



Final Conclusions
issued by the German Presidency
at the close of the Informal Council of EU Ministers
responsible for Spatial Planning
held in Potsdam on 10-11 May 1999

- (1) The Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the Member States of the European Union and the member of the European Commission responsible for Regional Policy emphasized in Potsdam that the conclusion of the political debate on the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) was an important step in the progress towards European integration.
- (2) By adopting the ESDP, the Member States and the Commission reached agreement on common objectives and concepts for the future development of the territory of the European Union.
- (3) The aim of spatial development policies is to work towards a balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the European Union. In the Ministers' view, what is important is to ensure that the three fundamental goals of European policy are achieved equally in all the regions of the EU:
 - economic and social cohesion;
 - conservation and management of natural resources and the cultural heritage;
 - more balanced competitiveness of the European territory.

The ESDP is a suitable policy framework for the sectoral policies of the Community and the Member States that have spatial impacts, as well as for regional and local authorities, aimed as it is at achieving a balanced and sustainable development of the European territory.

- (4) In the interests of closer European integration, the Ministers consider co-operation on regional development among the Member States and among their regions and local authorities necessary. Regional and local authorities must work together in the future across national boundaries. The ESDP is a suitable reference document for encouraging co-operation, while at the same time respecting the principle of subsidiarity.
- (5) All the participants were agreed that the ESDP does not provide for any new responsibilities at Community level. It will serve as a policy framework for the Member States, their regions and local authorities and the European Commission in their own respective spheres of responsibility.

The German and the succeeding Finnish Presidency of the Council will forward the ESDP to the European institutions. In addition, the German Presidency of the Council will inform the Accession Countries and the other European countries of the results of the Meeting in Potsdam within the framework of the Committee of Senior Officials of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) at the end of May 1999. The Member States will send the ESDP to their sector planning authorities and to the regional and local authorities in their countries. The following Presidencies of the Council will inform representatives of third countries of the ESDP's aims and principles at international meetings and conferences dealing with regional and urban development issues.

The Europe-wide debate on the draft of the ESDP document resulted in a large number of proposals being submitted; the European Commission organized ESDP fora on various topic areas covered by the document; the European institutions (European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee) as well as a number of non-governmental organizations presented useful comments on the ESDP draft. The Ministers thanked all those involved for their voluntary co-operation in preparing the European Spatial Development Perspective. They asked the Commission to have the document printed in sufficient numbers in all the official languages of the EU and send it to the Member States and authorities responsible for spatial development.

- (6) The Ministers and the European Commissioner agreed that the process of the application of the ESDP must now begin. The Community Initiative INTERREG is an important instrument for the application of the ESDP. They therefore expressly welcomed the prominent position accorded to the INTERREG within the framework of the four new Community Initiatives. With regard to funding, due attention should be paid to cross-border co-operation (Section A), especially in view of the enlargement of the EU and the need to ensure stability along the external borders. The funding of Section B (transnational co-operation) should take adequate account of the growing strategic role of transnational co-operation for achieving a polycentric and regionally balanced development of the EU; this should include the ultraperipheral regions.
- (7) They asked the succeeding Finnish Presidency of the Council to continue the ESDP process established in Potsdam with the steps to initiate its application by progressively developing an action programme and beginning a discussion on the forms of the future co-operation on questions relating to spatial development.

The Ministers reached agreement on the following important measures:

- a) They emphasized that the ESDP should be taken into consideration in sector planning in implementing the new regulation on Structural Funds. This also applies for example to the revision of the TENs which is being carried out by the Commission at present. They asked the Commission to report on the spatial impacts of sectoral policies at Community level.
- b) It is important for future transnational and interregional co-operation that the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) be established quickly. The Committee on Spatial Development was instructed to prepare a corresponding application for a co-operation project which is eligible for funding within the

framework of the Community Initiative INTERREG III, based on the results of the Luxembourg Presidency, and to also look for other funding possibilities.

- c) They discussed how their close co-operation could be improved after agreement has been reached on the ESDP and asked the Committee on Spatial Development to examine, together with the Commission, all the possibilities for this and to present a report in the course of the coming year.
 - d) The proposal made by the Presidency for a competition "Future Regions of Europe" was noted by the Ministers. The Committee on Spatial Development was asked to take account of how this would be funded and to work out the details for holding this competition in association with the Commission. The aim should be to hold the competition for the first time in the year 2001. The proposal made by the French delegation to include a youth competition for secondary schools on the theme of the European integration of their region was welcomed.
 - e) Raising the awareness of future generations with regard to the topic of European integration is very important. The Ministers therefore welcomed the proposal of the French delegation of using the ESDP as a basis for preparing geography books for secondary schools and hence providing a basis for the new geography of Europe. The Committee on Spatial Development was asked to examine the feasibility of this initiative in co-operation with competent national bodies of the Member States.
 - f) They welcomed the Spanish proposal for the preparation of a manual/guide on integrated strategies for the development of coastal regions.
- (8) The Ministers welcomed the willingness of the European Investment Bank to participate in the implementation of the ESDP by funding suitable projects.
- (9) They also welcomed the additional chapters of the Urban Exchange Initiative prepared by the German Presidency in conjunction with their Austrian colleagues. They arranged to send this report to the succeeding Finnish Presidency for the final discussion.
- (10) They thanked the future Finnish Presidency of the Council for agreeing to host the next Ministerial Meeting in Tampere at the beginning of October 1999.