

Maria Greta  
\*Krzysztof Lewandowski

# Representation of Regional and Branch (Textile Industry) Interests in the Structures of European Institutions

Technical University of Lodz  
Department of European Integration  
and International Marketing  
ul. Wólczańska 215, 90-924 Łódź, Poland

\*University of Lodz  
Institute of Economics  
ul. Rewolucji 1905 r. 41, 90-214 Łódź, Poland  
E-mail: Krzys@uni.lodz.pl

## Abstract

*Since the early 1990s, crucial changes have been observed in relations between European and regional institutions. On one hand, the European Union has become a structure that enables actors at different levels to play significant roles in the decision-making process. On the other hand, regions have been provided with new possibilities of entering Community institutions. These processes occur in all member states and take advantage of various access channels - both indirect and direct. The aim of this paper is to present the various avenues that regions can use to influence decision-making processes in the European Union. Special attention is paid to institutional relations and those arising under public policy.*

**Key words:** *European integration, regional policy, textile industry.*

## ■ Introduction

Looking at the evolution of the political system uniting Europe in the approximately 60 years since the Paris Treaty was signed, we can clearly see a gradual departure from the logic of classical international treaties towards the logic of common social space subordinated to the principles of democracy, and therefore requiring consultations with citizens and their advice.

The integration process gained impetus in mid-1980s, driven mainly by the initiative and determination of three outstanding politicians – F. Mitterrand, H. Kohl and J. Delors. The Single European Act signed by the governments of the Twelve at the Luxembourg summit in December 1985 and ratified by all member states in February 1986 paved the way for reforms crowned by the Treaty on European Union, adopted in Maastricht in February 1992. By introducing the institution of European citizenship, the rule of joint decision making, European Parliament acceptance of the candidacy of the Commission Chairperson and its members, establishing the Committee of the Regions (important for practical realisation of the principle of subsidiarity), and extending the scope of Community regulations to new areas (such as education, culture, consumer protection, public health, environmental protection, research), the Treaty constituted an important step towards the democratisation of the European Union [13].

Nowadays European institutions make many decisions that affect various aspects of the everyday life of citizens, ranging from environmental protection to consumer protection, and from trade policy to the mobility of the labour force. Therefore, the European Union is also becoming a major challenge for nation states that are currently not able to make decisions on many aspects of public life, where they have, until recently, held the monopoly. As a result, the last two decades have been a period of a clearly

emerging process of Europeanization, i.e. the influence of the EU (and of the Council of Europe, but to a smaller degree) on national states transmitted over two channels [6] Firstly, the number of policy areas where decisions are made in conjunction with Community institutions has been increasing. A case in point is the competition policy and public aid, where the European Commission guards the correct functioning of the single market and has the authority to block any initiative launched by a member state that might infringe Community law. Secondly, policy implemented at the European level affects national policies; for instance, the EU policy of socio-economic cohesion exerts a strong influence on national programmes of regional development [8] Similar effects are also observed regarding the policy of environmental protection, health protection and competition [5].

Economic policy is the most distinct example illustrating the operation of the two channels of europeisation. When signing the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and deciding to adopt a single currency in order to facilitate the functioning of the internal market, the member states set several macroeconomic criteria (such as rates of inflation, budgets and interest rates) applying equally to all members wishing to have the euro as their currency. Because of the necessity to oversee whether the established rules are adhered to, the supervisory function was entrusted to the European Commission and the ECOFIN Council, which brings together ministers of economy and finance from the member states (a bottom-to-top europeisation). Another consequence of this decision is that every document on economic programming that a member state prepares must comply with the established criteria to protect the state from serious sanctions (a top-to-bottom europeisation).

It would be wrong to think that the European Union tends to marginalise national governments, even though the existence of

supranational institutions, such as the European Commission and European Court of Justice, reduces their autonomy to make decisions. Another constraint on government activity is the consultation procedures conducted within other Community bodies, i.e. the European Council and the Council of the European Union. However, national governments have retained substantial power to make decisions, as they influence the reformation of EU policy and draft major institutional changes. While being a challenge for the role of the state and confining the scope of its activity, the European Union is not building a new hierarchy of authority but rather a political space where the various levels of governance can interact.

## ■ The role of regions and branches of industry in the decision-making process of the EU

The political system of the European Union allows regions and sectors to play a significant role. The Treaty of Rome provided grounds for establishing the European Economic and Social Committee, which represents the interests of producers, workers, dealers, craftsmen, professional occupations, and consumers. Thirty five years later the Maastricht Treaty established the Committee of the Regions, which represents the interests of regional and local authorities in the decision-making processes of the Community. The same treaty entitled regions (but with some exceptions) to participate in EU Council meetings on matters that are relevant to them. In addition, the regions and sectors of industry and commerce themselves launched energetic promotional activities, establishing their representative offices in Brussels and forming inter-regional and civil society associations intended to represent their specific interests as well as facilitate an exchange of experience gained while solving joint problems. Finally, regions and representatives of

various branches of the economy used the decision-making systems in several policy areas, such as cohesion policy and environmental protection.

The European Union provides the possibility of forming various configurations and coalitions. Regions can enter into an alliance with the Commission to oppose certain proposals submitted by their state, or to side with their government to resist proposals made by the Commission. Governments or the Commission can use regional acceptance of an initiative as an enhancement of its own proposal.

In many respects, however, the role of regions and branches in the decision making process has remained marginal. The European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions are only advisory bodies; most regions are excluded from sessions of the Council of the European Union because compared with the states they are too weak institutionally. Besides, agreements concluded between regions and branches and with the Commission have limited applicability (as they do not concern major decisions of the European Union), and they are rarely institutionalised.

The mobilisation of regions and branches became possible owing to support offered by the Commission that perceives regions as a way of solving the problem of insufficient democracy and control over the decisions of Community institutions, as well as a basis for demonstrating the benefits of EU functioning to its citizens. Besides this the European Commission has strived to dilute the power of governments by adding a new entity to the decision-making processes. This approach has additionally increased the role of agreements, and negotiations and arrangements have become even more complex [10].

The European Commission emphasised the role of regions in the decision-making process in the White Paper on European Governance that was published in 2001. In the opinion of the Commission, some form of dialogue with regional associations and the Committee of the Regions was necessary to improve the effectiveness and transparency of Community decisions, while respecting the constitutional and administrative regulations operative in member states. The necessity of giving a public dimension to decision making according to several principles was underlined:

- flexibility of the functioning of European institutions,
- allowing all stakeholders to take part in the formulation and implementation of European policy,
- clear-cut responsibility of all institutions for legislative and executive processes,

- effectiveness and coherence of policies implemented [4].

Compliance with these principles is expected to strengthen two other principles pursued by the European Union, i.e. subsidiarity and proportionality. According to the principles, before any initiative is taken, the most appropriate level of action (i.e. local, regional, national or European) and instruments applicable with respect to projected outcomes must be explored.

## ■ Regional diplomacy

Although regions participate in EU decision-making processes in many ways, their foreign policy is very much different from that pursued by governments. The first difference is the factors that induced the active involvement of regions in these processes. The factors were economic, because the regions wished to attract investment projects (mainly from the Community) and expand markets for their products, political, because some regions that have tense relations with their central government sought support for their aspirations for autonomy; and finally regions without a well-defined identity desired to demonstrate their cultural and economic achievements in the international arena, whereas regions with strongly felt national feelings wanted to coordinate their actions with other minorities or populations of the same minority living in other states (e.g. the Basques in France and Spain).

The other difference is the stronger focus and higher specificity of regional goals compared with those of governments. Whereas government policy is perceived as a large-scale and long-term undertaking, its regional counterpart emphasises concrete tasks, and its time horizon is shorter. In the latter case decisions are made irrespective of historical circumstances (this does not apply to border regions populated by national minorities, such as the Upper Adige and the Tyrol), and strategies and alliances are formed by persons that are currently in power in the region. This rarely happens at a national level, where policy arises from historical factors, and alliances are long term.

Regional foreign policy tends to emphasise specific issues more strongly, its focus being territorial (unions of entrepreneurs may persuade regional authorities to enter into an agreement, or pursue a specific strategy or goal), whereas at a national level, more general and geographically dispersed issues are given attention to (as a rule, large state-owned enterprises and international concerns operate on a scale significantly exceeding a local or regional market). Furthermore, regional foreign policy is determined by institutional factors. It can be assumed that regions with a larger autonomy

in relation to the central government (in federal states) can articulate their interests more strongly than weaker ones. In addition, regional diplomacy may depend on the will of central governments, which means that particular national governments can either decrease or encourage the foreign activity of regions.

The European Union is perceived today as a multi-tier system of governance, where both formal and informal political decisions are made by organizations at different levels [7]. In other words, the European Union is no longer just an international organisation as regions also have a role to play. The European Union has not created its own hierarchy of authority nor become „a state over states“. Neither has it become a “Europe of regions”, as regions have not replaced central governments. Therefore, a more adequate term to describe the European Union would be a “Europe with regions”. A detailed presentation of how the EU functions and what role regions play in its structure is much easier than trying to briefly summarise what the EU is like today.

## ■ Representation of regions at the Council of Europe

### The Council of Europe’s goals with respect to regional representation

The Council of Europe started to operate in 1949 as an organization aiming to strengthen democracy, human rights, and adherence to law, as well as to consolidate the cultural heritage of Europe in particular states. Today its members come from 47 states that accept the rule of law as well as guarantee human rights and basic values to every person within their jurisdiction.

The operational goals of the Council of Europe concentrate on many challenges, including assistance to local democracy and cross-border co-operation, and particularly on [3]:

- supporting local and regional self-government,
- aiding administrative and legal structures, as well as the finances of local and regional authorities,
- promotion of democratic citizenship,
- supporting cultural diversity in the regions.

The Council of Europe enhances social cohesion by:

- guaranteeing an adequate level of social protection,
- initiatives related to the creation of jobs, vocational training and worker rights,
- protecting the most vulnerable groups in society and excluded persons,
- ensuring equal opportunities and combating discrimination,

- consultations and cooperation on migration.\

Action programmes of the Council of Europe additionally include a health policy based on ethics, cultural diversity and a European identity.

Naturally, the list above indicates only some selected lines of action of the Council of Europe that express subsidiarity and place regions at the core of the Council's interest and activity. In view of this, the next sections will concentrate on institutions that represent regional interests in the structure of the European Council. This approach is also practical because subsidiarity in the EU, EU regional policy and representation of regional interests on the EU forum were a product of the Council of Europe's energetic actions and efforts aimed at EU structures.

### **The bodies of the Council of Europe with an emphasis on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**

Within the institutional structure of the Council of Europe, we can basically distinguish three bodies, namely:

- The Council of Ministers, which is a management body composed of ministers of foreign affairs representing member states (or their representatives, usually vice-ministers),
- The Parliamentary Assembly in an advisory capacity; its members are deputies mandated by their national assemblies, working in 10 committees,
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, which has the status of an advisory body and represents local and regional authorities - the Congress is the main subject of this section [9].

All of the Council and its institutional coherence are overseen by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. This administrative function includes responsibility for the day-to-day functioning of the Council.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe was given its present name in 2003. Its precursor was the European Conference of Local and Regional Authorities, which was granted the status of an auxiliary body to the Council of Europe in 1961 and renamed 'the Congress' in 1994 [10]. Today the Congress is "the third pillar" of the Council of Europe, constituting a major institutional link in the entire structure representing local and regional authorities in Europe as well as their common interests. Its goals can be summarised as follows:

- Supporting the political, administrative and financial autonomy of local and regional authorities,

- guaranteeing the active involvement of local and regional structures in the shaping of European unity,
- enabling representatives of local bodies to participate in the formation of European policies, both in the Council of Europe and European Union,
- encouraging cross-border and inter-regional cooperation,
- developing initiatives that enable citizens to become an active and effective part of local and regional democracy,
- cooperation with the Committee of the Regions in the EU in order to ensure the complementarity of actions being launched in regions,
- advising other bodies of the Council of Europe (the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly) on regional and local policies,
- drafting reports on activities that are within its competence,
- monitoring the implementation of provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in particular countries.

The Congress is composed of two chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions, and has in total 318 members and as many substitutes. Since it joined the Council of Europe (26 November 1991), Poland has had 12 representatives in each of the chambers. The members elect the president of the Congress from among their group for a two-year term. The Standing Committee, where all national delegations are represented, ensures the continuity of operations between sessions.

Congress work is conducted via four statutory committees:

- The Institutional Committee is responsible for drafting reports on the development of European democracy at local and regional levels,
- The Culture and Education Committee deals with the media, youth, sport and social communication,
- The Committee on Sustainable Development works on environmental issues as well as problems of spatial and urban planning,
- The Committee on Social Cohesion concentrates on employment, citizenship, inter-community relations, public health and equal opportunities.
- Congress meetings can also be attended by representatives of local and regional authorities in states that are not members of the Council of Europe: from states that have been granted the status of an honorary guest, as well as observers representing European organisations of local and regional authorities.

The most tangible achievement of the Congress has been the preparation of a range of

documents that have been adopted as conventions signed by European states. The most important of the documents are:

1. The European Charter of Local Self-government;
2. The European Framework Convention on Cross-border Co-operation between Communities and Local Authorities, otherwise known as 'the Madrid Convention';
3. The European Charter of Regional Self-government.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe approved the European Charter of Local Self-government in 1985 (Poland ratified the Charter in 1993 and put it into effect in 1994). The Charter states that democracy is essential to the effective functioning of local self-government. It also defines 'local self-government' as the ability of local authorities, democratically elected by local citizens, to manage a large part of public affairs on behalf of their communities. The Charter underlines that the rights and responsibilities of local authorities should be specified in acts of Parliament and inscribed in the Constitution. This document is part of international legislation and is a binding convention for countries that have signed and ratified it.

The Madrid Convention was signed in 1980 (Poland later ratified it and was made effective in 1993). The signatory states have pledged to support, facilitate and promote cross-border co-operation. The Convention provides a platform for the creation and activity of Euroregions as institutional vehicles of cross-border co-operation.

The last of the documents - the European Charter of Regional Self-government was adopted in 1997. It is similar to the European Charter of Local Self-government. Its preamble states that the region is a structure that is instrumental in furthering the principles of democracy, decentralisation of authority, and subsidiarity, which conducts its own policy and international co-operation, including the possession of its own representatives abroad. Therefore, its independence should be protected under the law, it should have adequate financial resources and control over its own property, and all decisions affecting a region should be made at the regional level or with its approval.

The structures of the Council of Europe also contain other institutions founded on distinct legal bases, namely the Management Committee of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Conference of Ministers, who are in charge of local and regional governments. The Committee is a forum where government representatives can co-operate with one another and enables an exchange of experience as well as debates on current problems arising in the

area between central governments and local as well as regional communities. Its existence allows to review regional problems and seek relevant solutions from the “other end”, i.e. through central authorities.

The European Conference of Ministers constitutes a platform on which Ministers meet on a two-year basis. Ministers in charge of local and regional governments learn about local and self-government problems in particular states, exchange experience and seek feasible solutions.

### Regional and branch channels of access to Community institutions

Many channels allow regions and branches to gain access to Community policy. They can be divided into two groups: institutional channels and channels provided under public policy. The two types are distinguished by the source granting rights of access. In the first case, the rights mainly arise from Community treaties or national legislation allowing regions to participate in the activities of various public institutions. They can be exercised in many policy areas, but their character is rather generic as they help to further the common interests of regional communities. The other type of rights is made available under regulations applying to particular areas of Community policy – they can only be exercised in a predefined area. Such rights are granted if regions are perceived as capable of enhancing the decision-making process, for instance by making the decisions more effective and productive.

Theoretically easy to distinguish, the channels may, however, pose some problems in practice. Many channels under public policy (for instance in the area of local development) can be also subordinated to national legislation. Additionally, various institutional or public policy channels may interact, amplifying each other.

#### Institutional channels

Institutional channels differ with respect to the source of their legitimisation. There are channels provided under Community legislation (treaties, regulations) that can be used by all member states and their institutions at lower levels. Such channels result from the enactment of national laws and therefore only effective in particular countries. This distinction is useful for classification rather than practical purposes; although one should bear in mind that Community channels are also at the discretion of particular member states – not only when signing treaties, but also in cases where treaties are incorporated into national legislation, which involves the enactment of relevant laws. Community directives must

be implemented by all member states, but the need to make them adaptable to various executory provisions calls for their relative flexibility.

Regional channels of access also depend on direct or indirect relations the regions have managed to establish with Community institutions. Direct channels allow regions to contact European institutions without any intermediaries, whereas indirect channels are determined by relations formed via central governments (*Table 1*).

Even though institutional access channels can be potentially shared by all EU regions, the possibility depends on the member state. The most illustrative is the case of indirect access provided under national legislation (D), where the access is completely controlled by the state. Different degrees of access may result not only from national legislation but also from procedures applicable (for instance, some instruments to bring about an understanding between the state and the regions may exist, which do not necessarily have a legal underpinning but refer to historical or social circumstances). Other cases also have their specific traits. Regarding the direct access provided under Community legislation (A), the different degree of access is due to the heterogeneous composition of the Committee of the Regions, where representatives are delegated by regions functioning under different national systems. As regards B, regional missions or inter-regional associations may have a different authority, whereas in the case of C regional ministers in federal states may enjoy a similar authority to that granted to ministers at the federal (central) level.

#### The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions was established based on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 as a body with an advisory status consisting of representatives of regional and local bodies [11]. Its establishment was the outcome of joint efforts taken by the European Commission, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Assembly of European Regions (AER).

The Committee of the Regions is an advisory body to the Council, to the EC and – following the Treaty of Amsterdam – to the European Parliament. It advises the UE on matters relevant to regions, and its structure resembles that of the Economic and Social Committee. At the same time, it speaks for the institutions and organisations it represents. The Committee of the Regions was founded with a view to making regions and local communities part of European integration [1].

The Committee is now composed of 344 representatives of self-government bodies from all levels of the 27 member states. The number of representatives is decided by the demographic potential of the member state (generally, the larger the population, the more representatives a country has), whereas the manner of their delegation is determined by the member state itself; in federal states priority is given to representatives of the Länder, whereas in region-based countries the number of representatives coming from regional and local authorities are balanced. However, in unitary states the representatives of municipalities predominate (*Table 2*, see page 18).

The Committee of the Regions confers with the main bodies of the EU on matters that are of concern to the regions. Under the Treaty, the list of such matters includes education, culture, public health, trans-European networks, telecommunication, energy, economic and social cohesion policy, transport, environmental protection, vocational education, utilisation of structural funds, hygiene and safety at work as well as the promotion of employment.

Since the date of its establishment, the Committee of the Regions has been striving to be granted the status of a fully-fledged institution of the Community, to make the European Charter of Local Self-government part of the *acquis communautaire* and for the stronger engagement of the Committee in the decision-making process at the EU level.

Generally, the Committee of the Regions does not have a very strong position in the institutional system. Firstly, its preroga-

**Table 1.** Channels of regional and branch access to the EU; Source: developed by the authors based on M. Brunazzo, *Le regioni italiane e l'Unione Europea. Accessi istituzionali e di politica pubblica*, Carocci, Roma 2005, p. 27.

		Source of legitimisation	
		European	National
Access	Direct	The European Economic and Social Committee; The Committee of the Regions (A)	Regional and branch representation Inter-regional and branch associations or networks (C)
	Indirect	The EU Council (B)	Inter-regional consultations (regional representatives become permanent representatives) (D)

tives are mainly advisory, and secondly its ranks are quite at odds, as members represent various structures at sub-national levels. The minister or prime minister in a German Land is a politician of a different calibre than a representative of a UK shire. Besides, the representatives associate themselves into loose-knit political groups, although their factions are not so dispersed as in the case of the European Parliament [11].

### The Council of the European Union

Another channel of access Community Treaties have made available for regions is that a regional minister can participate in sessions of the Council of the European Union (formerly the Council of Ministers) instead of a national minister. Pertinent regulations were implemented following proposals submitted by the German government which were aimed at meeting the demands of particular Länder to allow them to work with European and national institutions. This channel of access can only be used by states with regional governments, i.e. having a federal structure, such as Austria, Belgium and Germany.

It should be borne in mind, however, that a regional government representative sitting on the Council of the European Union may not represent any other interests but their country's, even if they contradict the interests of the representative's region.

### Representative offices of the regions and branches of industry

In the last twenty years, the number of representative offices has grown rapidly. In 1984 only two such offices could be found, in 1995 their number increased to 91, in 2002 to 158, and today there more than 300 of them [16]. The offices either mirror the regional structure (institutional representative offices), being an integral part of the region's organisation, or they are set up as the representative offices of regional or branch associations or agencies (non-institutional representative offices). The offices also differ on account of the number of employees: some are staffed by 1 - 2 persons working part time, but others may have as many as 15 - 20 full time employees.

Depending on the administrative structure in their countries, the regions or branches have either individual or shared representative offices. In the case of federal countries, or those having a similar structure, where regions enjoy substantial autonomy, particular regions maintain their own representative offices in Brussels. This is especially the case in German and Austrian Länder, as well as in Belgian, Spanish, Italian and British regions. The majority of regions, however, are represented collectively by a common representative office that groups

**Table 2.** Composition of the Committee of the Regions; Source: developed by the authors based on the COR website <http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages>.

State	No. of members
France, Germany, Italy, the UK	24
Spain, Poland	21
Romania	15
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Hungary	12
Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia	9
Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia	7
Cyprus, Luxembourg	6
Malta	5
TOTAL	344

regions of the same member state based on territorial proximity and common interests.

The tasks of the representative offices can be broadly summarised as follows:

1. Gathering information about EU programmes, new initiatives available for the region, prospective tendering for projects (seeking partners to jointly prepare projects), procedures as well as other possible undertakings and initiatives of European institutions, and communicating this information promptly to the region in line with priorities set by regional authorities.
2. Assisting in the preparation of various regional projects and seeking the sources of funding – searching for additional information necessary for a project to be prepared correctly.
3. Organisation of visits of representatives of regional authorities and experts from the region – training, seminars, conferences, i.e. the educational capacity.
4. Presentation of priorities, problems and regional development plans during meetings with representatives of the EC, the Committee of the Regions, European institutions as well as representatives of other regions (direct lobbying on behalf of the region).
5. Acting as a point of contact for representatives of other regions that may be interested in initiating relations with their own region and seeking such contacts actively for themselves – taking advantage of easy access to many European regions and other organisations – to enable an exchange of information and joint actions.
6. Participation in the process of advising the population in their region on European integration problems (briefings).

### Branch associations (using the example of the textile and clothing industry)

EURATEX is an organization of national and branch associations representing the European textile and clothing industry. Its headquarter is located in Brussels within touching distance of the major decision-making bodies of the European Union. At

present EURATEX consists of 46 members from 27 European countries and 15 associate and corresponding members. Poland is represented by the Polish Federation of Apparel and Textiles (Polska Izba Odzieżowa – Tekstylna).

EURATEX's main objective is to create an environment within the European Union which is conducive to the manufacture of textile and clothing products. In this context, the major areas of concern to EURATEX over recent years have been to ensure the smoothest possible transition into the quota-free era, to promote a further expansion of EU exports of textiles and clothing, to promote legislation and its application in the field of intellectual property, to support measures which enhance environmental protection but are at the same time acceptable to the industry, to promote and participate in research, development, innovation and other educational or social projects which bring added value to the industry at a European level, to engage in a constructive social dialogue at the EU level with our social partners, and to disseminate economic and statistical data to the membership.

EURATEX's organization, located in Brussels, is staffed to address the above objectives, to provide a number of associated services and to supply its members with the information and data necessary for them to further their industry's aims at national and branch levels.

The main activities of this organization comprise [19]:

- Informing Euratex members about EU/ International trade policy and EU Internal Market decisions impacting company strategies: trade agreements, market access problems, implementation of WTO provisions, rules of origin, and state aids.
- Coordinating Euratex actions related to the use of trade instruments to safeguard the interests of EU industry.
- Helping industry to define its Commercial and Industry strategy in relation to

World Trade Organization obligations and EU Internal Market provisions.

- Defining and supporting any action to improve the sustainability and supply of quality, safe and healthy textiles in Europe.
- Defining integrated environmental strategies vis a vis EU institutions and other decision makers.
- Informing Euratex members about European and international Intellectual Property discussions, projects and activities.
- Informing European institutions about the situation and needs of the European textile and clothing industry with respect to the protection of intellectual property and fight against counterfeiting and piracy.
- Designing and coordinating advocacy actions relating to Intellectual Property, including the drafting of related position papers.

Polish member of Euratex – Polish Federation of Apparel and Textiles<sup>3</sup> is an organization associating companies from clothing and textile sector; their unions and associations, trade enterprises, as well as research organisations and universities [21].

The main objectives of the Federation are:

- to express opinions in the area of economic policy effecting textile and clothing industry by submitting to the state authorities and parliamentary commissions problems reported by companies and suggestions of the possible solutions;
- to promote the interests of its members while taking into account the European Union's institutional framework and its international obligations;
- to create an environment which is conducive to the manufacture and trade of textile and clothing products;
- to participate in research, development, innovation and other educational and social projects at the domestic and European level which bring value added to the industry;
- to engage in the constructive social dialogue with our social partners at the domestic and European level;
- to collect, analyze and disseminate economic and statistical data for the members [21].

Polish Federation of Apparel and Textiles has a strong position among European branch organizations within Euratex, which is European Commission's indirect consultant. Thanks to its engagement Federation is represented in many organizational structures on European level:

- in Euratex' Board of Directors;
- in Managing Committee of European Technology Platforms (ETPs);

- in Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) of the European Economic and Social Committee.

### Inter-regional associations and networks

Towards the end of the 1970s, European regions started to co-operate with one another, setting up many associations and networks. The difference between an association and a network lies in the mechanism of their functioning and concerns the length and nature of co-operation as well as the dissimilarity of organisational structures. Generally, an association is a long-term undertaking, whereas networks are disbanded once their goal has been achieved or a European programme that induced their establishment has ended. An association has an institutionalised and consolidated organisational structure, with the permanent involvement of various regional entities (not only political). In contrast, networks are typically task-oriented and their organisational structure is more flexible but also more exclusive, meaning that political entities are privileged [12].

Another type of classification highlights the different forms of inter-regional co-operation and distinguishes representative and functional organizations. The first group incorporates all organizations that aim to promote or protect regional interests in the broad meaning of the phrase; relevant examples being the Assembly of the European Regions (AER), the Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and Eurocities.

The first of them, the Assembly of European Regions, was established in 1985 and today it brings together 300 regions in 30 countries. It strives to strengthen its members' influence on European institutions, promotes inter-regional co-operation and assists less developed or problem territories. Following the democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe, the AER extended its activities to enhance the idea of regionalism and federalism in Europe. Organisationally, the AER has commissions that deal with the following subject matters: institutional issues and inter-regional co-operation, social cohesion, social security, public health and employment, regional policy, spatial planning, infrastructure, environmental protection, and tourism.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions was formed in Geneva in 1951 and is now the largest organisation associating local and regional governments in Europe. CEMR members are from 50 national associations of local and regional authorities that represent over 100,000 self-government bodies [17].

The CEMR is concentrated on promoting the concept of a united Europe based on self-government and democracy, exchanging experience between particular associations, influencing European legislation and policy, and increasing the involvement of representatives of local and regional authorities in the shaping of European policy.

A special achievement of the CEMR is the idea of city partnerships. As of today, 26,000 partnership agreements have been signed between cities all over Europe. In this field, the CEMR co-operates with the EU Directorate General for Education and Culture.

Established in 1986, Eurocities is a network that links 130 large European cities in 30 countries. It mostly attempts to encourage dialogue between European institutions on all issues that may possibly affect cities and their residents. The main subjects are economic development and cohesion policy, provision of public services, environmental protection, social issues and employment, culture and education, an information and knowledge society, management and international cooperation.

The activities of Eurocities include **networking**, i.e. exchange of experience, the testing of new solutions and analyses of the best practices applying to urban life; **lobbying**, meaning the active formation of European policy, legislation and programmes that are relevant to cities, and **campaigning**, i.e. the launching of pan-European campaigns intended to raise citizens' awareness and change the attitude of urban authorities and residents to issues important for the community [20]. Functional organisations can be broken down into two categories: the first contains regions with similar geographical characteristics and the other covers the best-developed regions in Europe.

The first group of organisations incorporates the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), the Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe (AMRIE) and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

The first of the organisations was founded in 1973 with a view to initiating activities that might help reduce inequalities existing between central and peripheral regions, increasing regional involvement in the process of European integration and promoting maritime issues among European institutions. Today its members represent 159 regions in 29 countries.

The Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe, whose paramount goal is the development and promotion of the Integrated Maritime Strategy, has been dealing with

similar issues since 1993. AMRIE is both a public benefit organisation and research institute established by members of the European Parliament to serve as a vehicle for influencing Community policy in areas such as transport, environmental protection and maritime policy [15].

The Association of European Border Regions, established in Anholt, Germany, in 1971, is the oldest of the above organisations. It brings together European border and cross-border regions (Euroregions), introducing them to other international organisations and EU structures, while providing a platform for cooperation and exchange of experience; for instance, it has a close co-operation with the Council of Europe. Its members come from both EU and external regions.

AEBR acts on behalf of European border and cross-border regions, representing their interests in national and international parliaments, bodies, authorities and institutions in order to initiate, support and coordinate regional co-operation across Europe, and to facilitate the exchange of experience as well as information so that joint solutions can be formulated and reconciled.

The other group of organisations are associations promoting the development of well-off and the best-developed areas in Europe. Among these there are the Four Motors for Europe, and some cross-border regions such as Euregio and Regio Basilensis. The first of the organisations was formed in 1988, bringing together four regions that play leading roles in the economies of their countries, i.e. Baden-Württemberg (Germany), Catalonia (Spain), Lombardy (Italy) and Rhône-Alpes (France). The organisation has not created any permanent administrative structure; its members co-operate on the principle of organisational flexibility, which means that members assume a one-year presidency in turns. The organisation's activities concentrate around the exchange of experience, execution of joint undertakings and lobbying at the Community level [14].

## Conclusions

Relations between European, regional and branch institutions have changed significantly since the 1990s. On one hand, the European Union has become a structure that enables organisations to play a role in the decision-making process at different levels. On the other hand, regions and various branches of industry have been provided with new possibilities of entering Community institutions. This process takes place in all member states and involves various types of access channels – both direct and indirect.

From a regional point of view, the most important are relationships established under European policy, mainly the policy of socio-economic cohesion. In this area, regions are both the beneficiaries of EU aid and its main defenders. The principle of partnership has been central to regional policy; according to the principle, the European Union, national governments and regional authorities work together at each stage of decision making when programming and implementing.

It is difficult to imagine how other regional and branch channels with access to EU institutions could function without the cohesion policy. Being allowed to use structural funds, regions and branches have started to establish their representative offices in Brussels, as well as associations representing the common interests of regions and branches. The same policy triggered the establishment of the European Economic and Social Committee and then the Committee of the Regions, which have become permanent players in the institutional system of the European Communities.

Although the representatives of the textile and apparel industry are active mainly in European institutions of consultative character, their role cannot be neglected. They were able in the past to successfully lobby for their interests and block some initiatives, which could have essential repercussions for the whole industry.

## Editorial Notes

\* Prof. nadzw. at the Łódź Technical University, Department of European Integration and International Marketing and University of Łódź, Department of World Economics and European Integration.

\*\* Doctor at the Institute of Economics, Department of World Economics and European Integration, University of Łódź.

## Endnotes

1. Between 1994 and 2003, the organization was called the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, and since 2003 (as we already mentioned) it has been known as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
2. Article 263 (ex 198a) of the Treaty establishing the European Community of 7 February 1992.
3. Polish Federation of Apparel and Textiles has been established in 1965. The headquarter is located in Gdynia, Kielecka street 7. Another bureau is located in Łódź, Rewolucji 1905 No 49.

## References

1. Bociąg B., Cywińska B., Dziekański A., Grzegorzewska A., Kamiński D.: *Regiony, samorządy w Unii Europejskiej. Wybrane zagadnienia, Fundacja Prawo Europejskie, Warsaw 2004.*
2. Brunazzo M.: *Le regioni italiane e l'Unione Europea. Accessi istituzionali e di politica pubblica, Carocci, Roma 2005.*
3. Conseil de l'Europe, *Rapport d'activité 2007, Strasbourg 2008.*
4. *European Governance. A White Paper, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels 2001.*
5. Fabbrini S. (a cura di), *L'Europeizzazione dell'Italia. L'impatto dell'Unione Europea sul.*
6. Green Cowles M., Caporaso J., Risse T. (eds); *Transforming Europe. Europeanization and Domestic Change, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001.*
7. Greta M., Lewandowski K.: *Unia Europejska jako system wieloszczeblowego zarządzania, „Gospodarka w praktyce i w teorii”, Instytut Ekonomii Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego No. 2 (22) / 2008.*
8. Hooghe L. (ed.); *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996.*
9. Kaczmarek J.: *Rada Europy, ATLA 2, Wrocław 2002.*
10. Keating M., *The New Regionalism In Western Europe. Territorial Restructuring and Political Change, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham 1998.*
11. Nicoll W., Salmon T.C., *Zrozumieć Unię Europejską, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 2002.*
12. Ongaro E., Valotti G. (a cura di), *L'internazionalizzazione di regioni ed enti locali. Contenuti, esperienze e prospettive, Etas Libri, Milano 2002.*
13. Wódcz K., Wódcz J.: *Europa urzędników brukselskich czy Europa obywateli? U źródeł deficytu demokratycznego w Unii Europejskiej, w: K. Wódcz, Negocjowana demokracja czyli europejskie governance po polsku, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warsaw 2007.*
14. <http://www.4motors.eu/>
15. <http://www.amrie.org/>
16. <http://www.blbe.be>
17. [http://www.ccre.org/presentation\\_en.htm](http://www.ccre.org/presentation_en.htm)
18. <http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages>
19. <http://www.euratex.org>
20. <http://www.eurocities.org/main.php>
21. [www.textiles.pl](http://www.textiles.pl)

Received 09.11.2007 Reviewed 02.10.2008