

# SUMMARY

## Territorial Agenda 2030

### A future for all places

In Europe, increasing inequalities between places and between people as well as unsustainable developments have reached a critical level. They risk hampering Europe, its countries and thriving municipalities and regions to build on their success. It is time for concerted action at all geographical and governance levels to ensure positive future perspectives for all people, communities and places in Europe. It is time to better understand and adequately address territorial impacts of sector policies. We seek to contribute to sustainable development and to keeping Europe together. (Para 46)

This is a summary of the Territorial Agenda 2030, which we, the Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion, in cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank Group and relevant European and national associations, agree on. (Para 4)

The overall aim of the Territorial Agenda is to ensure that the need for a sustainable future for all places and people is addressed appropriately. To do so, the Territorial Agenda provides strategic orientation for spatial planning, underlines the importance of strategic spatial planning, and calls for strengthening the territorial dimension of all policies at all governance levels. (Para 9)

This must be based on

- a common understanding that development needs and impacts of future developments differ between places in Europe; and
- cooperation and coordination between places, levels of governments, policy sectors and groups of society to address complex issues and utilise diverse potential.

We therefore define two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, which have six priorities for developing the European territory as a whole and all its places. (Para 48)

In the course of this time, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed policy making and future development outlooks. As implications and policy responses vary across territories, the pandemic shows that territory matters and that our territories are highly interdependent. Territorial development policies and the cooperation on joint objectives are essential to increase the resilience of municipalities, regions and countries, and strengthen their recovery processes. (Para 10)

## Why we need to act

We have reviewed the Territorial Agenda launched in 2007 and updated in 2011, and we have taken into consideration recent reports from the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and ESPON. (PARA 7)

Europe consists of different types of places, such as capital regions, metropolitan areas, small and medium-sized towns, peri-urban areas, rural areas, inner peripheries, peripheral areas, northernmost areas, sparsely populated areas, islands, coastal areas, mountainous areas, outermost regions, cross-border regions, macro-regions, areas of demographic decline and areas in economic transition. These have very different development potential and challenges. At all levels, from sub-local to pan-European, economic and social disparities between places and between people as well as environmental risks and pressures increase. These are driven by economies of scale, imbalanced access to markets and qualified labour, disparities in quality of governance and in public services. Furthermore, the links and flows between places, especially along corridors, affect differently the possibilities to realise potential or respond to challenges.

(PARA 20)

The quality of government and governance processes is an important cross-cutting principle for local, regional, national and European development. It matters for the well-being of society and is a pre-requisite for long-term sustainable increases in living standards, investments, social trust and political legitimacy.

(PARA 23)

There is need to act as people and **places drift apart – increasing imbalances and inequalities** e.g. in the fields:

- Quality of life
- Services of general interest
- Demographic and societal imbalances
- Digitalisation and the 4th industrial revolution
- Employment and economic development
- Interdependencies between places
- Global embeddedness

There is need to respond to the **increasing pressure concerning sustainable development and climate change** e.g. in the fields:

- Climate change
- Loss of biodiversity and land consumption
- Air, soil and water quality
- Secure, affordable and sustainable energy
- Just transition
- Circular value chains
- Nature, landscape and cultural heritage

# Territorial priorities for Europe

## A JUST EUROPE

that offers future perspectives for all places and people

### BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development utilising Europe's diversity

- We will take action to encourage neighbourhoods, communities, municipalities, counties, regions and Member States to cooperate on improving working, living and business conditions in all places as well as strengthening socio-economic prosperity, innovation capacity and global competitiveness across Europe
- We invite policy makers from all levels to promote polycentric development models that offer a role for all places.
- We will take action to encourage decision makers at all governance levels to unleash the unique potential of territories with specific geographies and adequately address the constraints of these areas through integrated and cooperative approaches.

### FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Local and regional development, less inequality between places

- We will search for dialogue with decision-makers in cities and towns of all sizes to apply an integrated multilevel governance approach. This means involving people from different governance levels, in particular local and regional ones, policy sectors and groups of society.
- We will engage with local and regional decision makers to strengthen cooperation on long-term place-based strategies for these areas and address sustainable functional links between neighbouring areas.

### INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Living and working across national borders

- We will take action to embed stable cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in macro-regional, national, regional and local development strategies. Strategic Interreg cooperation, Horizon Europe cooperation, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), mainstream cohesion policy programmes, macro-regional strategies, inter-metropolitan, functional regions, cross-border planning and legal cross-border agreements are examples of stable approaches that facilitate cooperation between administrative areas which go beyond single cooperation projects.
- We will intensify dialogue with policy makers at all governance levels to coordinate national sector policies between countries and diminish existing obstacles to cooperation.

## A GREEN EUROPE

that protects our common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

### HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions

- We support the development of nature-based solutions and green and blue infrastructure networks that link ecosystems and protected areas, in spatial planning, land management and other policies.
- We will respect the natural limits of Europe's common livelihoods and increase the resilience of all places impacted by climate change.
- We will concentrate on strengthening awareness and empowering local and regional communities to protect, rehabilitate, utilise and reutilise their (built) environments, landscapes, material and immaterial cultural assets and other unique values.

### CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world

- We support Europe's transition to a circular economy and the development of place-based industrial symbiosis processes, also taking into account the need for sustainable soil and land use.
- We support the development of local and regional circular economy strategies linking local and global economies.
- We will encourage the diversification of local economies and efforts to strengthen innovation capacities in all regions, including local strategies for energy transition and measures in the building, transport and bioeconomy sectors.

### SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS: Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

- We will invite relevant players to enter into a dialogue on the need for adequate access to high-speed fixed and mobile communication networks in all places, and the need for a digital infrastructure with a low carbon footprint and low impact on human health.
- We will further improve links between regional planning and the development of Trans-European Networks (TEN), especially along core network corridors. Linking all places with major transport nodes supports international trade connections and local development opportunities.
- We will invite spatial and transport planners to explore new socially and environmentally progressive models for local and regional mobility-as-a-service and to cooperate on multimodal and environmentally friendly accessibility of and within urban centres.

## Putting priorities into action

The priorities spelled out in the Territorial Agenda 2030 need to be supported by the actions of committed players. Only then can Territorial Agenda priorities and concerns over spatial inequalities and the societal transformation toward a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately. Taken together, the actions should strengthen (Para 76)

- multi-level governance;
- coordination of sector policies in terms of their territorial impacts and coherence;
- cooperation between territories;
- territorial cohesion at European level;
- territorial cohesion at cross-border, transnational, inter- and intraregional level; and
- Member State and neighbouring countries contributions to territorial cohesion.

Application of the Territorial Agenda relies on informal multilevel cooperation between Member States, sub-national authorities, the European Commission, European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and other relevant players. Application of the Territorial Agenda would benefit from cooperation with those in charge of the Urban Agenda, the New Leipzig Charter and EU Cohesion and Rural Development Policy, and the EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies. (Para 78)

Actions putting the Territorial Agenda into practice can be taken at any governance level and can vary in character and focus. Every key player is asked to take action implementing the Territorial Agenda in the context of their regular mandate. Only then can spatial inequalities and the societal transformation toward a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately. (Para 80)

To inspire actions across Europe, pilot actions show, test and develop practices which contribute to achieving Territorial Agenda priorities. We encourage interested parties to closely follow them, take inspiration and come forward with proposals for new actions. (Para 81)

### Follow up

We ask the forthcoming EU Presidencies follow up on the Territorial Agenda 2030 and further strengthen its communication, application and governance:

- **Communication** on the progress of the application of the Territorial Agenda and marking the occasions of the 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Spatial Development Perspective (1999) in 2024 and 2029 and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Territorial Agenda (2007) in 2027.
- **Application** of the Territorial Agenda including a discussion on the progress of the application of the Territorial Agenda and the progress of the pilot actions and the initiation of new pilot actions.
- **Governance** with a focus on a stocktaking in 2024 including reviews of the governance system, progress of the implementation and relevance of the priorities. This will be conducted in the light of the preparations for the EU Cohesion Policy post-2027. The Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2025 is invited to organise an informal ministerial meeting, informing a decision on the possible renewal of the Territorial Agenda 2030.