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Today, during the online discussion organized by Europe Gateway as part of the Interacting with the European Parliament Project, the Chair of the Committee on Regional Development in EP, Danuta Huebner commented on different topics, related to the regional policy and the future of EU. Answering a question about the future regional development commissioner with regard to Bulgarian aspirations for the portfolio, Huebner answered: "It was important to have a Commissioner from a new member state in the past because we had to incorporate new member states into the policy. Now, he or she can be from any country. I've heard rumours about Hungary and Spain being interested in this portfolio."

"We need a good commissioner that would understand the local and regional Europe, that would be prepared to work long hours and open to do a lot of travelling", she added.

Huebner said she expected the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in Poland to be completed soon. According to her, a potential delay of the ratification in the Czech Republic could be a problem to the EU but would not be crucial for the work of the regional committee, since the body is faced with a lot of tasks.

The former commissioner explained that during the current economic crisis EU simplified the use of structural funds, decided on additional advance payments and provided funds for small and medium sized companies that replaced lacking bank credit.

Commenting on the priorities for the structural funds for the next programming period, Huebner emphasized the need for continuing investments in development needs of the regions and cities. The long term objectives are competitiveness of European regions, energy efficiency investment, renewable energy, innovation and skills. "The challenge for all of us is to simplify the policy further and attract also other funding to regional development" she added.

The MEP underlined the role of cross-border cooperation as an important aspect of regional policy adding, the policy should go beyond the exchange of good practices, providing real investment in the border areas.