

**Speech by Mr. Pierre Dartout, Head of the French delegation at the Directors’
General meeting organised by the Slovenian Presidency in Brdo,
on 14 May 2008**

I would like to congratulate the Slovenian Presidency for their implementation and coordination of the action plan and the follow-up tools they proposed. France, which will assume the Presidency in July, is truly grateful.

In this sense, I would like to remind you that France has agreed to submit the first progress report concerning the programme at the meeting of the ministers it will organise next November during its Presidency.

As far as the follow-up tools are concerned, they should be kept simple, the assessment indicators developed by the Slovenian Presidency updated on a regular basis, the number of indicators reduced, and a better balance ensured between the quantitative and qualitative aspects. France offers its cooperation in developing such a tool.

As for the evaluation of the action plan, a constant adjustment of the program seems necessary to us, depending on the progress made in terms of the considerations over the territorial cohesion concept. In addition, after the initial period of the implementation of actions, it would be advisable to review their consistency with the political objectives, set by the ministers in Leipzig. Such large number of actions, envisaged today, may pose a risk of losing the final objective: a more coherent approach to territorial development is needed.

The upcoming French Presidency will enable Slovenia to present the report on the action under 1.1, related to the coordination between territorial development and urban development at the Directors’ General meeting on spatial planning at the end of October in Paris.

On the occasion of launching the implementation of this programme by the Slovenian Presidency, France proposed to conduct several actions aimed at considering to what extent the territorial dimension is taken into account in some major sectoral policies of the European Union regarded as a priority, such as the Lisbon strategy, economic and social cohesion policy, agricultural and rural development policy and sustainable development strategy, by stressing in particular the aspects of climate and energy. Even though the economic and social cohesion policy is not a sectoral policy, it forms part of these key documents, on the basis of which a proposal will be made to the Ministers of spatial planning and cohesion policy to adopt the contributions.

We have also proposed to reconsider the integrated territorial development policies. Naturally, it does not call into question the relevance of the NUTS II level for the implementation of the cohesion policy, yet we believe it is necessary to think about the most relevant perimeters for the implementation of truly integrated territorial

development policies with a suitable level of governance. We suggest you to focus on various geographical levels, from population catchment and employment areas to large transnational regions which can extend beyond the borders of the Union, in the neighbouring countries. This could be the subject of a new action if you make such a decision.

Our proposal falls under the implementation of the action plan of the Territorial Agenda and is line with the working methods based on cooperation.

As leaders of these actions within the Territorial Agenda, we have proposed to set up working groups open to the Member States, and to the representatives of the European institutions and major European networks. You have answered in favour of this proposal and we thank you for that. The first meetings of these working groups will be held in the second half of May in Paris.

As from 1 July, the French Presidency will assume this work by integrating it into the programme of its Presidency in view of the meeting of the European Ministers in November. To this end, our work will be based on the network of national contact points on territorial cohesion, created by the last Portuguese Presidency, which we convene several times before the ministerial meeting.