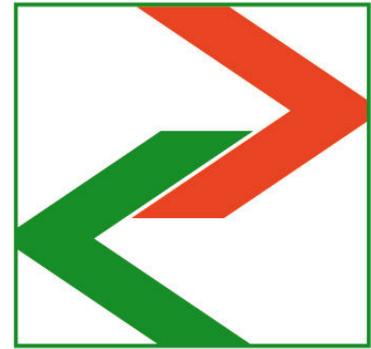


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Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
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GREEN PAPER ON TERRITORIAL COHESION

STATEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN BORDER REGIONS (AEBR)

June 2008

The statement of the Association of European Border Regions is orientated on following key-issues of the hearing on 15th, April 2008 in Brussels:

1. In your view what is the real **added value of territorial cohesion** as compared to economic and social cohesion (features, components, scales of intervention etc.)?
2. Why and how could more consideration to territorial cohesion be **integrated in the future cohesion policy** at different territorial levels – EU, transnational national, regional and local?
3. In what way does territorial cohesion contribute to the **Lisbon Agenda**? How to prove that territorial cohesion is not contradictory with competitiveness / efficiency?
4. What should be or could be the **role of your institution** in promoting better territorial cohesion? What are the implications of the new Lisbon Treaty regarding the **multi-level governance system and your own role**?
5. How to **communicate to the citizens** on the complex subject of territorial cohesion? What would be the best means to convince them of the utility of the concept?
6. How to make EU sectoral policies – making more supportive of territorial cohesion and to improve the coherence **between regional and sectoral EU policies**? How to do it also at national, regional or local level?
7. How to tackle **territorial specificities** (targeted place-based approach based on the existence of natural or physical handicaps) while ensuring the overall coherence with the wider strategic Community priorities?
8. Why and how to improve the **rural – urban relationships** on the ground? Do you have practical examples for this?

9. **Territorial cooperation** is one of the possible tools for assuring territorial cohesion; how do you consider it's current and future role at different territorial levels?

1. To question 1 to 4:

European **territorial cohesion** is in the same way as **territorial cooperation** an **European priority** and a **political objective of the EU**. It provides a clear added value. The **territorial potential** through cross-border cooperation has to be deployed in a better way, because:

- Cross-border co-operation is a corner stone of European integration and territorial cohesion.
- It creates a european, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural added value (see the AEBR paper: Added value of cross-border co-operation).
- It concretely contributes to the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy (see Annex "AEBR paper on Lisbon Strategy"), as cross-border co-operation always adds value to national measures due to:
 - additionality of cross-border programmes and projects,
 - synergies through cross-border co-operation,
 - joint research and innovation,
 - cross-border networking,
 - exchange of best practice and know-how,
 - spin-off effects by overcoming borders,
 - efficient cross-border resource management.

European territorial cohesion goes **beyond economic and social cohesion**, because she affects the whole territory of the EU and covers all areas of live. This fundamental issue is very important. **All Regions** (even low developed and rural regions) can contribute in line with their possibilities to the objectives of the Lisbon Treaty.

- All areas of life are important as horizontal challenge, because territorial cohesion is a cross-cutting approach which requires coordination between the different sector policies.
- Territorial cohesion is closely connected to the configuration of the spatial development. Ideally it causes a reciprocal effect between spatial structure and sector policies.

In this respect the recommendations of the AEBR are:

- Sectoral policies (European and national) have to be reviewed regarding their spatial effects (e.g. transport, agriculture and education). Therefore it is reasonable to develop long-term horizontal **strategies and programs**, especially **cross-border ones, in which** in medium-term practical orientated **sector policies become integrated** (interdependency, because the results of the medium-term sectoral measures in turn have an impact on the actualisation of the long-term strategies / programs).
- In the context of territorial cohesion a **polycentric development** of the area of the EU is necessary to balance geographic concentration power. According to this the territorial agenda assumes even **in rural areas substantial contributions to growth and employment**, not only in agglomeration areas.
- Considering the global challenges and effects (e.g. closing down or relocation of many production facilities, buyout of / stake holding in European key companies by investors from non-EU member states, severe shortcomings in the energy transport networks) the **priorities** of the **territorial policies** seem to be **rather small-scale**. Thus, a **large-scale priority is necessary** considering Europe as an integrated system. As important aspect of the territorial cohesion the spatial fragmentation in the EU should be surmounted and incoherencies resulting from national differences should be eliminated with the aim of an integrated Europe (see also the ESPON long-term scenarios till 2030). This refers to:
 - raw materials supply and processing (energy sector, steel) in the EU,
 - mergers on European level and not in accordance with the national antitrust legislation,
 - national competitiveness in globally important technological developments,

- the necessity of a large-scale risk management (e.g. as regards arid regions or floods that often hit regions across borders).
- **Territorial cooperation** in connection with **spatial planning** on European level **helps to resolve the spatial fragmentation of the EU** and inconsistencies and lack of coherence caused by national differences. Only then the **new challenges** of climate change, ageing of the society, coherence of renewable primary products for usage of energy and food (close connection between territorial policy and cohesion policy) **can be accomplished**.
- According to ESDP and the „Territorial Agenda 2007“ from the **EU member states an regions** should be demanded:
 - Elaboration of cross-border **approaches** and concepts related to spatial development (spatial development concepts) as well as their consideration in national spatial development and sectoral planning,
 - Cross-border **coordination** on a regular basis with regard to spatial development planning and measures,
 - Elaboration of joint cross-border **regional – and if reasonable – land utilisation plans** as the most far-reaching form of cross-border spatial development policy.
- This requires a **new understanding of territorial governance**. Cooperation, partnership and networking can not only be realised on traditional, hierarchical levels.
- Likewise it is necessary, that the **EU-policy** pays strong attention to the **national / regional / local policies and vice-versa**.
- The **sectoral policy areas** of the EU have to be better synchronised
- The regional policy and EUREK as territorial task should be given a **coordinating function**.
- The **political objectives** of territorial cohesion and the “Territorial Agenda” have to be taken more into account in the spatial policies on European and national / regional level in future.

2. To question 5 to 9:

- The new challenges like climate change, shortage of energy, ageing of the society and renewable primary products have direct impact on rural areas, especially on border areas. Without an adequate **policy in favour of rural areas** a migration to metropolitan areas and urban agglomeration with decisively emigration from rural areas is threatening. Unfortunately negative examples can be found even today in some border regions.
- The experience of more than 35 years indicates that one time the political pendulum is swinging in favour of **metropolitan areas / urban agglomeration** and the other time in favour of **rural areas**. **Fact is, that both are mutual linked**. Metropolitan areas and urban agglomeration can not exist without a corresponding surrounding area. On the other side rural areas can not develop without appropriate centrality in its nearby proximity. This again is supporting the mobility, but does not necessarily cause migration from the rural areas (home / workplace).
- If the diversity of the **European regions is regarded as asset**, this **especially** applies to **border regions**. It therefore has to be avoided to speak of a congeneric but rather of a focussed equal treatment of the different geographic areas of Europe.
- **Cross-border territorial strategies / programs** are an essential element for the success of cross-border cooperation. They show the **added value of cross-border cooperation** in addition as amendment of the national policies for border areas. Often they open the semi-circle on the border and enable through cooperation first to build the **critical mass** for sustainable investments and measures (for example common waste disposal, common hospital, common rescue services, institutes for innovation and research, universities).
- For this programs and strategies it is essential, that they are not developed by consultants, but **from the beginning on all stakeholders, non-governmental organisations etc. are involved**. Based on the knowledge of the region they provide **basic information** for the SWOT – analysis. The formulation and evaluation of the SWOT – analysis can be done by consultants.
- Likewise it is essential to agree, **that all partners – the regional and national level and the EU - stay on the round table during the implementation procedure and**

abdicate responsibility for the realisation of the respective programs and strategies.

- Even important is furthermore to **support this common strategy by medium-term strategies for all sectoral policies**, so that an integrated sustainable concept can be managed.
- The most successful **method of operation** is cooperation of partner from both sides of the border ab initio instead of one side of the border is preparing a paper and sends it to the other side with request for annotation.
- Equally a **common secretariat** for coordination and implementation of the strategies, programs and sectoral policies is helpful, whereas the single partners get the feeling to come into operation with their own strengths. (The advantage is, that not everyone is coming forward for every measure, but only, when the own strengths can really be played).
- These cross-border strategies have demonstrated as well, that in the relation between metropolitan area / urban agglomeration specifically to **relocate institutions into the rural area**. This increases the purchasing power, what in turn benefits the centres.

3. Finally the AEBR notices:

- **Territorial cooperation**, which is a European priority and political objective of the EU, is an **instrument** to implement territorial cohesion and regional policy of the EU.
- Their **implementation in multiannual “EU-programs”** with a concrete objective (like cross-border cooperation) has the great **advantage**, that only for this single purpose EU-funds and for several years are provided, which again ties regional and national means for co-financing.
- The experience revealed that without these EU-programs such a **targeted programmatic work** with assured co financing extending over several years **on national level is not possible**.