

Territorial Agenda of the European Union

Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions

Draft (as of 7 March 2007)

I.

Tomorrow's Territorial Challenges to be Tackled Today

(1) The EU can look with confidence at the progress achieved on its economic, social and ecological renewal. Together the EU Member States operate with approximately 10 Billion Euro, 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 marks the territorial dimension of the EU.

(2) We, as Ministers responsible for territorial development in our states, would like to contribute to sustainable economic growth and job creation as well as a social and ecological development and, therefore, support both the Lisbon and the Gothenburg Strategies of the European Council by agreeing upon the Territorial Agenda.

(3) At our Informal Ministerial Meeting held in Rotterdam (2004) we agreed to work closely together to better assess the perspectives of the EU. Following on, we accepted in Luxembourg (2005) territorial priorities as the basis of our future common activities. The elaboration of the Territorial Agenda is being supported by an Europe-wide stakeholder dialogue since summer 2006. The Territorial Agenda builds upon the aims of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) as well as on the CEMAT Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent, confirmed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, to also intensify the dialogue with EU Neighbouring Countries.

(4) We are today facing new major challenges. Among the most important ones we regard:

- regionally very diverse impacts of climate change, particularly on the economy,
- rising energy prices and uneven territorial opportunities for new energy paradigm,
- geographical concentration of activities supported by market forces while concurrently dislocating jobs within and outside of the European Union and growing social imbalances and disparities,
- accelerating integration of our regions in the global economic competition, at the same time increasing dependencies of states and regions in the world,
- impacts of the enlargement on the economic, social and territorial cohesion,
- effects of our ageing population and in and out migration as well as internal migration on labour markets, on the supply of public services of general interest, on the housing market, and on how people live together in our cities and regions,
- coping with growing traffic problems of congested corridors without reducing the citizens' mobility or the locational advantages of economic areas,
- overexploitation of the ecological resources and loss of biodiversity, particularly through ongoing urban sprawl while remote areas are facing depopulation.

II.

Strengthen Regional Identities and Territorial Diversity

(5) Given these challenges, we firmly believe that the territorial cohesion of the EU is necessary as an essential prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and implementing the European Social Model. In this context, we regard it as essential task to develop preconditions in all regions that offer equal opportunities for its citizens and development perspectives for entrepreneurs.

(6) We agree upon that regional identities and potentials, needs and diverse characteristics of regions and cities have to be embedded in a policy of territorial cohesion. We understand territorial cohesion as a permanent process of the political, administrative and technical cooperation of all stakeholders in order to mobilise these potentials.

(7) Sustainable development of regions and cities in the EU can only be achieved through an intensive dialogue between all stakeholders. The private sector (particularly locally and regionally based entrepreneurship), the scientific community, administration, Non-Governmental Organisations and Sector Policies need to work together in order to make best use of crucial investments in European regions. This is what we call territorial governance.

(8) Through the Territorial Agenda we are contributing to strengthening the global competitiveness of all regions of Europe. The diverse territorial potentials of regions and cities for sustainable economic growth and job creation in the EU must be identified and mobilised. At the same, cities and regions may through their engagement contribute to reversing climate change, e.g. by supporting the development of low or zero-emissions settlements.

(9) We point out the increasing territorial influence of Community Policies. This implies on the one hand that 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, isolated development strategies of cities and regions should focus more explicitly on European contexts. It is important that national and regional concerns should closely intertwine with EU Policies. This particularly applies to Rural Development Policies, Environmental and Transport Policies and EU Cohesion Policies.

(10) 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. The policy of integrated urban development and the policy of territorial cohesion each therefore deliver a self-contained contribution to implementing the aims of sustainable development. Both policies may thereby relate European decisions more closely to the immediate concerns and circumstances of citizens.

III.

New Territorial Priorities for the Development of the European Union

(11) In the content of a policy for territorial cohesion, which is supported by all Member States, we commit ourselves to the following priorities for territorial development in the EU:

1.

We Recommend to Strengthening Innovative and Cooperative Urban Development in Metropolitan Regions, Urban Areas and Regional Centres

(12) We are convinced that those regions and cities which are the most innovative in implementing development through cooperation, will manage to face global competition. It is the cooperation between economic, societal and political stakeholders which best enables cities and regions to build on their strengths. In order to facilitate this process, infrastructure networks within and between regions in Europe need to be extended and updated on a continuous basis.

(13) Growth zones in the European Union can be enlarged beyond the economic core area through a policy of cooperation and networking. An intelligent way of combining strengths can be to create appropriate and innovative clusters where the business community, the scientific community and administrations can work together.

2.

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

(14) The aim of a competitive and sustainable Europe of regions covers urban and rural areas with their small and medium-sized cities. Urban and rural areas have to be recognised as equal partners. They are thus able to identify their common assets, elaborate joint regional development strategies and in this way will lay the foundation for regional activities and investment decisions of the private sector.

(15) Regionally oriented investment decisions must not lead to destructive rivalry between local authorities. On the contrary, they should be made jointly by public and private stakeholders. This is what we call urban-rural partnership. In order to strengthen this, new forms of territorial governance arrangements may be necessary in European regions. We would like to give innovative economic potentials space for development and we would like to support a positive competition between cities and regions.

3.

We Support the Strengthening and Extension of Trans-European Networks

(16) Mobility is a key prerequisite of economic development in all regions of the EU. To meet the requirements for mobility we consider integrated development of transport systems, both for passengers and goods, of rail, road and air (including a networks of viable regional airports), efficient maritime, coastal and inland waterways as well as crossborder transport management are needed. We support the removal of barriers to crossborder rail transport and for securing the functionality of overloaded parts of road networks by telematic-supported measures.

(17) In order to remove territorial or socially motivated barriers to accessibility, especially in peripheral and rural areas, and enable decentralised working and adequate provision of services of general interest, such as health care and education, we support unhampered and content-neutral access to information and communication technologies in all regions. In order to secure the necessary infrastructure, such as achieving general coverage for broadband connections, we recommend prioritising infrastructure such as broadband cables in transport and communication programmes.

(18) Rising energy demand in the face of limited reserves of non-renewable energy sources, and a growing dependence of the European Union on imported energy as well the challenge of climate change, means that we need to further exploit and develop opportunities of decentralized, efficient, safe and environmentally friendly production of renewable energy, which is as yet underutilised. In order to make better use the regional potentials of this field of action, from which rural areas might particularly profit, we recommend further strengthening of the networks and more harmonised conditions for the energy sector.

4.

We Support the Promotion of Trans-European Risk Management

(19) Joint transregional approaches and strategies are to be further developed in order to prevent and mitigate climate-unfriendly emissions and to adapt to climate change. In this respect the policy of territorial cohesion needs to be further developed and intensified, particularly with regard to the consequences of adaptation strategies.

(20) 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, Integrated Coastal Zone Management) are to be adopted and new forms of risk governance

arrangements are to be developed, especially in multi-hazard areas like coastal zones, lakesides, maritime and river basins and mountainous areas.

5.

We Require the Strengthening of Ecological Structures and Cultural Resources for a New Approach to Development

(21) The irreplaceable values of European ecological structures and cultural resources, especially of landscapes and of Baukultur, are to be recognized in the future as opportunities for territorial development policies. Taking the respective regional circumstances and potentials into account it is our understanding that they constitute the foundation of an environmental- and culture-oriented development which offers development perspectives particularly to those regions lagging behind or undergoing structural changes. Coordinated transnational interventions and associated management therefore should promote cultural routes and networks of cultural as well as other territorially applicable projects of natural and cultural significance.

(22) The existing networks of valuable nature areas and cultural landscapes should be further developed in order to create an integrated and sustainable trans-European green structure with adequate corridors and zones linking protected sites and other core areas of European and national importance.

(23) Integrated territorial development policies should also be strengthened in the most ecologically or culturally fragile areas of the EU in order to address the key challenge of reconciling economic development and ecological as well as cultural sustainability in these areas.

IV.

Actions for Implementing the Territorial Agenda

(24) In order to better incorporate territorial priorities in political debates and decision making processes we consider reasonable the following actions for implementing the Territorial Agenda between 2007 and 2010 / 2011 to be commendable and we commit ourselves to delivering these actions.

1.

Actions of European Institutions

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

(26) We ask the European Commission to include more explicitly the territorial dimension of the European Union in future Reports on Social and Economic Cohesion in order to enable cities and regions in framing their development strategies within a European context. This would help to realise the principle of subsidiarity.

(27) We still regard maintaining the inclusion of a policy of territorial cohesion in the Treaty of the European Union, when being ratified, as an indispensable step towards a better territorial coherence of EU Policies.

(28) 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, in order to give cities and regions a stronger role in implementing EU Policies.

2.

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

(29) In future we require an in-depth dialogue among EU Member States and the European Commission on strategic territorial issues. Therefore the opportunities provided by the existing committees for this purpose should be used effectively.

(30) We recommend ensuring that consideration of territorial impacts is part of the development of both EU and National Policies by making use of existing assessment and planning procedures. Therefore we ask the European Commission in partnership with the EU Member States, based on the principle of subsidiarity, to closely examine the effects of directives and regulations on the territorial cohesion of the EU.

(31) We propose that the ESPON 2013 Programme, in close cooperation with the European Commission undertake a more in-depth analyse of the effects of EU Policies on territorial cohesion and develop operational indicators for a continuous territorial monitoring system. Concurrently, the activities of ESPON and URBACT / Urban Audit should increasingly be harmonised.

(32) We consider the opportunities offered by the EU Programmes for European Crossborder Territorial Cooperation (Objective 3) to be new and future-oriented funding instruments for strengthening European networks of cities and regions as well as for supporting new innovation-oriented European development corridors. We ask the European Commission to support us in developing particularly transnational cooperation towards an efficient and more easily manageable instrument to promoting territorial cohesion.

3.

Actions for Strengthening Territorial Cohesion in EU Member States

(33) We will commit ourselves to integrating the political priorities of the Territorial Agenda as well as the territorial aspects of the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion in national policies. A basis for a better integration has been laid down by the conclusions of the Baden Seminar on Governance in June 2006 during the Austrian EU Presidency.

(34) We will take on board the territorial priorities of the Agenda in the context of the implementation of National Strategic Reference Frameworks.

(35) We will ensure that, within the terms of our respective national institutional arrangements, the needs of public and private stakeholders are taken into consideration when developing territorially relevant policies. The stakeholders are to engaged, according to our new understanding of development, in the political debate on territorial priorities.

4.

Joint Activities by Ministers

(36) In order to implement the Territorial Agenda we agree to establish informal structures for cooperation between our ministries, including the respective EU Presidencies, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission. This requires smooth functioning of the Presidencies Group (Troika) to be equipped with adequate secretarial resources and supported by the services of experts.

(37) We agree to act jointly in order to continue and strengthen our existing cooperation among ourselves and with the European Commission through the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points. In this respect, we ask the European Commission to ensure a

permanent contact point for territorial cohesion by using or consolidating existing networks for territorial and urban development and by enhancing the exchange of experiences on best practices.

(38) Our joint activities will be focused on facilitating the EU-wide debate on EU key dossiers from a territorial point of view. In this respect, the most important ones include:

- the debate on the Lisbon process post 2010,
- the review of the EU Budget to be reported in 2008 / 2009,
- the 2010 midterm review of Cohesion Policy,
- the debate on the post 2013 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP),
- the 2010 midterm review of the EU Rural Development Policy,
- the 2011 review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS),
- the debate on the way in which to implement the recommendations of the Green Paper on Maritime Policies,
- the debate on the 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU,
- the 2010 midterm review of the programme "Culture" (2007-2013),
- the debate on the Transport Policy post 2010,
- the debate on the Energy Policy,
- the debate on the Research and Innovation Policy,
- the debate on the Neighbourhood Policy,
- the debate on the EU Internal Market and Competitiveness Policy,
- the ongoing debate on EU Governance, and
- the debate on the EU Constitution and on EU Governance.

(39) We ask the coming EU Presidencies together with all EU Member States, the European institutions, the European Commission and other stakeholders to implement the 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 readiness of the Slovene EU Presidency to base their activities on this.

(40) We ask the Slovene EU Presidency to take the Territorial Agenda into account in their preparations for the 2008 spring European Council in view of a stronger and more formal political recognition of the territorial dimension of various EU decisions.

(41) We agree that there is a need to encourage public and private stakeholders to become engaged in addressing the territorial cohesion of the EU. Their specific interests are to be recognised. A joint discussion on 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 a Conference on Urban Networking for Innovation and Competence to be held in autumn 2007 and of Germany to organize a Conference on Territory and Economy to be held in spring 2008.

(42) In view of the rapid global changes and the territorial challenges related to this, we ask the coming EU Presidencies to evaluate and review the Territorial Agenda by the end of 2010 / beginning of 2011.

(43) We consider it as our political task to raise awareness for the most important territorial challenges for the EU and we thus will take an active role in implementing the Territorial Agenda on the European level and in our states. We are convinced that with the Territorial Agenda we are taking a big step towards a significantly competitive Europe of diverse regions where citizens can live in a just society.