

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

2007/2190(INI) - 21/02/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by 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.

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 the context of the mid-term review of cohesion policy, and with an eye to post-2013 cohesion policy, that the implementation of an integrated approach might be a binding requirement for programme planning and project selection under the Structural Funds. To that end, they call on decision-makers to undertake voluntarily to implement new cooperation methods.

The resolution calls on urban and rural authorities in cooperation with all public and private stakeholders to identify their common assets and produce joint regional and sub-regional development strategies in order to secure better living conditions and quality of life for all citizens of the Union. It also 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. Legislative measures need to be taken in the next few years to achieve this.

The Council and Member States are called upon to involve fully 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.

Parliament recalls the key role that access to information and communication technologies plays for the future development prospects of the regions, and thus recommends, as mentioned in the Territorial Agenda, integrating infrastructure such as broadband cables into new transport and communication programmes. It 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 resolution 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.

MEPs insist that efforts be stepped up to improve integration and social and territorial cohesion, particularly by overcoming defects in the built environment. They recommend that Member States give priority to internal urban development rather than external, in other words that they prioritise the re-use, or use for new purposes, of existing buildings, mainly by means of sustainable land management, before building on new land. The Commission is asked to explore more effective mechanisms to support local authorities in developing strategies for integrated transport networks, particular in less developed regions. Members 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.

Parliament welcomes the fact that the Treaty of Lisbon declares territorial cohesion alongside economic and social cohesion to be a Treaty objective and provides for shared legislative competence between the EU and the Member States in this area. Reflecting its resolution on the 4th report on Cohesion (see [INI/2007/2148](#)), it highlights the fact that there is no commonly agreed definition of territorial cohesion yet and therefore urges the Commission to define clearly territorial cohesion and to list the objectives for territorial development in the European Union in its forthcoming Green Paper on territorial cohesion.