



Presidency Conclusions of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union on the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion

At the invitation of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union an Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion took place in Gödöllő on 19 May 2011.

The ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development in the European Union met to discuss the policy developments related to territorial cohesion and to adopt the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020.

The Commissioner for Regional Policy of the European Commission, the Chair of the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament, the President of the Committee of the Regions, the President of the ECO Section of the European Economic and Social Committee, representatives of the European Investment Bank, the European Environment Agency also took part in the meeting. The Presidency was also pleased to welcome representatives from Croatia, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations.

The Ministers

- **Welcomed** that territorial cohesion became the third dimension of Cohesion Policy as the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. The Treaty has important implications for territorial and sectoral policies in Europe. Member States and European Institutions now have shared competence in contributing to territorial cohesion, which calls for their continued and strengthened cooperation.
- **Emphasized** that cohesion is a key condition of the long term development of the European Union. It aims for equal opportunities for citizens and enterprises, wherever they live or are located.
- **Highlighted** that diversity of territories can be a potential for the development of the European Union, and that regional and local stakeholders are of key relevance in this regard.
- **Pointed out** that sustainable and efficient use of Europe's territory, resources, and territorial capital, as well as attention paid to areas facing specific challenges, are key elements of territorial cohesion.
- **Stressed** the importance of adequately adjusting strategies and programmes to the specificities of territories. Interventions should be tailored to these specificities to find the optimal solution for the long-term development of territories.



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- **Underlined** that the territorial dimension needs to be taken into account to ensure the successful implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- **Welcomed** the proposal of the European Commission, expressed in the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, to address territorial cohesion in the new programmes. Cohesion Policy is a key framework and instrument through which the European Union can address territorial development challenges. It helps unleash territorial potential at local, regional, national and transnational levels.
- **Pointed out** that recognising the territorial dimension and coordination of sectoral policies is important to foster territorial cohesion. Most policies can be more efficient and can achieve synergies with other policies if the territorial dimension and territorial impacts are taken into account. Understanding territorial impacts can help to reduce the risk of unintended side-effects on territories.
- **Agreed** that multi-level governance is important to ensure balanced and coordinated contributions of the local, regional, national and European levels, where appropriate, in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.
- **Considered** that the place-based approach to policy making can contribute to territorial cohesion. Based on the principles of horizontal coordination, evidence-based policy making and integrated functional area development, it implements the subsidiarity principle through a multilevel governance approach. It aims to unleash territorial potentials by building on the specific assets of places, applying tailor-made solutions.

The Ministers

- **Thanked** the previous presidencies for their contribution to implementing the Territorial Agenda of the European Union adopted in Leipzig in 2007.
- **Took note** of the results of the First Action Programme for the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union adopted in Ponta Delgada in 2007 and the results of its assessment conducted by the Swedish presidency.
- **Took note** of the results of the updating process of the evidence based background document entitled Territorial State and Perspective of the European Union, as well as the evaluation and review of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union coordinated by Hungary at the request of ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development in 2007.
- **Acknowledged** that the revision of the Territorial Agenda does not pre-empt future agreements on the next multi-annual financial framework and the next legislative package for Cohesion Policy, but emphasises the importance of considering the territorial dimension.

Based on the above, the Ministers agreed on the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020.



The Ministers

- **Welcomed** the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (TA2020), the renewed action-oriented policy framework to support territorial cohesion as the third dimension of the objective to establish economic, social and territorial cohesion.
- **Reaffirmed their conviction** that the TA2020 provides strategic orientations for territorial development, fosters integration of the territorial dimension within different policies at all governance levels and contributes to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy through territorial cohesion principles.
- **Stated** that an integrated and cross-sectoral approach is needed to transform the main territorial challenges of the European Union into potentials to ensure balanced, harmonious and sustainable territorial development. Therefore they defined the following six territorial priorities for the European Union:
 - 1) promoting polycentric and balanced territorial development,
 - 2) encouraging integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions,
 - 3) territorial integration in cross-border and transnational functional regions,
 - 4) ensuring the global competitiveness of regions based on strong local economies,
 - 5) improving territorial connectivity for individuals, communities and enterprises,
 - 6) managing and connecting the ecological, landscape and cultural values of regions.
- **Highlighted** that the successful implementation of the TA2020 needs joint efforts of different stakeholders at all levels, and therefore recommended that:
 - ⇒ upcoming presidencies, in close cooperation with the European Commission, should establish the framework and identify the method and actions needed to implement the TA2020;
 - ⇒ relevant actions should be defined so that they ensure that the Europe 2020 Strategy, Cohesion Policy and sectoral policies mutually contribute to each other's aims through appropriate dialogue with the respective policy-makers;
 - ⇒ sectoral policies should take territorial diversity and territorial impacts into account, and, where relevant and beneficial, tailor their interventions and measures to the specificities of different territories;
 - ⇒ implementation of the TA2020 has to be carried out at European, transnational, interregional, cross-border, national, regional and local levels through multilevel governance, facilitating the contribution of policy-makers and, where appropriate, enabling all stakeholders to express their views;



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⇒ the principles and priorities of the TA2020 should be disseminated, promoted and taken into account at European, national, regional and local levels;

The Ministers

- **Thanked** Member States, Partner States, and Candidate Countries in cooperation with the European Institutions and Non-Governmental Institutions for their joint efforts in establishing a new basis for the TA2020, and to contribute to a large extent to its successful implementation.
- **Spoke out in favour of** maintaining and also of strengthening dialogue with European Institutions, with special emphasis on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.
- **Expressed their belief** that Cohesion Policy is a key framework for realising the objective of territorial cohesion and asked the Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy, as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament, to take the TA2020 into consideration when designing and implementing the post 2013 Cohesion Policy.
- **Recognised that** considering the territorial dimension in sectoral policies is important for territorial cohesion, and asked those responsible for designing and implementing sectoral policies to take the TA2020 into account.
- **Stressed the importance** of cooperating within their means and competences with the ministers responsible for urban development, as cities and towns play an important role in achieving the objective of territorial cohesion.
- **Noted** that it is important to strengthen the evidence-based implementation of Cohesion Policy and other European policies, and that stronger focus on territorial cohesion will require further knowledge and methodological support.
- **Recognized** that the ESPON (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and cohesion) Programme has demonstrated its ability to create useful pan-European territorial knowledge, and thus encourage the ongoing process to prepare the continuation of ESPON post-2013 conducted by Luxembourg as indicated in the annex to this Presidency Conclusion.
- **Asked the forthcoming Polish presidency** to take over the coordination of the process and contribute to the successful implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020.

The Ministers asked the Hungarian presidency to present these Conclusions to the Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy taking the opportunity of their informal meeting that will take place on the 20 May 2011.



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**Annex to the Presidency Conclusions
of the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning and
territorial development on 19 May 2011**

Ministers welcome the ongoing process to define the ESPON activities and improve the continuation of ESPON post-2013. Without pre-empting the decision on the financial framework and the Structural Funds Regulation they acknowledge the progress made on the key principles behind current work. These principles are:

- ESPON continuing as a European Territorial Cooperation Programme;
- Keeping the Members States and Partner States through the Monitoring Committee, in cooperation with the European Commission, in the deciding position;
- Upgrading the external feedback, combining policy advice and scientific quality assurance;
- Ensuring stronger emphasis on the use of ESPON results from applied research and targeted analyses in policy development, supported by the delivery of analytical responses;
- Providing for an enhancement of the internal scientific and communication capacity of ESPON in order to process scientific results more effectively towards policy makers;
- Reducing administrative burdens for participating countries and project groups including the changing to a service contract logic.

Ministers encourage Luxembourg, in close cooperation with the European Commission, all ESPON participating countries and the EU institutions, to continue the efforts concerning the future of ESPON in line with the above mentioned principles and to present a proposal for ESPON post 2013 during the Polish EU Presidency.