Contribution of the Portuguese Government for the Public Consultation on the 
Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion - Turning Territorial Diversity into Strength

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The present document is the contribution of the Portuguese Government for the public consultation process on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion.

The Portuguese Government actively supported and promoted the public consultation on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion.

The Portuguese Government has officially presented and debated the Green Paper in a public session with the participation of the Minister of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development, the Secretary of State of European Affairs, as well as a representative of the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the European Commission, a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament and a representative of the National Association of the Portuguese Municipalities.

The Portuguese Government has also supported a cycle of conferences about the Green Paper, held under the initiative of the Portuguese Association of Geographers, in cooperation with other organizations representing the Portuguese professionals who deal directly with territorial matters. This cycle of conferences was held at a national level (mainland and Autonomous Regions).

The Directorate General for Spatial Planning and Urban Development has promoted a public consultation through its Web page, as well as publicized and distributed published copies of the Green Paper, the European Union Territorial Agenda and its first Action Plan.

The contribution of the National Association of the Portuguese Municipalities to the public consultation on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion should also be underlined. This contribution was publicly presented at the above mentioned Government official public session.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The public consultation on the Green Paper promoted by the European Commission is a decisive step in the European debate about territorial cohesion.
Territorial cohesion is an implicit value of the EU. Moreover, it is also an objective which guides the definition and the implementation of some of the most important Community policies, such as: cohesion policy, which started to be implemented 20 years ago, Rural Development Policy, particularly after the Agenda 2000, or the national regional state aids regime, specially through the new guidelines set for the period 2007-2013.

Nevertheless, the current debate about territorial cohesion is particularly relevant and has an important political meaning for the EU.

First of all, because, once the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the Treaties will explicitly refer to territorial cohesion as the third dimension of cohesion policy.

Secondly, because European cooperation in the area of spatial development has led to the adoption of a shared strategy and of a common line of action: the Territorial Agenda of the EU, adopted in Leipzig, in May 2007, at the Informal Meeting of the European Union Ministers responsible for spatial development and for urban development; and its first Action Plan, adopted in Ponta Delgada, in November 2007, at another Informal Meeting of Ministers.

Thirdly, because the debate about territorial cohesion is interrelated with the wider debate on the EU Budget Review and the development of European strategies and policies, particularly those which concern the future of cohesion policy after 2013.

Additionally, because we are facing an economic, financial and social crisis, which requires a solution able to conciliate the recovery of the levels of growth and employment with the values of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The Portuguese Authorities have, thus, participated in this public consultation, just as they have done in previous consultations about the EU Budget Review and the future of Cohesion Policy. This participation clearly shows the interest and importance the Portuguese Government attaches to these issues, both in the framework of the European Union development and in the framework of the development of Portugal and its regions.

This is a political debate. A debate about the European project. A debate based on political commitments, giving sequence to a common path. What is at stake here is much more than just the clarification of a concept. It is about ensuring that the European Union continues to move forward in a path to an intelligent and supportive development, turning its territorial cohesion and diversity into strength.
In a broad assessment, the major positive aspects of the Green Paper are the value attached to the European territory and to its diversity and the three guidelines for a more balanced and harmonious development of the European Union: reducing the negative effects of density disparities, connecting territories to overcome distance and cooperating to overcome division.

On a more critical note, the absence of a future oriented and global strategic approach to the European territory, should be underlined. This situation is worsened by the insufficient enhancement of the Territorial Agenda, by unbalanced references to real examples of the territorial specificities of the European Union, as well as by the scarcity of proposals able to provide a concrete and operational political content to the concept of territorial cohesion.

Nevertheless, Portugal trusts the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion represents a decisive step towards integrating territorial cohesion in the shared competences of EU policy. It constitutes a fundamental driving force in a wide debate about its implications in the political practice of the European institutions, of the national and regional authorities, of the economic and social partners and other stakeholders involved in the processes of European construction and territorial development.

The public debate and the conclusions that the Commission will draw from it will certainly allow the correction of less positive aspects and the deepening and consolidation of the less developed ones.

In the last part of the Green Paper, the Commission invites all the interested parties to participate in a wider and deeper debate about several issues related to the concept of territorial cohesion and to its implications in the political practice of the national and regional European institutions. The present document embodies the Portuguese reply to this invitation. Its first part consists of an analysis of the factual contents and proposals presented in the first three sections of the Commission’s paper. The second part deals with the Questions for the Debate.

ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE GREEN PAPER...

The first two sections of the Green Paper, which refer to the working document of the Commission therewith attached containing the maps and tables mentioned in the text and clarifying several concepts and indicators used, present a territorial perspective of the economic and social cohesion (1) and propose a path towards a more balanced development (2).
In a document such as the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion*, the technical and the political issues are interlinked, which is a reason for it to be read and considered as a whole.

In the previous section, a political overview of the issues of the *Green Paper* considered to be more and less positive has already been presented. The following comments refer to the specific topics that are believed to require further attention, consideration and improvement.

**Unbalanced references to concrete examples of the EU’s territories...**

It is understandable that the *Green Paper* includes references to some concrete examples of national and regional situations, experiences and territorial cohesion priorities. It is, however, difficult to understand the geographical unbalance of such examples. This situation is quite obvious on the first and third paragraphs of the text and it is also very clear on other parts of the document, such as section 2.3, dedicated to territorial cooperation. To be more specific, the absence of any reference to the southwest Atlantic Europe is not understandable and it is regrettable as this area constitutes, in its continental and maritime dimensions, a marking feature of European diversity, both because of its geostrategic importance and because of its specific problems and potentials.

**Excessive focus on certain regions and limiting approach of low density...**

The contents of section 2.4, *Regions with specific geographical features* raises some reservations.

First, because its focus is limited to “three specific types of region that in some cases face particular development challenges”.

Secondly, because the *Green Paper* accepts the concept of low-density regions used for the national regional state aids regime, therefore restricting its scope to the regions with less than 12.5 inhabitants per square kilometre. This option is not adequate, for the following reasons: it isolates the density criterion with regard to other criteria which, in that regime, allow for a greater flexibility and for the enlargement of regional eligibility; it is not consistent with the acknowledgement that is made on the working document attached to the *Green Paper* of the seriousness of problems affecting the remote rural areas; and it presents, without providing any justification for this choice, a threshold of low population density which is four times less than the 50 inhabitants per square kilometre established, for similar purposes, in the Regulation (CE) nº 1083/2006.

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1 *Vide* Table 1 and Map 3 attached to the *Green Paper*

2 *Vide* item f) of article 52º of the Regulation (CE) nº 1083/2006, of the Council, dated 11th July
If this option were to be accepted, almost exclusively the most northern regions of the European Union would be considered. This would mean, for example, excluding all of inland Portugal's NUT III, which, with no exception, are remote rural and low-density regions. This option is a matter of concern for the Portuguese Government and we strongly believe that it should be corrected.

**The structural aid intensity should not be measured by the criterion of how many Euros per inhabitant alone...**

The way how, in section 2 of the working document attached to the Green Paper, structural aid intensity in the rural remote regions is compared with structural aid intensity in the intermediate and urban regions is detrimental to the rural remote regions.

Indeed, if the criteria are limited to the indicator of Euros per inhabitant, then you will be ignoring the specific demands resulting from low density. And ignoring such demands is not in line with the criteria of allocating structural aid to the regions, because these criteria take into consideration the area as well as (and not just) the population.

**Reference to the need of coordinating policies, but absence of guidelines for its implementation and conflicting specific topics...**

Sub-section 3.1 of the Green Paper identifies the political areas that have a more direct impact on territorial cohesion. Although it emphasizes the need for a better coordination between sectoral and territorial policies, it does not provide any concrete guidance for that purpose.

The absence of guidance in such a crucial issue for territorial cohesion is to be regretted. Moreover, two additional remarks are justified.

First of all, the fact that the Green Paper refers to the first pillar of CAP in a way that differs from what is referred to in the 4th Report on Social and Economic Cohesion should be underlined. This report shows that the regional allocation of the funds that are granted to agriculture within the framework of this CAP pillar is concentrated on the more developed areas of the EU, and, therefore, does not contribute to territorial cohesion. Contrariwise, the Green Paper only mentions the favourable impact of such funds on the maintenance of activities, on the agricultural revenues and on the good management of land use in rural areas.

Secondly, the positive impact of the competitiveness policy topics on territorial cohesion should be emphasized, since the Green Paper advocates that the regional allocation of funds to the economic activities should be concentrated on the less developed areas, thereby adjusting its intensity to the nature and dimension of the territorial problems.
Insufficient enhancement of the Territorial Agenda of the EU and absence of a global strategic vision of the European territory...

Sub-section 3.2 of the *Green Paper*, which concludes the analysis and precedes the Questions for debate, is dedicated to the background of the *Green Paper*, ranging from the 90’s (ESDP) to the recent adoption of the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union* and of its *First Action Plan*.

The content and the priorities of the *Territorial Agenda* are, however, presented in a superficial way. This fact is surprising and impoverishing, given the importance of the *Agenda* for the strategic framework and recognition of territorial cohesion. A good opportunity to enrich the *Green Book* with some contributions for a global strategic perspective of the European territory was thus lost. It is difficult to understand how a subject that was so important in 1999 with the ESDP can be almost completely absent from the present document.

**ON THE QUESTIONS FOR THE DEBATE**

1. **Definition**

   | Territorial cohesion brings new issues to the fore and puts a new emphasis on existing ones. |
   | What is the most appropriate definition of territorial cohesion? |
   | What additional elements would it bring to the current approach to economic and social cohesion as practiced by the European Union? |

**Territorial cohesion...**

When *territorial cohesion* becomes included in the Treaties as one of the three dimensions of the cohesion objective and policy, it formally turns part of the pillars of the European project - cohesion.

More than looking for a *definition*, the need is to clarify the *why*, the *what for* and the *how* of territorial cohesion: What is its added value as a *crosscut political principle, as a strategy and as a new dimension of cohesion policy?* What are its specific objectives? How to give it an effective and operational content? What changes should it induce in coordination, in governance and in the instruments of European policies, particularly of cohesion policy?

Answering these questions is a political exercise that will enable to continue treading the path that has followed for the past twenty years, without aiming at depleting it in a final definition.
However, there are urgent steps to be taken and issues that are already part of our common fundamentals.

Although the scope of territorial cohesion is very wide, three major political dimensions of the concept can be considered:

- As a **crosscutting principle of the EU’s political action**, territorial cohesion should promote stronger **coherence between different policies**. Territory is a privileged arena for meeting and coordinate territorial and sectoral policies. The coherence and efficiency of the political action and the sustainable development of the European Union, from the European to the local level, depend upon this coordinated approach.

- As the **third component of cohesion policy**, territorial cohesion should promote **convergence and integration between different territories**. The enhancement of their specific potential, the development of integrated and participated territorial approaches, territorial cooperation and multi-level governance are examples of contributions induced by the territorial cohesion perspective that add a political value to cohesion.

- Finally, as a **strategy**, territorial cohesion adds a new meaning to the previous dimensions, laying their foundations in **strategic shared approaches about the same territory** as enshrined in documents such as the *Territorial Agenda*, as far as the European Union territory is concerned, and in other documents as far as supranational, national or regional territories are concerned.

*Additional elements for the European Union’s cohesion policy...*

Territorial cohesion is not an autonomous policy. It is a dimension of cohesion policy that complements the social and the economic dimensions of this policy.

Bearing this in mind, the following questions should be asked: What is the added value of territorial cohesion for cohesion policy? In which areas and how should its contributions be integrated?

Taking the current strategic and regulatory framework of cohesion policy, defined in the *Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion*³ and in the *Regulation of the Council that establishes the general guidelines for the Structural Funds and for the Cohesion Fund*,⁴ as a starting point,

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let us now suggest some elements that may contribute to finding the answers to those questions.

The first domain in which territorial cohesion should contribute to improve cohesion policy is strategic approach.

The current programming period (2007-2013) represents a huge progress regarding the strategic approach of the community cohesion policy, with a special focus on growth, competitiveness and innovation. The next programming period should consolidate this progress, strengthening and enhancing its territorial dimension. This should be done both via the Community Strategic Guidelines, where territorial cohesion should cease to be a secondary reference and, instead, become one of its fundamental axis, and via the National Strategic Reference Frameworks, where territorial priorities should also play a more relevant and structuring role.

The second domain in which territorial cohesion should contribute to improve cohesion policy is intervention principles.

Since cohesion policy was created, its added value has mostly derived from the consistency and stability of its intervention principles: concentration of aid on the less developed regions, multiannual programming, shared management, complementarity and additionnality, partnership, decentralised territorial implementation. Territorial cohesion should contribute to revitalize some intervention principles, such as: territorially based coordination between different instruments of structural policies; coherence of multi-level territorial governance, from the European to the local level; or the increased involvement of regional and local authorities, as well as other territorial stakeholders, both in the programming and implementation phases of cohesion policy.

The third domain in which territorial cohesion should contribute to improve cohesion policy is operational programming.

In order to be consistent with its added value on the strategic level, the territorial dimension of cohesion policy should also be reinforced through operational programming. The importance of this issue is underlined by considering that the structure of the objectives of cohesion policy and the rules of eligibility should not be subject to significant changes in the next programming period. Thus, only through the “architecture” and content of operational programming and through the modulation of the rates of participation of the funds, it will be possible to properly focus on the reduction of intra-regional disparities, on the problems and potentials of areas with specific geographic features, as well as on establishing narrower and more coherent links between regional and territorial cooperation programmes.
The fourth domain in which territorial cohesion should contribute to improve cohesion policy is the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.

To be consistent with its strengthening on the strategic and operational levels, the territorial dimension of cohesion policy should also be reinforced in the follow-up and programme evaluation, particularly when these have a strategic nature.

2. The scale and scope of territorial action

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<tr>
<th>Territorial cohesion highlights the need for an integrated approach to addressing problems on an appropriate geographical scale that may require local, regional and even national authorities to cooperate.</th>
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<td>- Is there a role for the EU in promoting territorial cohesion? How could such a role be defined against the background of the principle of subsidiarity?</td>
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<td>- How far should the territorial scale of policy intervention vary according to the nature of the problems addressed?</td>
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<td>- Do areas with specific geographical features require special policy measures? If so, which measures?</td>
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The role of the EU, the scale of intervention and the cooperation of local, regional and national authorities....

Territorial cohesion as a crosscutting principle of community political action raises the issue of scale in the context of the cohesion of the European Union as a whole, leading to the debate on how Europe is perceived at the global scale and on its external relations, namely on the issue of external relations with its neighbouring regions.

In this context, the answer to the question raised by the Green Paper on whether the EU should play a role in promoting territorial cohesion or not, can only be yes. It is particularly important to recall, however, that the defence of territorial cohesion is not only up to the EU, but also to the Member States, the regions, the municipalities, the towns and the local territories.

However, this multiplicity of scales entangles a high risk of diluting the responsibilities of every level of intervention, which, if it occurs, may raise problems related to coordination and governance that, in turn, may undermine the efficiency of policies.

The fact that the structural action of the EU is traditionally dominated by a logic based upon NUT II regions may suggest that this is the main level of decision. However, the practice is mostly the conversion of community policies designed at the European level and, on a subsidiarity scheme, with a national focus, into regional policies.
It is essential to consider a deeper integration of the territorial participation into the cycle of community policies, since the definition stage to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, because it would strengthen its consistency and efficiency, as well as the acknowledgement, by the European citizens, of its added value.

Territorial implementation of the subsidiarity principle requires a special attention. It is necessary to find a balance between the need to increase the citizen’s participation and the need to ensure that an effective scale, competence and decision-making power remains in place, without which there is a risk of loosing intervention capacity.

Vertical coordination tends to be done mostly in cascade, starting at the European level, and then moving to the Member State level and, only afterwards, to the regional and intraregional levels. Nevertheless, it is necessary to find ways to reconcile this top-down approach with a bottom-up approach, in order to ensure more effectively the participation and cooperation of local and regional authorities in the process of policy making, through the modalities that seem more adequate to the institutional, political and administrative diversity of the Member States’ organisation.

How to deal with territorial diversity?

The territorial diversity of the European Union has been one of the major elements in the European identity definition process and is generally considered to be a source of potential, whether it is regarded from a political and cultural perspective or from a social, economic and environmental perspective.

Although territorial specificities play a crucial role in territorial enhancement, policies exclusively based, or mostly based, on rare geographical features do not necessarily have an added value in themselves. On the contrary, approaches excessively centred on territorial specificity can be more fracturing than cohesive, leading to fragmented visions of the European territory.

Apart from the problems that derive from some specific features, such as periphery, economic marginalization, distance from the main centres of innovation and knowledge or deficient mobility, which demand an effort of solidarity, specific geographical features should also be regarded as comparative advantages that potentiate territorial development and attractiveness.

To cope with specific problems, apart from outermost regions which already enjoy an exceptional status, the EU has adopted a range of instruments oriented towards peculiar areas, such as mountains, low-density areas or declining urban areas.
Some success stories resulted from these interventions, which should be taken as good practices and encouraged as positive examples, although this should not necessarily lead to the creation of new specific instruments or new eligibility geographical criteria for aids within the scope of structural policies.

In the Portuguese case, in addition to the landscape and cultural diversity of the territory, very intense in relation to the size of the country, it is necessary to consider the potentialities and problems inherent to the maritime and insular territories, each of which must be properly considered by national and community policies for development and cohesion.

3. Better cooperation

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<th>Increased cooperation across regional and national borders raises questions of governance.</th>
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<td>- What role should the Commission play in encouraging and supporting territorial cooperation?</td>
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<td>- Is there a need for new forms of territorial cooperation?</td>
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<td>- Is there a need to develop new legislative and management tools to facilitate cooperation, including along the external borders?</td>
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The programming period 2007-2013 has inscribed Territorial Cooperation as a new Objective of cohesion policy, bringing the INTERREG experiences into the mainstream.

The difficulties experienced in implementing territorial cooperation activities are well known, given the differences between the territories and the observance of the rules and of internal law in each country. However, there is growing awareness of the need and importance of territorial cooperation for economic, social and territorial cohesion. And such awareness requires the involvement of the territories in the planning and implementation of shared development strategies, more network cooperation between public and private actors, dissemination of good practices and enhancing the utilization of public infrastructure and facilities.

The European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) provides an important example of a new formula of territorial cooperation. Although no evaluation of this experience is available yet, there is belief in its added value as far as the promotion of new links between the agents, structures and public bodies able to contribute to the development of its own territories is concerned.
The barrier effects induced by borders are becoming diluted. The creation of networks has enabled regions to find common solutions for identical problems, taking advantage from structuring joint development strategies, with the aid of successive territorial cooperation programmes.

However, the work is not over yet. There are still underdeveloped dimensions of the internal market, typical of cross-border areas, which should be overcome through cooperation in the framework of the EU.

Completion of the internal market in the cross-border areas is a major aim of the “Second Generation Cross-border Cooperation”. It corresponds to the establishment of new cooperation and proximity mechanisms that favour the creation of new central areas and the supply of more and better public services to the citizens and to companies, strengthening the economic activity, reinforcing social cohesion and improving living conditions in the cross-border territories.

Cohesion policy in the cooperation area may enhance the positioning of the European Union in the world. The reinforcement of cooperation in the external borders of the EU might contribute to enhance economic development and political stability in the macro-regions confining with the EU, therefore mitigating also the demographic pressure resulting from the existing significant development imbalances.

In order to reach these goals, it is necessary to pursue the work that has been developed at community level towards a better coordination between the different financial instruments required for the cooperation actions, namely the structural funds and the EDF.

Cooperation during the programming period of 2007-2013 has acquired a more strategic and integrative nature, but this aspect will only be entirely used if it is accompanied by the cooperation actors’ behavioural change.

The era we are living in summons us towards three directions of change:

1) Strategy: fighting fragmentation and the lack of consistency and depth in the cooperation projects, requires a guiding framework of strategic nature;

2) Private entrepreneurship: improving territorial competitiveness requires a greater involvement of the private sector in concrete actions of territorial cooperation. For instance, the programmes aiming at economic enhancement of endogenous resources, directed towards the promotion of competitiveness in low density territories, might be extended to cross-border cooperation;
3) Integrated vision: inter-institutional partnership, with the active participation of companies and the support of the structural policies instruments, are crucial to achieve the third change, the integrated initiatives of regional development.

4. Better coordination

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<th>Improving territorial cohesion implies better coordination between sectoral and territorial policies and improved coherence between territorial interventions.</th>
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<td>- How can coordination between territorial and sectoral policies be improved?</td>
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<td>- Which sectoral policies should give more consideration to their territorial impact when being designed? What tools could be developed in this regard?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How can the coherence of territorial policies be strengthened?</td>
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<td>- How can Community and national policies be better combined to contribute to territorial cohesion?</td>
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Improving coordination of the political action at the European and national levels is the most important factor to turn territorial cohesion into a priority of the European Union. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to meet several conditions.

**The first condition to improve the coordination of policies is the definition, by the European Union’s institutions, of a strategy for territorial cohesion** representing a shared vision of the European territory and of the territorial objectives and priorities of the EU and, therefore, a common reference for the several territorial and sectoral policies. The *Territorial Agenda*, which resulted from the process of informal political cooperation, is an important step in that direction. Nevertheless, including territorial cohesion in the sphere of the shared responsibilities of the EU should also mean that this issue is welcomed in the agenda of the institutions, in particular of the Commission, of the European Council, of the Council and of the European Parliament.

**The second condition to improve the coordination of policies is the strengthening of the quality and of the articulation between territorial policies**, thus promoting the coordination of public policies’ interventions in a specific territory. Spatial development policies are very important, but are also a competence that belongs exclusively to the Member States. However, through the cohesion policy and the rural development policy, the European Union also fulfils very important duties in the sphere of structural actions with a territorial impact. There is here wide scope to strengthen the coherence and efficiency of community action, through the improvement of coordination between policies, instruments and institutions involved, from the community to the regional level. In particular, it is
necessary to evaluate the extent to which the solutions adopted for the current period of programming of community structural action (2007-2013), as far as the specificity of the Funds and their articulation are concerned, are the most appropriate in terms of coherence and efficiency to promote development and territorial cohesion.

The third condition to improve policy coordination is to strengthen the way sectoral policies and interventions consider the territorial cohesion dimension, since the definition to the implementation stages. This requires, not only the concurrence of the above mentioned conditions, but also the creation of mechanisms to assess the territorial impacts of the sectoral policies and the effective cooperation between the institutions responsible for them, particularly at the European and national levels.

Finally, the fourth condition to improve policy coordination is the existence of multi-level governance mechanisms that strengthen the synergy between community policy and national policies for the benefit of territorial cohesion. The European institutions and the Member States have a strong experience in conducting the follow-up of the implementation of shared strategies based on the open method of coordination. This is an important source of inspiration for the coordination of the community policy action towards territorial cohesion. As a crosscutting principle and strategy of the European Union, the follow-up mechanisms of the territorial cohesion should not be mistaken with the territorial cohesion governance as a dimension of the cohesion policy, which is based upon its own method of intervention, that has already been tested and is based on specific financial and regulating principles and mechanisms (vide supra, the approach to Question 1).

Finally, acknowledging and enhancing the importance of the territorial diversity of the European Union requires a special focus on coordinating territorial and sectoral policies, in Member States and in their regions. This should avoid contradictory impacts and, above all, promote synergies able to favour the fulfilment of their specific objectives and the full exploitation of each territory’s potential and of its development strategies. There is still a long way to go, in which the Commission, the Member States and the regional and local authorities will have their own role to play and their own responsibilities assigned.
5. New territorial partnerships

The pursuit of territorial cohesion may also imply wider participation in the design and implementation of policies.

- Does the pursuit of territorial cohesion require the participation of new actors in policy-making, such as representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders, voluntary organizations and NGOs?
- How can the desired level of participation be achieved?

Territorial cohesion also poses a technical challenge, that of explaining the content of the policies and of underlining the results they are aiming at or the results they have achieved for the civil society in such a way that it will gain the civil society's support. This requires deepening our knowledge and intensifying the exchange of experiences, best practices and network cooperation.

Territorially based thematic networks have been promoting this activity, thus contributing to a better knowledge of the European territory. They also represent a cooperation commitment between the Member States, their regions and the European organizations that might be decisive for developing competitiveness conditions, as well as adaptation conditions to territorial challenges and to globalization. By involving different levels and sectors of the administration and the civil society, the development of thematic networks is an important factor for the promotion and the implementation of good governance and new partnerships.

The wide dialogue process that was evolved, from mid 2006, in the framework of the preparation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and led to the creation of the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) is an important landmark. This network aggregates specialists from the 27 Member States, from the candidate countries, from three invited countries, from the European institutions and from a significant number of European intergovernmental organizations, which actively cooperate, on a voluntary basis, in the implementation of the First Action Programme of the Territorial Agenda and in its governance.

The community programmes ESPON and URBACT should also be valued and valorised as concrete examples of cooperation between the Member States, in the first case, and between their regions and cities, in the second case. Such cooperation has materialized in the production and dissemination of information and knowledge and in the development of platforms of dialogue and experience sharing in the sphere of urban and territorial development problem solving.
6. Improving understanding of territorial cohesion

- What quantitative/qualitative indicators should be developed at EU level to monitor characteristics and trends in territorial cohesion?

Notwithstanding the criticisms, GDP per capita is a key cohesion policy indicator, enabling the analyses of convergence/divergence of the regions from the point of view of its economic and social development. Thus, it should also remain as the main criterion for defining the regional eligibility of the intervention objectives of the structural funds and of the Cohesion Fund, as well as one of the main criteria for its allocation.

However, this indicator does not completely reflect the complexity of the problems that need to be addressed, nor does it completely reflect the potential of the territories that should be enhanced. Other instruments and other measurement criteria are necessary, both qualitative and quantitative, as a basis for the conception, programming, follow-up and evaluation of the policies.

These other instruments and measurement criteria should not be used only for descriptive and static analyses. They should enable comparative and prospective analyses of the evolution of the different territories and support the understanding of the implementation of different policies. They should also enable monitoring and comparability at the European, national and regional levels, namely at the level of NUT III and not only of NUT II. Furthermore, they should be considered as systems of indicators aimed at the follow-up of thematic or specific territorial priorities.

In order to evaluate the implementation of development and territorial cohesion objectives, it is not enough to build simple and one-dimensional indicators. It is necessary to build synthetic territorial cohesion indicators able to combine information about several issues of development, of standards of living and of territorial resources.

The ESPON Programme is a very relevant experience of cooperation between the Member States and the Commission. The results obtained justify the role played by the ESPON Programme 2013 in the production of territorial information. The support that the Programme has received from Member States and from the Commission should be deepened, in order to consolidate and to improve the technical conditions of follow-up and of evaluation of progress in implementing the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and in implementing territorial cohesion.
CONCLUSION: THE NEXT STEPS...

The Portuguese Authorities are looking forward to the results of the public debate on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and to the conclusions and inferences the Commission will draw from it.

The publishing by the Commission of a White Paper on European Territorial Cohesion, which would consolidate the main gains and the future political perspectives, in the format of conclusions or proposals, will be particularly welcomed.

Looking forward to having the issue of territorial cohesion tackled in its multiple dimensions by other European institutions and by the Member States, on the basis of the Commission’s proposals, in the framework of legislative and political measures for the period after 2013, once the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the Portuguese Government reiterates its availability and commitment to actively contribute to this process so that it unfolds successfully.