



PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS
of the German EU Council Presidency on the occasion of the
Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and
Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion

1 December 2020, Germany

Preamble

At the invitation of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union an Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development and/or Territorial Cohesion took place on 1 December 2020.

The ministers of the European Union member states, Norway and Switzerland responsible for spatial planning and territorial development discussed policy developments related to territorial cohesion, to adopt the Territorial Agenda 2030 and start an implementing process.

The Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms of the European Commission, the Chair of the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament, the President of the European Committee of the Regions, the President of the ECO Section of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Vice-President of the European Investment Bank also took part in the meetings.

The Presidency was also pleased to welcome representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations and other observers.

The Ministers

1. **pointed to** increasing economic and social disparities between places from the local to the European level that impact on their possibilities to realise development potential and respond to challenges leading to a considerable diversity for future perspectives.
2. **emphasized** that the COVID-19 pandemic, policy responses, the implications and the resulting prerequisites for recovery vary greatly between regions across Europe and within countries and often aggravate existing challenges. Territorial cohesion therefore must play an important strategic role in the recovery process as a prerequisite for achieving and preserving social and economic cohesion in the EU and to increase the resilience of municipalities, cities, regions and countries.
3. **expressed** their firm belief that an integrated and sustainable spatial planning and development policy is needed in order to make an important contribution to improving the situation of European citizens and businesses in their social, environmental and economic surroundings.
4. **reaffirmed** that their informal cooperation together with the European Union institutions shall contribute to identify and mobilize the diverse potentials of all cities and regions in Europe to foster the regional recovery efforts of EU and its Member States and neighbouring states in the best interest of a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Europe that offers future prospects for all people and places, protects common livelihoods and shapes transitions.

5. **highlighted** that territorial cohesion needs an open and continuous dialogue between all stakeholders of different policy sectors including local and regional actors, the scientific community and non-governmental organisations.

6. **underlined** the need to recognize the territorial dimension when legislation and policies are designed and implemented at European Union, national regional and local level to be more effective and achieve synergies with other policies. Understanding territorial impacts can help to reduce the risk of unintended side-effects on territories. Sectoral policies should tailor measures to the geographic specifics of territories thereby going beyond administrative borders.

7. **agreed** upon the Territorial Agenda 2030 as a renewed action-orientated policy framework to promote territorial cohesion in Europe as established in the Treaty of the European Union.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 provides strategic orientation to strengthen the territorial dimension within all policies and at all governance levels. It is based on our common understanding that development needs and impacts of future developments differ between places in Europe. Cooperation and coordination between places, levels of government, policy sectors and groups of society are necessary to address complex issues and utilise diverse potential.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 aims at a sustainable future for all places and people. Therefore it defines two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, with the following six priorities for developing the European territory as a whole and all its places to which we commit:

- better balanced territorial development utilising Europe's diversity
 - convergent local and regional development for less inequality between places
 - easier living and working across national borders
 - better ecological livelihood and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions
 - strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world
 - sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places.
8. **welcomed** the start of first pilot actions on the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion. Pilot actions show, test and develop practices, which contribute to achieving the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030, and are important instruments to put priorities into action. The pilot actions mirror increasing recognition of the importance of place-based policies and show a broad spatial and thematic coverage.
9. **invited** the Member States and other key actors to take inspiration from these pilot actions and to come forward with proposals for further pilot actions to keep the process alive and support it with specific measures.
10. **took note** of the European Commission's 7th Cohesion Report and is looking forward to the new Cohesion Report in 2021, acknowledged the strengthened regional and territorial dimension of the European

Semester and the post-2020 EU legislative acts, including the Just Transition Fund, invited the European Commission and the Member States to ensure strong territorial dimension in the Partnership Agreements and the programmes of the EU Member States for the 2021 – 2027 structural funds programming period to facilitate territorial cohesion.

11. **thanked** the European Committee of the Regions for the Opinion “CoR’s contribution to the renewed Territorial Agenda, with special emphasis on community-led local development “ (COTER-VI/056) and the Opinion „Equivalent standards of living as a joint challenge for all levels of government in Europe” (COTER-VII/004) and the European Economic and Social Committee for the Opinion “Revision of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda of the EU” (ECO/507) and invites both Committees to initiate a dialogue how the coordination of EU policies and initiatives with a territorial dimension can be improved.
12. **thanked** the European Investment Bank for their ongoing support to integrated territorial development and invites it to play an active role in financing sustainable investments of all sizes in areas covered by the Territorial Agenda 2030 and to contribute to pilot actions, in particular to support the development of better funding approaches in the territorial context.
13. **called on** all relevant stakeholders to engage in functional regions, cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation and help to diminish existing obstacles to cooperation.

14. **recognised** the results and important role of the ESPON 2020 cooperation programme (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion) for the production of European territorial evidence and development of knowledge from actual and comparable data as a contribution for political consideration especially in spatial development policies and encouraged the European Commission and all ESPON participating countries and EU institutions to continue the cooperation in the 2021 – 2027 programming period to support and advise the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030.
15. **advised** the current Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU to further develop the format and framework for an implementation mechanism and to design communications tools and strategies to obtain and disseminate information promoting the Territorial Agenda 2030.
16. **asked** forthcoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU to follow up on progress in applying the Territorial Agenda 2030 and to present it to councils of EU sector policy with spatial impact to stimulate a regular political cross-sectoral debate.
17. **recommended** a stocktaking of the Territorial Agenda 2030 in 2024, assessing the relevance of the priorities in the light of the EU Cohesion Policy post-2027 and invite the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2025 to organise an Informal Ministerial Meeting informing a decision on the possible renewal of the Territorial Agenda 2030.