

Territorial Agenda 2030

A future for all places

SUMMARY



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Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for
spatial planning, territorial development and/or
territorial cohesion

1 December 2020, Germany



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In Europe, growing inequalities between places and between people as well as unsustainable developments have reached a critical level. Increased concerted action at all geographical and governance levels is needed 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.

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.

The Territorial Agenda underlines the importance of and provides orientation for strategic spatial planning and calls for strengthening the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels. It seeks to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals in Europe.

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 societal groups 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, along with all its places.

While revising the Territorial Agenda, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed policy making and future development outlooks. As implications and policy responses vary across territories due to different conditions, the pandemic shows that territories matter and are highly interdependent. Territorial cohesion should play an important role in the recovery process. Territorial development policies and cooperation on joint objectives are essential to increase the resilience of municipalities, regions and countries, while also strengthening their recovery processes.

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 Group and ESPON.

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

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 prerequisite for long-term sustainable increases in living standards, investments, social trust and political legitimacy.

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 responses to global societal challenges and improving working, living and business conditions in all places as well as strengthening socio-economic prosperity, innovation capacity, positions in global value chains and global competitiveness across Europe.
- We invite policymakers 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

Convergent 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, as well as diverse policy sectors and societal groups.
- We will engage with local and regional decision makers to strengthen cooperation on long-term place-based strategies and address sustainable functional links between neighbouring areas.

INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS

Easier 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. We also support the development of new strategic documents, where needed, and the promotion of co-development, involving citizens across borders.
- We will intensify the dialogue with policy makers at all governance levels to coordinate national sector policies between countries and to diminish existing obstacles to cooperation.

A Green Europe that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions

- We support the development of nature-based solutions as well as green and blue infrastructure networks that link ecosystems and protected areas in spatial planning, land management and other policies, and the development of new crisis management tools to increase places' safety and resilience.
- 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, utilize and reutilize their (built) environments, landscapes, material and immaterial cultural assets and other unique values through instruments of EU Cohesion Policy, Rural Development Policy, spatial planning or any other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development among others.

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 encourage the strengthening of 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 stakeholders 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 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 actions from committed players. Only then can Territorial Agenda priorities and concerns over spatial inequalities and the transition towards a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately. Taken together, the actions should strengthen

- multi-level governance;
- place-based approaches;
- coordinated sector policy territorial impacts and coherence;
- cooperation between territories;
- territorial cohesion at European level;
- territorial cohesion at cross-border, transnational, inter- and intra-regional level; and
- Member State and neighbouring country contributions to territorial cohesion.

Application of the Territorial Agenda relies on informal multilevel cooperation between Member States, sub-national authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, 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, EU Cohesion and Rural Development Policy, the implementation of the EU Recovery Plan and the EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies.

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 implement the Territorial Agenda in the context of their regular mandate.

To inspire joint actions across Europe, pilot actions demonstrate, test and develop practices which contribute to achieving Territorial Agenda priorities. Everybody is encouraged to closely follow these actions, take inspiration and offer proposals for new actions.

Follow up

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

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

Follow the application process on
territorialagenda.eu