

DG Meeting on Territorial Cohesion, Greek Intervention

“Implementation of the First Action Programme for the implementation of the TA EU”, *INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT*

- Regarding the very useful contributions both of Slovenia and Germany, concerning the indicators and the criteria for monitoring and assessing the progress of the implementation of AP1, we believe that since they have not been thoroughly discussed up to now, there is still work to be done, before we agree on them.

The relevant reference in point 4 of the “proposal of recommendations for the conclusions” should be altered.

- As regards to the discussion on the number of actions included in the AP1, we would like to underline that all the actions and sub-actions it contains have the same value and should not be ranked according to their contribution and significance for the implementation of the lines of action of AP1. AP1 will be accomplished and considered as successful only through the realization of all the actions and sub-actions agreed by the Ministers in Azores. Of course we are all aware of the limited sources of MS, but we have to keep in mind that this procedure, which is an on-going process, was a decision taken by all the responsible participants. If we try to focus on some of them we jeopardize the completion of this “task” and we call into question the whole rationale!

SPECIFIC ACTIONS FROM THE “ AP1”

- Thematic Group on “Energy efficiency – Renewable energy” (EERE), *Action 2.1.a.*

Greece as the lead Partner of the Thematic Group on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy along with its partners in implementation from many M-S, from Sweden, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic, France, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg has the mandate to produce, at the end of the year, a report on the relationship between the energy question by means of energy efficiency and renewable energy and the philosophy and practices of the regional policy, taking into account the territorial cohesion, the relevant documents coming from the last Presidencies, the Territorial Agenda, the Leipzig Charter, The First Action Programme on the implementation of the T.A. and the relevant DG’s paper presented in TCUM’s meeting.

As regards the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter, the significant role of EERE is recognized throughout these documents, since EERE has a clear and significant territorial dimension along with a very serious impact on regional development. Let me just mention that, renewable energy sources, as is the sun and the wind, are primarily local resources that present various opportunities for exploitation.

The maximization of the rational use of energy and the use of renewable energy sources, is a big challenge, under the scrutiny of the territorial/urban dimension.

Debriefing our activities, we have to mention that a draft questionnaire has been set up and distributed among the partners in implementation, for comments. At this point we would like to invite once again our partners in implementation to

contribute, as soon as possible to the final formulation of the questionnaire. Your correspondence will help us to finalize the questionnaire and will allow us to send it to all MS, in order to complete it.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to examine how and to what extent MS have incorporated EERE considerations in their planning. It focuses on the tools that MS use in order to embed their considerations for EERE to their spatial development planning, on the one hand and on the processes of decision making on the other.

At the same time, we have established a contact with the relevant DGs, which will provide valuable national statistical data on energy issues. We consider EU's assistance of great value to our work.

The next step is to use the findings of the questionnaire and produce the first draft report. This part of the work will be implemented during the French Presidency. The analysis of the findings is scheduled to start in September 2008, taking also into consideration the Green Paper for Territorial Cohesion, expected at that time.

Last but not least, we would like to underline that the task to build on the so-called challenges, namely climate change, energy, urban issues and demography, undoubtedly constitutes a really heavy task for all of us. However, it is an innovative initiative that gives us the chance to participate more actively in the dialogue for our common future in the field of cohesion policy.

- *Action 2.1.a.*

In this context, I would like to mention here in brief the initiative of Greece "Euroislands", under the Line of Action 2.3c "Analyze key-dossiers, policies and legislation from the point of view of the Regions with specific territorial constraints- European Islands". This initiative, the First Action Programme (AP1) will use specific targeted consists of a targeted action based on the common acknowledgement of "insularity" and which, using the territorial dimension of cohesion, will present considerations and form policy suggestions regarding the European Islands.

In particular, a study will be carried out within the framework of the ESPON 2013 programme, which bearing the title "The development of the Islands- European Islands and Cohesion Policy" will aim at providing an insight of the particularities, challenges and constraints that islands face. It will also help to reveal the extent to which Cohesion Policy instruments can be implemented in territories presenting specificities and particular characteristics, and will finally try to make policy recommendations, in order to enable the islands strengthen and promote their economic and social role within the European Union.

The lead stakeholder of the project is Greece and the partners, representing national and/or local authorities from Malta, Cyprus, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Finland and Estonia, will all work in close cooperation to provide qualitative and quantitative data, valuable insights, and policy recommendations for the successful completion of the study. In addition, European Organizations such as the CRPM, the Small Islands Network and the European Commercial Chambers of the islands will participate to this initiative contributing with their experience to the completion of the study.

Consequently, this study will comprise a specialized instrument for the local, regional and national authorities; an instrument that will enhance the sustainable development of the European islands.

Territorial Cohesion Process,

Point 3 of the Agenda

The integration of territorial cohesion in the basic texts referring to the cohesion policy, such as the 4th Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, has been confirmed by the recent inclusion of this dimension in the Lisbon Treaty, lending a particular dynamic to the dialogue for the incorporation of the territorial dimension in the European policies.

The recommendations of the Territorial Agenda (TA) and the Leipzig Charter, as well as the actions included in the First Action Programme for the implementation of the T.A. that resulted from the debate on territorial and urban matters during the German and Portuguese Presidency, supports our efforts to make more concrete the content and the various dimensions of the territorial cohesion.

The Territorial Agenda constitutes the agreed framework of collaboration between the Member states aiming in the better comprehension of territorial structures, tendencies and challenges.

At this point, we would like to address the importance of the enhancing of the AP1 with new proposals related to other major EU policies (Rural Policy, Transport Policy, ...), opening substantially, by this way, the discussion on the effects of the sectoral policies on the European territories, in the diverse territorial entities of the E.U.

For us, taking into account the recent major matters in the global scene, 1) the increased economic globalization and the continuing tendency for the concentration of development in the high potential regions, in parallel with the persistence of regional and intraregional inequalities, 2) the EU enlargement and 3) the new global challenges on the climate change, the rising energy prices, the migratory movements, the expanded cities.

the concept of territorial cohesion refers to the reinforcement of the "European territorial capital" and the prospect for balanced and equivalent development of all European regions, with respect to its particularities.

Given the difficulties on the definition of the "territorial concept" and on this time of the ongoing debate and the intense reflection on the future cohesion policy,

we would like to underline some relevant key issues,

the environmental and social protection as well as the enforcement of "ecology" and "culture" as the added values in the process of regional development,

the promotion of polycentric urban development, the enhancement of the local strengths while responding to the need for strengthened urban-rural relations and the improvement of urban "quality",

the specific efforts in order to reduce the territorial disparities emerging from the restructuring of the rural economy.

the sustainable accessibility and the strengthening of the trans-European networks,

the cooperation and networking between the States and the regions, in other words, the transnational and cross-border cooperation,

The specific emphasis to areas that face intense or specific – usually due to its geographical position- problems, which even in the context of cohesion policy seem not to be handled properly. These areas include the urban areas; the islands; the mountain areas; the outermost regions; the border regions – internal and external borders of the European Union,

The vital role of the integrated approach to spatial planning

Since we have agreed, at European level, that one of the distinctive features of the cohesion policy is its capacity to adapt to the needs and to the specific characteristics of the territories, according to the problems or to the opportunities resulting from their geographical situation,

and since we accept that cohesion increases as the disparities between the regions as well as within the regions diminishes,

we can then, argue that the territorial dimension together with the social and economic ones can foster the principle of solidarity and justify the necessity for the accomplishment of cohesion in Europe.