



Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion and Regional Policy
Ponta Delgada, Azores, the 23rd and 24th of November 2007

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY
TERRITORIAL COHESION

23 November 2007

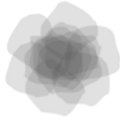
At the invitation of the Portuguese presidency, an Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion and Regional Policy was held in Ponta Delgada, Azores, on the 23 and 24 November 2007.

On the 23rd November, the Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in the European Union met to discuss and reach a common view on the issues related to territorial cohesion.

The European Commissioner for Regional Policy, the Chairman of the REGI Committee of the European Parliament, the Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, the Vice-President of the ECO Section of the European Economic and Social Committee, the Vice-Chair of the COTER Commission of the Committee of the Regions and the representative of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also took part in the meeting. The Presidency was also pleased to welcome the representatives of the Candidate Countries and of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, and representatives of Inter-Governmental Organizations.

The Ministers

- Expressed their satisfaction for the inclusion of territorial cohesion as the third dimension of Cohesion Policy in the “Treaty amending the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community”, adopted in Lisbon on the 18th October, to be signed on the 13th December;
- **Stated their will** to continue their cooperation on the basis of Member States’ partnership with the European Commission and the European Parliament on the issue of territorial cohesion in the light of the new Treaty;



- **Reaffirmed their common view** on the crucial role played by territorial cohesion for a sustainable development of Europe that respects its territorial diversity and contributes to the objectives laid down in the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies;
- **Reaffirmed their conviction** that sustainable spatial planning and development, in a multi-level governance system, provides the basis for better coordination, coherence and synergies of sectoral policies with a territorial impact as well as a necessary framework for achieving the aims and goals of territorial cohesion;
- **Stressed the need** for regional policy to take into consideration the existing territorial diversity and potential;
- **Stressed the importance** of cooperating, within their means and competences, with the ministers responsible for urban development, in order to better integrate spatial and urban development, taking into account territorial diversity and the subsidiarity principle, to improve the social, economical, cultural and environmental conditions in the European Union and in the Member States;
- **Stressed the need to pay special attention** to the issue of climate change and highlighted the importance of adopting a territorially-based approach when addressing this challenge and of making use of sustainable spatial planning and development to define and implement cost-effective mitigation and adaptation strategies and measures.

As a further step in the process of political cooperation re-launched in Rotterdam in 2004, after the adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the Tampere ESDP Action Programme in 1999, **the Ministers agreed on the First Action Programme for the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and on the process for its implementation.**

By agreeing on the First Action Programme, the Ministers took a commitment:

1. To cooperate to implement its five lines of action:
 - ⇒ to implement the Territorial Agenda in their own areas of competence at European Union and Member State level;
 - ⇒ to influence EU key-dossiers and to give a territorial/urban dimension to sectoral policies;



- ⇒ to strengthen multi-level territorial governance at European Union and Member State level;
 - ⇒ to compare and assess the territorial state, perspectives, trends and policy impacts in the European Union and the Member States from the point of view of territorial cohesion and sustainable spatial development;
 - ⇒ to coordinate and monitor the First Action Programme implementation, assess and review the Territorial Agenda and the First Action Programme and to develop a communication and awareness raising strategy on territorial cohesion and sustainable spatial development.
2. To jointly focus their attention on the EU key-dossiers mentioned in the Territorial Agenda, bearing in mind the up-coming EU budget review and giving particular attention to:
- ⇒ the debate on the Lisbon process post-2010;
 - ⇒ the 2010 midterm review of Cohesion Policy and the debate on the Cohesion Policy post-2013;
 - ⇒ the Transport Policy post-2010;
 - ⇒ the 2010 midterm review of the EU Rural Development Policy;
 - ⇒ the 2011 redevelopment of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy,
- and to:
- ⇒ the issue of the territorial impacts of climate change;
 - ⇒ the "health-check" of the Common Agricultural Policy;
 - ⇒ the integrated EU Maritime Policy.
3. To immediately start the implementation of the following actions of the First Action Programme:
- ⇒ Action 1.1 - Prepare and promote policy options to foster coordination between spatial and urban development in the light of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter, at European Union and Member State level;
 - ⇒ Action 2.1 - Cooperate with the European Commission to use the activities of the Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters thematic working groups to analyse key-dossiers, policies and legislation, at European Union and Member State level, in the light of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter;



- ⇒ Action 2.4 - Prepare and promote contributions of the Ministers to the debate on the most relevant European Union key-dossiers from the point of view of sustainable spatial development and territorial cohesion;
- ⇒ Action 3.1 - Design and implement a strategy to promote transparent decision-making processes in the administration and with public and private stakeholders as well as non-governmental organisations on territorial policies at European Union and Member State level;
- ⇒ Action 3.2 - Convene with selected stakeholders on their commitment to implement Territorial Agenda territorial priorities in their own action programmes and activities;
- ⇒ Action 4.1 - Use, within its institutional framework and on the basis of its management arrangements, the ESPON 2013 Programme to develop a robust platform of knowledge on territorial state, perspectives, trends and policy impacts in the European Union and Member States from the point of view of territorial cohesion and sustainable spatial development;
- ⇒ Action 5.1 - Coordinate, monitor and assess the implementation of the First Action Programme;
- ⇒ Action 5.2 - Design and implement a communication and awareness-raising strategy on territorial cohesion in the European Union and on the Territorial Agenda.

The Ministers also:

- **Reaffirmed their commitment** to foster “network creation environments” at all levels of action and with different sectors of administration and society, took note of the approval of the URBACT II, ESPON 2013 and INTERREG IVC Operational Programmes, expressed satisfaction for the inclusion of neighbouring countries and stressed the importance of using these programmes and the Objective 3 of Structural Funds on European Territorial Cooperation as a tool for the implementation of the First Action Programme;
- **Took note of the current contribution** of the Structural Funds and the European Investment Bank to urban development and territorial cohesion as demonstrated by the Fourth Cohesion Report, and expressed their conviction that synergies with other funds, namely with the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development, should be



created to enhance the opportunities for improving the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification of their economic activity, thus contributing to the implementation of the Territorial Agenda;

- Stressed the need to use efficiently the opportunities provided by the existing committees to deepen the dialogue and cooperation with the European Commission. They stressed in particular the importance of cooperation in the framework of the Expert Committee "Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters", in particular in its thematic working groups and the contribution these groups can provide to the implementation of the First Action Programme;
- Reaffirmed their will to go on cooperating between themselves and with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Investment Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the stakeholders and the Neighbouring States in order to promote the territorial priorities and meet the challenges set in the Territorial Agenda and to support and implement the First Action Programme.

The Ministers acknowledged the official launch of the European Union-wide consultation process on the future of Cohesion Policy after 2013 and reaffirmed their will to actively participate and contribute to this debate.

The Ministers also reaffirmed their will to cooperate, within their own means and competences, with the authorities responsible for the implementation of the National Reform Programme under the Lisbon Strategy.

The Ministers thanked:

- Slovenia for the efforts to integrate the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in their preparations for the 2008 Spring European Council and committed themselves to fully support, within their means and competences, Slovenia's related proposals;
- France for its will to continue the actions initiated within the framework of the Territorial Agenda for which it considers to take strong initiatives both on the content and on the way of implementing the First Action Programme, and for its intention to bring together, during its presidency, the European Ministers responsible for spatial



and urban development policies and those in charge of the Community Cohesion Policy, in order to discuss a progress report on the on-going actions and to decide on new projects to be carried out;

- The Czech Republic and Sweden for expressing their support of deepening territorial cohesion during their presidencies of the European Union in 2009;
- The European Commission for the preliminary report on the preparation of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, following on the agreements reached during the Finnish and German presidencies, stressing the importance of continuing the existing cooperation in this matter.

The Ministers asked the Slovenian presidency to take over the coordination of the process of implementing of the First Action Programme during its presidency and the following presidencies to carry on this effort, as a framework for their joint action and for their cooperation with all concerned with spatial development and territorial cohesion.

The Ministers also agreed on a common contribution for the on-going public debate on the Green Paper from the Commission "Adapting to climate change in Europe - options for EU action" (Annex 1) and asked the Portuguese presidency to deliver it to the European Commission.

In this common contribution the Ministers highlight the role of spatial planning and development and the importance of adopting a territorially-based approach when addressing the issue of adaptation to climate change, one of the challenges mentioned in the Territorial Agenda.

The Ministers asked the Portuguese presidency to present these Conclusions to the Ministers responsible for Regional Policy, at the session of the Informal Ministerial Meeting that will take place on the 24th November.