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## **WORKING DOCUMENT**

on the Follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion

Committee on Regional Development

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## **Background**

On 24-25 May 2007 the EU ministers responsible for spatial planning and urban development adopted the Territorial Agenda (TA) and the Leipzig Charter (LC) at an informal ministerial meeting in Leipzig.

On the basis of a joint analysis of future challenges to spatial planning in Europe, the EU ministers agreed on territorial priorities for the development of the European Union and on recommendations for an integrated urban development policy, with particular reference to disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The TA is the result of many years of intergovernmental cooperation between the Member States, and is based on three essential objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which is still applicable:

- establishment of a polycentric and balanced urban system and the creation of a new urban-rural relationship,
- ensuring parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge,
- sustainable development, particularly through management and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

The adoption of the TA reinforces the territorial dimension and forms part of efforts to define and shape the concept of territorial cohesion more effectively. On the basis of Articles 2, 6, 16 and 158 of the EC Treaty, territorial cohesion has already been acknowledged as a third dimension of cohesion policy. The Reform Treaty declares territorial cohesion to be a Treaty objective and provides for concurrent legislative competences for the EU and the Member States in this area.

The EU urban planning ministers agreed on the LC in spite of the fact that the EU does not possess any legislative competence in the field of urban planning. However, the urban dimension is increasingly becoming the subject of attention at European level, particularly for the formation of cohesion policy. Ongoing processes of urban expansion are accompanied by many challenges, such as the decay of neighbourhoods, the overloading of inner-city transport networks, soil sealing, environmental damage and social problems. The LC builds principally on the results of:

- the Lille Action Programme of 2000,
- the Urban Acquis of 2004 and
- the Bristol Accord of 2005.

## **Towards the adoption of the first Action Programme**

On 23 November 2007 the EU ministers will be adopting the first Action Programme for the implementation of the TA at the Informal Council of Ministers in the Azores. The Action Programme provides a framework for concrete individual measures to be taken to achieve the

objectives of the TA until an initial assessment in 2010. In this context, five areas of work should be distinguished:

- Implementing the TA in the ministers' sphere of competence,
- Influencing key EU dossiers and reinforcing the territorial and urban dimension of sector-specific policies,
- Reinforcing multi-level governance,
- Assessing and comparing territorial development in the EU,
- Coordinating and assessing the implementation of the first Action Programme and developing a communication strategy for territorial cohesion and sustainable spatial development.

The Action Programme is intended to trigger a dynamic progress making it possible to influence European spatial development positively in accordance with the objectives of the TA and LC.

### **Role of the European Parliament**

The European Parliament was involved in the elaboration of the TA and LC as a stakeholder, took an active part in the process and wishes to monitor the implementation process as a critical observer.

On 27 February 2007 the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) adopted a position paper with recommendations for the TA and LC, calling, inter alia, for an Action Programme with precise evaluation criteria and measurable objectives.

The own-initiative report – building on the REGI committee's active contribution to the adoption of the TA, the LC and the first Action Programme – is another essential contribution to achieving the balanced, sustainable development of the EU on a territorial basis.

The report is intended to be adopted before the EU Spring Summit, at which a debate on the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies is on the agenda, so that greater attention can be paid to the interests of the territorial and urban dimension in the context of these strategies.

### **Requirements for successful implementation**

The objectives formulated in the TA and the LC can only be achieved by a comprehensive, cross-sector, holistic development strategy. To that end it is essential to pursue an integrated approach, both vertically and horizontally.

**A vertically integrated approach** means better coordination and cooperation between different levels of government (local, national and European) involving all the local and regional actors concerned and civil society (stakeholders). The Action Programme should not only call on the relevant EU ministers to take action but should involve all levels of government in the implementation of the objectives. Local and regional stakeholders in

particular should adopt these objectives, which are of particular importance in the pursuit of spatial planning aims.<sup>1</sup>

Urban development can only be successful if it is understood as city-plus-periphery policy. For just as the periphery benefits from what the city has to offer, the city urgently needs its periphery to carry out functions which it is not able to perform itself, such as recreation or water supply. In view of the intensive reciprocal relations – in particular the flows of materials, capital and people – between city and periphery, it is clear that cities must enter into partnerships with their peripheries. To that end, appropriate administrative structures must be created making it possible to make use of synergies and avoid unhealthy competition for resources. Bureaucratic and political barriers must be overcome. In this connection territorial and regional cooperation has a key role in preventing polarisation between urban and rural areas and making the best possible use of synergies. The specific competences of rural areas make an important contribution to the territorial diversity of Europe.

Sustainable regional and urban planning also calls for a **horizontally integrated approach**. Sector-specific policies must not run counter to the objectives of spatial planning or those of urban development, but must be in harmony with them. With that in mind, sector-specific policies such as transport or energy policy must be analysed to gauge their large- and small-scale spatial impact. Such an approach is also of benefit in avoiding social exclusion and giving encouragement to disadvantaged neighbourhoods. An integrated development strategy must therefore be implemented taking account of the most diverse aspects such as education, the labour market, transport policy and "Baukultur" (culture of the built environment).

**Cohesion policy** also plays a key role in achieving the objectives of the TA and LC. Thanks to the size of its budget, cohesion policy is the most important management instrument for sustainable spatial and urban development. The award of appropriations from the structural funds should be geared more closely to territorial policy objectives, such as the promotion of a polycentric urban structure or of trans-European climate change risk management.

Cities have a particular responsibility for meeting Community climate change objectives. On the model of a climate-friendly city, action on climate change should be mainstreamed and taken into account in all areas of policy. The structural funds can contribute to this for example by giving priority to more climate-friendly transport solutions and energy-efficient construction measures.

### **Concrete proposals for improving the implementation of the TA and LC objectives**

Only through interaction between economic, environmental, social and cultural development will it be possible for balanced spatial and urban development to take place. Spatial development is concerned with the planning and management of the whole territory (housing, trade and industry, transport, infrastructure, natural environment, agriculture), in which urban areas have always played a special role in view of their economic and social function and their complexity.

One priority of the Portuguese Presidency is to implement the objectives of the TA. The Member States have agreed in the TA to carry out an initial assessment of the TA in 2010

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<sup>1</sup> See, inter alia, European Commission, "Spatial impacts of Community policies and costs of non-coordination".

under the Hungarian Presidency. Such an assessment only makes sense if the concrete objectives of the TA are to be compared with real developments. It is therefore necessary for concrete, measurable indicative targets to be defined in the context of the implementation of the first Action Programme, making it possible to evaluate the spatial development of the EU. To that end use should be made of the proposals in the Espon studies (e.g. Espon 1.1.1 on polycentrism, Espon 1.1.4 on demographic changes, Espon 1.2.1 on transport).

The Lisbon Reform Treaty declares territorial cohesion to be a Treaty objective and confers on the EU a concurrent competence with the Member States in this area. The Commission should make use of this basis to press on with the implementation of the TA by means of initiatives and to develop it through the Open Method of Coordination.

This should include – in addition to the assessment of the spatial impact of new proposed legislation at EU level – a more detailed analysis of EU policies as to their territorial effects. Some Espon projects have already produced initial results in this area which should be taken into account in the formation of policy.<sup>1</sup> A more systematic analysis of the territorial impact of sector-specific EU policies is a prerequisite for effective implementation of the integrated approach. Espon has developed methods for the evaluation of territorial impact in this area: TEQUILA offers a method for multi-dimensional analysis.<sup>2</sup> The new 2013 Espon programme with a budget of EUR 34 million may contribute further possibilities.

Awareness of the territorial effects of regional policy and of sector-specific EU policies should be raised by a debate at the EU Spring Summit on the implementation of the TA and LC in the context of the discussion on structural funds. Particular consideration should be given to the importance of the integrated approach and to guaranteeing territorial diversity.

On a proposal from the Commission and on the basis of the work of Espon, a uniform pan-European framework for spatial impact assessment at project level should be devised. Some Member States, such as Germany, Austria, the Wallonian region of Belgium, and Portugal, already have such an instrument. The experience gathered with this instrument could be used in the debate. An assessment framework of this kind should come into play particularly for major projects financed out of the structural funds. This is necessary particularly in order to boost the importance of spatial impact in the selection of projects for funding. Reducing land use and the multi-functional use of city centres as living and working areas are also spatial policy objectives which should be used far more extensively as conditions for the award of structural fund appropriations.

In the context of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, the territorial and urban dimension should be paid greater attention in the national strategic framework plans and should be one of the Commission's benchmarks in the context of the Open Method of Coordination. Greater account must also be taken of territorial and urban aspects in the evaluation and formation of European policies, for example in the budget review procedure, in policy on rural areas and in EU transport policy.

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<sup>1</sup> See inter alia “Territorial effects of structural funds, Espon project 2.2.1”.

<sup>2</sup> Draft ad-hoc note, Policy Department B, EP, “Follow-up of the TA and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion”

## **Summary**

Putting the objectives set out in the TA and the LC into practice is not an end in itself, but is in the interest of a sustainable development strategy to improve the quality of life for all EU citizens. The EU is characterised not only by great territorial diversity in a small area, but also by a high quality of life, not least thanks to the European sensitivity for spatial planning and sustainable urban and regional policy. This is a strong suit which the EU should continue to play to. Successfully implementing the TA and the LC can make a vital contribution to this.