

**Interventions in Item 3 “Territorial cohesion process”
of the Polish delegation presented at the meeting 14 May 2008**

1. What are the objectives of territorial cohesion?

*In the current EU and national policies the **territorial cohesion** complements the economic and social cohesion goals by:*

- ✓ *taking into account the specific characteristics of areas (urban, rural, border regions),*
- ✓ *focusing on development opportunities and strengths of particular regions - thus ensuring the effective targeting of policy instruments;*
- ✓ *promoting better coherence and coordination between cohesion policy and sectoral policies having territorial impact;*
- ✓ *promoting cooperation and networking of regions and cities,*

and by this contribute to the harmonious and balanced development.

At the same time the ESDP¹ as well as the “Territorial Agenda of the EU” identified the thematic priorities of territorial development such as: polycentrism, urban-rural partnership, clusters of innovation, TEN, risk management (also climate change), ecological structure.

However without explicit rules and procedures the real implementation and measuring of territorial cohesion is now difficult to describe and grasp.

The inclusion of territorial cohesion in Lisbon Treaty gives the opportunity to develop this approach and to give more importance to it by clearly defining this concept. So-far reflection on the implications of the Lisbon Treaty with regard to territorial cohesion shows a definition ambiguity (“empty box”, “overfilled box”, etc.). That is way the present treaty provisions necessitate a wide debate on both European and national levels on following topics:

1. **incorporation of the territorial dimension into the cohesion policy, as well as into other Community and national policies;**
2. **elaboration of common understanding of terms, definitions and criteria/indicators connected with territorial cohesion;**
3. **precise determination of its thematic scope:** territorial accessibility, relations between cities and rural areas, access to public services ;
4. **coordination rules and roles of particular actors** of multilevel governance (particularly EC) within the scope of EU territorial development
5. **institutional capacity** at the EU level to use TC as a trigger of better coordination between EU policies .

2. What can be a role of territorial cohesion within cohesion policy?

We underline the need to define the concept of territorial cohesion and to clarify what the territorial cohesion means in the context of Cohesion Policy. From the Polish perspective, expanding the scope of cohesion policy through a territorial dimension is very favourable, i.e:

1. *this may lead to **strengthening cohesion policy importance and enhancing its effectiveness** for the attainment of the pan-EU goals, as well as for its role in such areas as, for example, TEN, rural areas support etc.*
2. **territorial cohesion should be treated as a general principle** complementing economic and social dimensions thus leading to the harmonious and balanced development by taking into account the specific characteristics of areas and focusing on development opportunities and strengths of particular regions.

¹ European Spatial Development Perspective,

3. *territorial cohesion concept could be used to **strengthen coordination of interventions under different EU policies** and as a vehicle for the **integrated approach to the development**. Better coordination between EU policies (on EU level) will give positive effect to the cohesion policy itself.*
4. *Developing the concept of the territorial cohesion implies also a need to set/develop clear **indicators that will enable to measure territorial cohesion** and to show the **impact of the cohesion policy** in this area. In the current debate on the effectiveness of the cohesion policy there appear strong voices that the existing economic and social indicators are not sufficient to show adequately the policy effects. Therefore we consider that new territorial indicators should complement the existing ones to give an overall and more comprehensive picture. In this context we would welcome a reflection and discussion on **possible criteria of territorial nature** e.g. polycentrism, accessibility, interconnection, settlement density.*

All the same, it must be noted that making use of related benefits will be possible only in the case of deepening, also in a domestic context, of the integration of the territorial policy with the social-economic one. (While this is already slowly happening, problems concerning coordination and those of an institutional and legal character are beginning to appear.)

In our opinion there is a need to determine new principles of Cohesion Policy coordination, including the territorial dimension, both at national and Community levels. We see a particular role of the European Commission in this process.

3. What can be a role of territorial cohesion in relation to sectoral policies?

*Territorial cohesion adds to economic and social cohesion the **horizontal dimension**. This is important for the whole EU territory and overall directions of EU policies. In this sense the incorporation of the territorial dimension in other EU policies is necessary. The real impact of sectoral policies (in particular transport, environmental and competitiveness policy), on the territory (**territorial impact**) should be analyzed and taken into account. Therefore **widening the procedure of impact assessment by including territorial criteria** could/should be considered.*

*Territorial cohesion concept could be also used to **strengthen coordination of interventions under different EU policies** by using territory as a starting point.*

*Thus territorial cohesion could be a vehicle for the **integrated approach to the development activities** carried out within various EU policies, contributing to defining their objectives in most effective way allowing for the complementarities and synergies of activities. This should lead to reformulating a strategic thinking by **shifting an accent from a sectoral policy approach** (line-approach) **to a task-approach** (problem/ challenge -approach) and allowing for a **better co-ordination and synergies of Community policies objectives according to the territorial criteria**.*

4. What is the role of spatial planning in territorial cohesion concept?

*Spatial planning could be one of the instruments to implement and achieve the territorial cohesion. The debate on territorial cohesion is the right time to deeply analyze the necessity of **elaboration a common vision of spatial development of EU territory as an useful reference framework for other EU policies**. This will provide an opportunity that complex, multi-dimensional and sometimes conflicting objectives of other EU and national sectoral policies are strategically consolidated in a common framework taking into account territorial dimension.*