Follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter - Towards a European action programme for spatial development and territorial cohesion

2007/2190(INI) - 23/01/2008 - ${summary.subTitle}

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the report by Ms Gisela KALLENBACH (Greens/EFA, DE) on the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter (towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion).

The Territorial Agenda of the EU and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities were both adopted at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for spatial planning and urban development, held in Leipzig on 24-25 May 2007.

- The objectives set out in the Territorial Agenda are the establishment of a balanced urban system and the creation of a new urban-rural relationship, the formation of innovative regional clusters, ensuring parity of access to infrastructures and knowledge, the promotion of trans-European risk management, sustainable development, forward-looking management and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.
- The objectives set out in the Leipzig Charter are: making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches by creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces, modernising infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency, promoting innovation and educational policies and ? particularly in deprived neighbourhoods ? promoting sustainable, efficient and affordable urban transport, pursuing strategies for upgrading the physical environment, strengthening the local economy and local labour market policy, and proactive education and training policies for children and young people.

Members consider that the objectives of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter can only be achieved by pursuing a comprehensive, cross-sector, holistic development strategy to put the integrated approach into practice. They propose, in this context, to analyse to what extent the implementation of an integrated approach might be a binding requirement for programme planning and project selection under the Structural Funds.

The report calls on the Commission and Council to take the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter into account in their review of the general budget of the European Union, and to make qualitative adjustments to enable territorial cohesion targets to be incorporated more effectively into EU policies. MEPs believe that legislative measures need to be taken in the next few years to achieve this.

The Council and Member States are called upon to fully involve local and regional governments, including cross-border public authorities, and, in pursuit of the partnership principle, to involve the economic and social partners, relevant NGOs and private stakeholders in the action programmes for implementing the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter.

Recalling the key role that access to information and communication technologies plays for the future development prospects of the regions, the report recommends integrating infrastructure, such as broadband cables, into new transport and communication programmes. The report also acknowledges that high quality pre-school and school education, lifelong learning, universities and other research institutes, are fundamental for the future development of cities and regions.

Members emphasise that demographic trends lead to new challenges on the labour market, in access to social and health services and housing and in planning, in general. They point out that the ageing of the population can be seen as an opportunity for creating new jobs in a growing market and new products and services, which improve the quality of life of older people.

The report also calls on the Member States to guarantee, as a matter of principle throughout their territory, the availability of, right of access to and accessibility of services of general interest. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of disadvantaged groups such as the disabled, immigrants, ethnic minorities, the long-term unemployed and people with few qualifications, as well as the particular needs of women.

Lastly, MEPs insist that efforts be stepped up to improve integration and social and territorial cohesion, particularly by overcoming defects in the built environment and by improving environmental conditions, while pursuing a balanced development policy for urban areas. They call for better integration of deprived neighbourhoods and ask the competent authorities of the Member States to identify the warning signs of decline in particular areas and to increase efforts to implement a policy of social integration to reduce inequalities and prevent social exclusion.