EU island regions to pursue their development

benefiting from “equal opportunities” as compared to non-island regions;

- 2) that Member States may derogate from some European provisions (in particular in the areas of support to enterprises, taxation and transport);
- 3) that the EU Chambers of Commerce and Industry be supported in setting up permanent observatories of island SMEs to ensure that policies are implemented as appropriate and necessary in each territory.

Cagliari, 15 November 2002