

Territorial cohesion process Latvia

Latvia appreciates that Slovenia presidency has included issue about territorial cohesion in the agenda of this meeting.

We agree with the opinions expressed by Member states and with the efforts of the European Commission and the statement of the European Parliament that **it is vital to achieve an agreement among the involved stakeholders regarding the content of territorial cohesion** – its concept, definition and application.

Therefore we would like to point out following 4 statements:

1. We consider that the concept of territorial development is of a broader scale and pertains to promotion of social and economic development in all EU regions through enhanced efficiency in using the growth potential and resources of particular territories.

Whereas the concept of **territorial cohesion should be applicable to the promotion of social and economic cohesion in less-developed regions of the EU with specific territorial development handicaps** that are characterized by their geographical location, economic and demographic backwardness.

2. Considering the fact that economic disparities among the EU Member States are still significant, we are aware that even upon **adding the territorial dimension to the content of the Cohesion Policy, it is still important to maintain its original objective – reduction of social and economic disparities among regions** and facilitating the development of regions lagging behind.
3. We are emphasizing the fact that the principles for allocating support under territorial cohesion should primarily be based on social and economic criteria.
4. We consider territorial cohesion as a process of social and economic convergence. Spatial planning is the most important instrument in hands of politicians and societies. It creates principles, rules, specific conditions and measures to be undertaken and it allows pursuing sustainable development which makes balance between social, economic and environmental aspects of concrete territory. Spatial planning considers also the best possible use of territorial potentials to ensure their contribution to the economic growth, equal rights for every member of society and needs of people and businesses. Good spatial planning thus is basic element of development and necessary precondition and basis for decisions on implementation of EU SF and initiatives aiming territorial cohesion.