



Bundesministerium
für Umwelt, Naturschutz,
Bau und Reaktorsicherheit

Territorial Agenda of the European Union

Stand: 25.05.2007

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Herausgeber: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz,
Bau und Reaktorsicherheit (BMUB)
Presse- und Informationsstab
Stresemannstraße 128 - 130
10117 Berlin

Telefon: 030 18 305-0
Telefax: 030 18 305-2044
E-Mail: service@bmub.bund.de
Internet: www.bmub.bund.de

Zuständiges Referat: SW I 3

Territorial Agenda of the European Union

Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions

Agreed on the occasion of the
Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion
in Leipzig on 24 / 25 May 2007

I.

Future Task: Strengthening Territorial Cohesion

(1) The EU looks with confidence at the progress achieved in economic, social and ecological terms. Together the EU Member States operate a combined economy, which is about one third of the world-wide Gross Domestic Product. It is this economic power as well as a territory covering more than 4 million km² and a population of 490 million inhabitants in a variety of regions and cities, which characterises the territorial dimension of the EU.

(2) We, as Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development, present the Territorial Agenda as an action-oriented political framework for our future cooperation, developed together with the European Commission. Through the Territorial Agenda we are contributing to sustainable economic growth and job creation as well as social and ecological development in all EU regions. We are hereby supporting both the Lisbon and the Gothenburg Strategies of the European Council, which are complementary strategies.

(3) Through the Territorial Agenda we would like to promote a polycentric territorial development of the EU, with a view to making better use of available resources in European regions. An important aspect is the territorial integration of places where people live. In this way we will contribute to a Europe which is culturally, socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. It is particularly important to better integrate our newer Member States into this policy of polycentric settlement development. Through the Territorial Agenda we will help – in terms of territorial solidarity – to secure better living conditions and quality of life with equal opportunities, oriented towards regional and local potentials, irrespective of where people live – whether in the European core area or in the periphery.

(4) We see the future task “Territorial Cohesion” as a permanent and cooperative process involving the various actors and stakeholders of territorial development at political, administrative and technical levels. This cooperation is characterised by the history, culture and institutional arrangements in each Member State. EU Cohesion Policy should be able to respond more effectively than it has done so far to the territorial needs and characteristics, specific geographical challenges and opportunities of the regions and cities. That is why we advocate the need for the territorial dimension to play a stronger role in future Cohesion Policy in order to promote economic and social wellbeing.

(5) Territorial Cohesion can only be achieved through an intensive and continuous dialogue between all stakeholders of territorial development. This process of cooperation is what we call territorial governance. The private sector (especially locally and regionally based entrepreneurship), the scientific community, the public sector (especially local and regional authorities), non-governmental organisations and different sectors need to act together in order to make better use of crucial investments in European regions and contribute to tackling climate change.

(6) The Territorial Agenda presents the product of our cooperation. At our Informal Ministerial Meeting held in Rotterdam (2004) we agreed upon a territorial development policy to better assess the perspectives of the EU. And in Luxembourg (2005) we accepted territorial priorities as the basis of our future common activities and the formulation of an expert report on “The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union” which provides the basis for the Territorial Agenda. Our elaboration of the Territorial Agenda is being supported by a

Europe-wide stakeholder dialogue, ongoing since summer 2006. Based on articles 2, 6, 16 and 158 included in the EC Treaty, territorial cohesion has been considered as the third dimension of Cohesion Policy. It has been taken up, for example, in the Third and also the Fourth Cohesion Report as well as in the Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion adopted in 2006. We affirm our commitment to working even more closely together and with the EU institutions in pursuit of this goal – independent of the ongoing discussion about the EU's reform process (EU Constitutional Treaty).

II.

New Challenges: Strengthening Regional Identities, Making Better Use of Territorial Diversity

(7) We are facing major new territorial challenges today. These include:

- regionally diverse impacts of climate change on the EU territory and its neighbours, particularly with regard to sustainable development,
- rising energy prices, energy inefficiency and different territorial opportunities for new forms of energy supply,
- accelerating integration of our regions, including crossborder areas, in global economic competition, and at the same time increasing dependencies of states and regions in the world,
- impacts of EU enlargement on economic, social and territorial cohesion, particularly with regard to the transport and energy infrastructure related integration of Eastern Europe and the new EU Member States as well as their regions,
- overexploitation of the ecological and cultural resources and loss of biodiversity, particularly through increasing development sprawl whilst remote areas are facing depopulation,
- territorial effects of demographic change (especially ageing) as well as in and out migration and internal migration on labour markets, on the supply of public services of general interest as well as the housing market, the development of the settlement structure and how people live together in our cities and regions.

(8) Given these challenges, we firmly believe that territorial cohesion of the EU is prerequisite for achieving sustainable economic growth and implementing social and economic cohesion – a European social model. In this context, we regard it as an essential task and act of solidarity to develop preconditions in all regions to enable equal opportunities for its citizens and development perspectives for entrepreneurship. We agree that regional identities and potentials, needs and diverse characteristics of the regions, cities and villages of Europe gain meaning through a policy of territorial cohesion and through other regional development policies.

(9) Through the Territorial Agenda we are also helping to strengthen the global competitiveness and sustainability of all regions of Europe. This is in accordance with the renewed Lisbon Strategy agreed by Member States in 2005. The diverse territorial potentials of regions for sustainable economic growth and job creation in the EU must be identified and mobilised. Every region and city may, through their engagement, contribute to saving energy and to its decentralized supply and to mitigating climate change, e.g. by supporting the development of low or zero-emissions settlements, developing potential new renewable sources of energy supply and promoting energy efficiency particularly of the building stock. Our cities and regions need to become more resilient in the context of climate change. They should be firmly bound into governance processes for implementing the Lisbon Strategy as well as into National Reform Programmes.

(10) We wish to highlight the increasing territorial influence of Community policies. This should be taken into consideration as on the one hand EU policy-making should have more regard to local, regional and national potentials and the motives of stakeholders by taking a strategic integrated territorial development approach. On the other hand, individual city and

regional development strategies should explicitly take more account of their national and European contexts. It is important that national, regional and local concerns closely intertwine with EU policies. This applies particularly to rural development policies, environmental and transport policies as well as EU Cohesion Policy.

(11) The Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities complements the concern of the Territorial Agenda as it raises integrated urban development policy as a task with a European dimension. Therefore, integrated urban development policy and territorial cohesion policy each make complementary contributions to implementing the aims of sustainable development.

III.

Territorial Priorities for the Development of the European Union

(12) The Territorial Agenda builds upon the three main aims of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which remains valid, namely

- development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural partnership;
- securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;
- sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage.

It also builds on the CEMAT Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent confirmed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Based on these principles we also want to intensify the dialogue with neighbouring countries adjoining the EU.

(13) In the context of our policy for territorial cohesion we commit ourselves to the following priorities for territorial development in the EU:

1.

We Aim to Strengthen Polycentric Development and Innovation through Networking of City Regions and Cities

(14) City regions and cities of varying size are best able to build upon their own strengths in the context of a Europe-wide cooperation with entrepreneurs as well as societal and political stakeholders. If they succeed in implementing networks in a polycentric European territory in an innovative manner, they will create conditions to allow them to benefit global competition in terms of their development.

(15) Cities which function as regional centres should cooperate as parts of a polycentric pattern to ensure their added value for other cities in rural and peripheral areas as well as for areas with specific geographic challenges and needs (e.g. structurally weak parts of islands, coastal zones and mountainous areas). To facilitate this process, infrastructure networks within and between regions in Europe need to be extended and updated on a continuous basis. We therefore support European cooperation between city regions as well as with small and medium-sized towns at the internal borders and also beyond the external borders of the EU.

2.

We Need New Forms of Partnership and Territorial Governance between Rural and Urban Areas

(16) A competitive and sustainable Europe comprises in great variety and with different interdependences city regions of varying size and rural areas. City regions are thereby surrounded by urban centres and rurally characterised areas; rural areas beyond the direct commuting distance of city regions are surrounded by regional centres and small and

medium-sized towns. The respective authorities should, as inter-dependent partners, identify their common assets, elaborate joint regional and sub-regional development strategies and in this way jointly lay the foundation for making regions and sub-regions attractive and for enabling investment decisions both by the private and public sector. This is what we call urban-rural partnership.

(17) Regionally oriented investment decisions should be prepared jointly by public and private stakeholders. In this context, it is necessary if, for example, local authorities of varying size form voluntary associations for joint marketing and developing joint strategies to tackle common problems. Against the background of demographic change, authorities facing population loss of young people need to cooperate closely to enable them to maintain attractive services and infrastructure. This cooperation implies a new political dimension. To strengthen this, new forms of territorial governance arrangements may be necessary in European regions. Generally speaking, we would like to create opportunities for innovative economic potential for development, building upon experiences of successful partnership and political cooperation in a functional regional context, also including crossborder areas. We therefore support positive competition between cities and regions.

3.

We Want to Promote Regional Clusters of Competition and Innovation in Europe

(18) Growth zones should be enlarged beyond the economic core area of the EU through a policy of cooperation and networking. One way of combining strengths can be through the creation of suitable and innovative clusters where the business community, the scientific community and administrations work together. This also applies across internal and external borders with our neighbours.

(19) City regions of varying size, small and medium-sized towns as well as rural areas are encouraged, to cooperate with other authorities, even in other countries, in order to strengthen their international identity and specialisation as a way of becoming more attractive for investment. It is reasonable to focus on existing centres of innovation.

4.

We Support the Strengthening and Extension of Trans-European Networks

(20) Mobility and accessibility are key prerequisites for economic development in all regions of the EU. To meet the requirements for mobility in a polycentric European territory, including our neighbouring countries, and to contribute to enhancing the urban environment, it is important to secure integrated and sustainable development of multi-modal transport systems. We need capable networks both for passengers and goods, of rail, road and air (including networks of viable regional airports), efficient maritime, coastal and inland waterways, and secondary networks linking with respective hinterland areas as well as crossborder transport management. We support the removal of barriers to crossborder rail and road transport and particularly support the use of telematic measures to assist the operation of overloaded parts of road networks.

(21) We support an unhampered and socially fair access to information and communication technologies in all regions, to remove territorially induced barriers to accessibility, especially in peripheral and rural areas, and to enable decentralised working and adequate provision of services of general interest, including health care and education. In order to secure the necessary infrastructure, such as achieving general coverage for broadband connections, considering respective demand, we recommend combining infrastructure such as broadband cables in new transport and communication programmes.

(22) Rising energy demand in the face of limited reserves of non-renewable energy sources, and a growing dependence of the EU on imported energy as well the challenge of climate change, means that we should further explore and develop opportunities for decentralized, efficient, safe and environmentally friendly production of renewable energy, which is as yet

underutilised. In order to make better use of regional potentials in this field, which might generate opportunities particularly in rural areas, we recommend further strengthening networks and harmonising conditions for the energy sector.

5.

We Promote Trans-European Risk Management including the Impacts of Climate Change

(23) Joint transregional and integrated approaches and strategies should be further developed in order to face natural hazards, reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. Further work is required to develop and intensify territorial cohesion policy, particularly with respect to the consequences of territorially differentiated adaptation strategies.

(24) In order to improve the efficiency of risk management activity and to guide development appropriately, integrated trans-European and crossborder strategies (e.g. flood protection, drought and desertification prevention, integrated coastal zone and mountainous areas management, technological hazard management, improved forecasting), should be adopted, in cooperation with our neighbouring countries, and new forms of risk governance arrangements should be developed, especially in multi-hazardous areas like coastal zones, lakesides, maritime and river basins and mountainous areas.

6.

We Require the Strengthening of Ecological Structures and Cultural Resources as the Added Value for Development

(25) The irreplaceable values of European ecological structures and cultural and natural heritage, especially cultural landscapes and the quality of design and process on architecture as well as the built environment, should constitute, against the background of the respective regional circumstances and potentials, the foundation for environmentally and culturally-oriented development which offers development perspectives, whilst safeguarding diverse cultural identities, particularly in regions that are lagging behind or undergoing structural changes. Coordinated transnational interventions and associated management should promote cultural routes and networks as well as other territorial projects of natural and cultural significance.

(26) We advocate further developing networks of valuable nature areas and cultural landscapes in order to create an integrated and sustainable trans-European green structure with adequate corridors and zones linking protected sites and other areas of European and national importance.

(27) Integrated territorial development policies should also be strengthened in ecologically or culturally fragile areas of the EU in order to address the key challenge of reconciling economic development and environmental, social and cultural sustainability.

IV.

Implementing the Territorial Agenda

(28) In order to better incorporate the six territorial priorities in political debates and decision making processes we consider the following actions to be important and recommend them for implementation between 2007 and 2011. We commit ourselves to delivering these actions:

1.

Actions by the European Institutions

(29) We welcome the Communication of the European Commission on “The Contribution of Cities to Growth and Employment in Regions” and ask the European Commission to work on a follow up in view of the Territorial Agenda.

(30) We ask the European Commission to continue to include explicit reference to the territorial dimension of the EU in future Reports on Social and Economic Cohesion to activate cities and regions to bring in their development strategies in the European context. This would help to realise the principle of subsidiarity.

(31) We request the Regional Development Committee of the European Parliament, the Territorial Cohesion Committee of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to support and implement the priorities of the Territorial Agenda in their activities, thus giving cities and regions a stronger role in implementing EU Policies.

2.

Actions for Close Cooperation Between the European Commission and EU Member States

(32) We recommend a continuous and in-depth dialogue between EU Member States (including regional and local authorities) and the European Commission on strategic territorial development issues. The opportunities provided by the existing committees (particularly the Expert Committee “Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters” which was established by the Committee of the Coordination of Funds [COCOF]) should be used efficiently for this purpose.

(33) We ask the European Commission and other European institutions to initiate a dialogue with Member States, based on the principles of subsidiarity, to discuss how the effects of European legislation on sustainable urban and territorial development and planning can be assessed and taken into account and how to improve the coordination of EU policies and initiatives that concern territorial policy areas. This assessment and coordination could take place within the framework of the existing institutions and procedures.

(34) We recommend that the ESPON 2013 Programme, in close cooperation with the European Commission undertake a more in-depth analysis of the effects of EU Policies on territorial cohesion, reveal cause-and-effect relationships and develop operational indicators for a regular reporting on territorial matters. In this context it is important for the ESPON and URBACT programmes and Urban Audit to cooperate closely.

(35) We consider the cooperation, including our neighbouring countries, in the context of EU Programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (Objective 3) to be new and future-oriented funding instruments offering opportunities for strengthening European networks of cities and regions as well as supporting new innovation-oriented European development corridors. We ask the European Commission to support us in developing interregional, crossborder and transnational cooperation as an effective instrument for promoting territorial cohesion.

3.

Actions for Strengthening Territorial Cohesion in EU Member States

(36) We will commit ourselves, within our competences, to integrate the political priorities of the Territorial Agenda as well as the territorial aspects of the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 in national, regional and local development policies. In view of the conclusions of the Seminar on Governance of Territorial Strategies, held under the Austrian EU Presidency in June 2006 in Baden, we recommend integration of the territorial dimension in the strategic processes underpinning cohesion policy at EU and national level.

(37) We will ensure that, within the terms of our respective national institutional arrangements, we engage in transparent decision-making processes with public and private stakeholders as well as non-governmental organisations in developing territorially relevant policies, territorial priorities and actions for their implementation.

4.

Joint Activities by Ministers

(38) In order to implement the Territorial Agenda we agree to maintain informal structures for cooperation between our ministries, including the respective EU Presidencies, and with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Investment Bank. This requires smooth functioning of the Presidencies Group equipped with adequate secretarial resources and supported by the services of experts, additionally from other Member States.

(39) We agree to act jointly in order to continue and strengthen cooperation among ourselves and with the European Commission through a network of territorial cohesion related contact points. We intend the open Territorial Agenda Working Group, consisting of EU Member States and the European Commission, to continue its work in the current phase of implementing the Agenda.

(40) As a first step in our joint activities and as follow-up to the 2007 spring European Council we commit ourselves, within our competences, to contribute to a sustainable and integrated climate and energy policy in the EU.

(41) Our further joint activities will be focused on facilitating the EU-wide debate on EU key dossiers from a territorial point of view. The most important ones include:

- the debate on the Lisbon process post 2010,
- the 2010 midterm review of Cohesion Policy,
- the 2010 midterm review of the EU Rural Development Policy,
- the 2011 redevelopment of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS),
- the ongoing debate of how to implement the recommendations of the Green Paper on Maritime Policies,
- the ongoing debate on the 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU,
- the debate on the Transport Policy post 2010,
- the ongoing debate on the Research and Innovation Policy,
- the ongoing debate on the Neighbourhood Policy.

(42) We ask the coming EU Presidencies together with all EU Member States, the European institutions, including the European Commission and the European Investment Bank as well as other stakeholders to implement the actions set out in this Territorial Agenda. We welcome the initiative of the Portuguese EU Presidency to facilitate the implementation of the Territorial Agenda by working out the first Action Programme as well as the will of the Slovene EU Presidency to initiate its implementation through its activities.

(43) We ask the Slovene EU Presidency to take the Territorial Agenda into account in their preparations for the 2008 spring European Council with view to achieving a stronger and more formal political recognition of the territorial conditions for the development of regions and cities and new forms of participation with EU decisions.

(44) We agree that there is a need to encourage public and private stakeholders of territorial development to be engaged in addressing territorial cohesion of the EU. Their specific interests should be recognised. A joint discussion about scenarios for the territorial development of Europe may ease the process of reconciling different interests. We ask the coming EU Presidencies to elaborate this ambition through specific activities in accordance with topical needs for policy development in Europe. We welcome both the initiative of the Portuguese EU Presidency to organize an Informal Ministerial Meeting to be held in

November 2007 and of Germany to organize a Conference on Territory and Economy to be held in spring 2008.

(45) We ask the coming Hungarian EU Presidency to evaluate and review the Territorial Agenda in the first half of 2011.

(46) We consider it our political task to raise awareness for the most important territorial challenges for the EU and we will therefore play an active role in implementing the Territorial Agenda at the European level and within our states. We are convinced that through the Territorial Agenda we are taking a further step towards a competitive and sustainable Europe of diverse regions and active citizens.