

## DIRECTORS GENERAL MEETING ON TERRITORIAL COHESION

Congress Centre Brdo, Slovenia, 14 May 2008

### CYPRUS, SPATIAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

INTERVENTION OF CHRISTODOULOS KTORIDES,  
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First of all, Madam Chairperson, allow me to thank the Slovene Presidency for organising this meeting and all previous ones for the discussion of the territorial cohesion process, as well as, in particular, for the further elaboration of the Territorial Agenda Action Programme and the preparation of the interim report we have been examining this morning. Cyprus participates as a partner in a number of this programme's actions:

In Action **2.1d** of the TCUM working group on **urban sprawl**, we have provided feedback for the finalisation of the relevant questionnaire, which has recently been disseminated by Belgium, while we are currently finalising an additional short paper on the characteristics of development sprawl in Cyprus, where actions taken for its mitigation are described. Due to existing legal provisions permitting the construction of isolated housing outside development boundaries, as well as the speculative retention of land by developers within designated development areas, this has become a major spatial planning challenge for Cyprus, both in urban and expanding rural areas at the urban fringe. We hope that through this exercise a number of spatially relevant conclusions, demonstrating the added value of the territorial approach, could contribute to the overall discussion of the territorial cohesion policy.

In Action **2.3a**, as a stakeholder partner of Norway in the **valorisation of territorial diversity** proposal, we look forward to the possibility of its approval by the ESPON Programme; thereupon we will be providing, along with other involved stakeholders, all necessary input for the preparation of the project's terms of reference and implementation. We feel confident that such a project will shed further light into issues such as peripherality, polycentricity, insularity, competitiveness and balanced territorial development, focusing not only on territorial cohesion but also on territorial diversity and the best utilisation of each region's comparative advantages, improving local foundations for development so as to contribute in a positive way to overall EU policy goals.

In Action **2.3b**, as a stakeholder partner of Switzerland in the proposal on **European mountain areas**, although we are disappointed that it has not been evaluated as eligible within a relevant call for interest published by the ESPON Programme, we nevertheless strongly support the Swiss suggestion to carry the proposal through in another way, as soon as possible, and would like to be considered as future partners in this endeavour. We strongly feel that there is indeed a need to elaborate on previous definitions of mountain areas, at sub-regional levels, in order to contribute to the better documentation of territorial trends, development potentials and policy options for these areas, many of which are experiencing severe depopulation and the associated problems concerning adequate provision of services.

In Action **2.3c**, as a stakeholder partner of Greece in the proposal concerning **European islands and cohesion policy**, we look forward to the possibility of its approval by the ESPON Programme; thereupon we will be providing, along with other involved stakeholders, all necessary input for the preparation of the project's terms of reference and

implementation. Through its fourth participation in an action under the current Territorial Agenda Programme, Cyprus looks forward to a comprehensive documentation of the various dimensions of insularity and island typologies, which have strong implications in terms of accessibility, particularly concerning a series of Territorial Agenda priorities, such as cross-border cooperation, the development of innovation clusters, as well as transport and energy networks.

Last but not least, Cyprus is also ready to participate as a partner in the coming Czech presidency's proposal to lead action **1.1a** on **urban-rural relations**. This issue is increasingly becoming more important in view of changing models of local governance and emerging prospects for land exploitation and real estate investments. As such, it is associated both with the restructuring of the rural economy and the sprawl of development over large periurban and coastal areas. It is such complex interrelationships and often conflicting facets of urban-rural relationships that we believe this action should examine, in the light of the Territorial Agenda.

Finally, allow me to also express our appreciation for the proposed programme and the *"Working note on Territorial Cohesion and the Regional Policy of the EU"* prepared by the coming French presidency, the elaboration of which we eagerly anticipate, especially regarding the discussion on territorial strategies for integrated development and multi-level governance.

Thank you for your attention.