

9 May 2008

## **Start up in Barcelona of the NEPIM regions network to promote responsible consumption in Europe**

---

- **Ten European regions have signed a founding charter through which they have joined the NEPIM network for the promotion of sustainable consumption.**
- **The Catalan Consumer Agency plays host to the top leaders in consumer policies of the different European regions that are promoting the network**
- **The promoters wish to create legislative proposals and recommendations on consumption, which can then be adopted by the European Commission**

Barcelona was a meeting place for various consumer organizations from ten European regions who gathered in the city to promote critical, responsible and sustainable consumption in Europe. The director of the Catalan Consumer Agency (CCA), Jordi Anguera, chaired the meeting, which served to discuss and decide on the structure of the NEPIM network, its opening-up to new members, funding, standards of performance and its potential as a lobby of the European Union. During the meeting, the promoters signed the founding charter through which they form part of the NEPIM network.

After three years of exchanging knowledge and experience on labelling, sustainable tourism, renewable domestic energy supply, responsible consumption, extrajudicial settlement of consumer disputes, etc., the respective network members decided unanimously to develop joint projects. These projects fall within the priorities of the work program of the European Commission aimed at achieving a veritable policy on consumer protection.

Between 2005 and 2007, regional governments and consumer associations from seven EU member states joined together to form the NEPIM network, within the Interreg III C project funded by EU structural funds, in order to promote the quality of life of citizens as consumers, through the exchange of experiences and the joint research into new approaches designed to anticipate and resolve consumer disputes.

Three years later, these same organizations considered it necessary to work towards more sustainable consumption in order to meet the needs of preserving

the natural resources and energy on the planet. They also believe that it is necessary to raise awareness and inform citizens about the need to change consumption habits in order to become increasingly responsible and sustainable.

The members of the network and the signatories of the founding charter aim to pursue the following objectives:

- To promote throughout Europe critical and responsible consumption, which is capable of meeting the individual and social human needs of today's and future generations, which will preserve the environment, with a decrease in the use of available resources and their use in a better way, which will reduce harmful emissions and produce less waste, with the respect for the social rights of workers and to continue promoting, in this way, a model of consumption and sustainable development.
- To defend the right of consumers to choose critically and independently, the goods and products from the EU market; and to this end, to undertake to inform users and consumers about their rights and facilitate their access to justice.
- To keep innovation within a framework of respect for traditions, with a particular focus on the impact of the economic system on the environmental and social balance.
- To work for the respect, preservation and dissemination of crop biodiversity and regional foods, and to promote this heritage and to collaborate in their protection and recovery, and also to promote, traditional food in consumption habits of the participating regions against the effects of globalization. The traditional varieties are seen as a legacy to be transmitted to future generations.
- To promote environmentally sustainable and ethically responsible forms of production.
- To encourage consumers to make more sustainable choices in order to reduce energy use, waste production, the preservation of natural resources and the favouring of more socially responsible means of production.

The network members will request the European Commission to recognise these principles and will define work programs in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Rhineland, Northern Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Upper Austria, Eastern Belgium, Alsace, Tuscany, South Tyrol, the Czech Republic and Catalonia.