Territorial Agenda 2030

#TerritorialAgenda
A future for all places

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The Territorial Agenda was revised and negotiated between summer 2019 and summer 2020. In the course of this time the COVID-19 pandemic has changed policy making and future development outlooks. As implications and responses vary across territories, the pandemic shows that territory matters and that our territories are highly interdependent. Territorial development policies and the cooperation on joint objectives are essential to increase the resilience of municipalities, regions and countries, and strengthen their recovery processes.
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I. Preamble

We, the Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion, in cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank Group and relevant European and national associations, have reviewed the Territorial Agenda launched in 2007 and updated in 2011. We agree on the Territorial Agenda 2030.

We encourage our colleagues in neighbouring countries to take note of the Territorial Agenda and join in putting it into practice at European, transnational, macro-regional and cross-border levels. They are welcome to use the Territorial Agenda within their countries at national, regional and local levels, and in cooperation with other countries.

We encourage all players involved in spatial planning and territorial development policies at all administrative and governance levels in the EU and neighbouring countries to put the Territorial Agenda into practice. The Territorial Agenda applies to all (types of) places, focusing on mutual relations and people’s well-being.

The Territorial Agenda draws on the conclusions of the ESPON ‘State of the European Territory Report’ (2019), the ESPON ‘European Territorial Reference Framework’ (2019) and the European Commission’s ‘Seventh Cohesion Report’ (2017). It also takes into consideration recent reports on spatial planning, territorial cohesion and territorial development, Cohesion Policy and the territorial dimension of sector policies from the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and ESPON.


The Territorial Agenda provides an action-oriented framework to promote territorial cohesion in Europe. Promoting territorial cohesion is a European Union aim introduced by the Treaty on European Union (Art. 3, TEU). Territorial cohesion means promoting a balanced and harmonious territorial development between and within countries, regions, cities and municipalities, as well as ensuring a future for all places and people in Europe, building on the diversity of places and subsidiarity. It enables more equal
opportunities, incl. access to public services, for people and enterprises, wherever they are located. At a smaller scale these aspects are addressed in the New Leipzig Charter. Territorial cohesion reinforces solidarity to promote convergence and reduce inequalities between better-off places and those with less prosperous future perspectives or lagging behind. Territorial cohesion helps all places to perform best possible utilising their own assets. This benefits Europe as a whole and each individual country.

The Territorial Agenda provides strategic orientation for spatial planning, underlines the importance of strategic spatial planning, and calls for strengthening the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels. It seeks to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Europe.

It is essential to limit inequalities which hamper Europe, countries and thriving municipalities and regions to build on their success. This can only be achieved by paying more attention to the diversity of places in Europe, along with their development potential and challenges.

While revising the Territorial Agenda, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed policy making and future development outlooks. As implications and policy responses vary across territories, the pandemic shows that territory matters and that our territories are highly interdependent. Territorial cohesion should play an important role in the recovery process. Territorial development policies and the cooperation on joint objectives are essential to increase the resilience of municipalities, regions and countries, and strengthen their recovery processes.

In line with the TFEU (Art. 174, 175 and 349), all Union policies and actions should contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion. Working towards sustainable territorial cohesion and limiting inequalities between people and between places requires joint efforts. For this, sector policies, municipal, regional, national, EU and other authorities, as well as various groups of society need to come together. They need to cooperate to find an optimal balance between inclusiveness, competitiveness and resilience through participative, integrated territorial development.

Municipalities and regions might need external support to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Among others this is supported by both EU Cohesion Policy and Rural Development Policy under the Common Agricultural Policy, their objectives and investments in all regions. This is of particular relevance for territories with less prosperous future perspectives, territories lagging behind, and territories suffering from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps.

The European Green Deal and its Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and Just Transition Mechanism as well as related EU sector policies offer the opportunity to promote synergies between the Territorial Agenda and overarching EU strategies and policies. The Green Deal links green and just transition objectives, as it aims at combating territorially unevenly dispersed effects of the energy transition, climate change impact and of environment related challenges, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and thereby improving the overall territorial balance in Europe. This is in line with the idea of territorial cohesion and the place-based approach building on the diverse potential of all places.
We call on those involved in territorial development and strategic spatial planning at all levels to take on board the Territorial Agenda priorities. Furthermore, we call on those responsible for designing and implementing sector policies – at all levels of governance – to take the priorities of the Territorial Agenda into consideration. Coherence between all EU, national and sub-national policies is important for territorial cohesion. Most policies have significant territorial impacts and influence development opportunities of territories in different ways. Coordinated and place-based policies can significantly increase coherence and effectiveness of policies and reduce negative effects as the result of conflicting policies.

We call upon decision makers in Member States, regions, metropolitan areas, cities, towns, rural areas and other places to contribute to inclusive and sustainable futures for all places and people. Places with common potential or challenges can collaborate in finding common solutions. Places with complementary potential can explore their comparative advantages together and thereby create additional development potential. We shall facilitate their ability to develop more effective policy responses through closer cooperation.

The place-based approach to policy making contributes to territorial cohesion and polycentric development. It is based on horizontal and vertical coordination, evidence-informed policy making and integrated territorial development. It addresses various levels of governance (multi-level governance approach) contributing to subsidiarity. It assures cooperation and coordination within society involving citizens, civil society, businesses and knowledge centres. It ultimately aims to unleash unique territorial potential related to place-based capital, knowledge and assets, whilst recognising the need to have tailored solutions for different types of territories. The development and implementation of European, national regional and local strategies with a place-based approach will contribute to long-term development and competitiveness for places.

The Territorial Agenda and the New Leipzig Charter share the place-based approach, policy coordination and effective multi-level policy frameworks as common principles. The Territorial Agenda advocates these as overarching principles for all places and policy sectors. The New Leipzig Charter provides guidance for applying these in cities, urban areas, their functional regions, and peri-urban areas. We therefore support strengthened cooperation between and across spatial levels, including urban-rural partnerships. As set out in the New Leipzig Charter, the principles of good urban governance and quality design ensures attractive, inclusive, durable, adaptable places which contribute positively to making places more pleasant and attractive for people to work, live and enjoy. It is essential public authorities plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design when considering development in our cities, towns and villages.

We call upon communities and societal groups across Europe to contribute to overcoming growing development differences between people and between places. Building bridges between people with different incomes, educational backgrounds, cultures, traditions and religions is key to keeping Europe together. We shall facilitate cooperation and increase solidarity between groups of society to reduce segregation and promote social inclusion as well as use diversity as an asset for everyone’s well-being.
The diversity of places in Europe is an underused potential. Place-based policy making can help release untapped potential. Joining efforts across sector policies, governance levels, places and societal groups is essential for an inclusive and sustainable Europe that offers future perspectives for all people and places, protects common livelihoods and shapes transitions.

II. Why we need to act

Recent studies e.g. from ESPON, the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and other international, national and regional players, highlight that Europe faces major economic, social and environmental challenges but also has great potential to improve living conditions in all places and for all people. This requires policy responses with a strong territorial dimension and coordinated approaches acknowledging and using the diversity and specificities of places.

Europe consists of different types of places, such as capital regions, metropolitan areas, small and medium-sized towns, peri-urban areas, rural areas, inner peripheries, peripheral areas, northernmost areas, sparsely populated areas, islands, coastal areas, mountainous areas, outermost regions, cross-border regions, macro-regions, areas of demographic decline and areas in economic transition. These have very different development potential and challenges. At all levels, from sub-local to pan-European, economic and social disparities between places and between people as well as environmental risks and pressures increase. These are driven by economies of scale, imbalanced access to markets and qualified labour, disparities in quality of governance and in public services. Furthermore, the links and flows between places, especially along corridors, affect differently the possibilities to realise potential or respond to challenges.

Quality government and governance

The quality of government and governance processes is an important cross-cutting principle for local, regional, national and European development. It matters for the well-being of society and is a pre-requisite for long-term sustainable increases in living standards, investments, social trust and political legitimacy. Cooperation across sector policies and levels of government and governance, as well as engagement of local communities are essential for the development and implementation of integrated place-based strategies. Continuous capacity building at all levels is particularly important to enhance better implementation of the strategies in a participatory manner.

As highlighted in the Seventh Cohesion Report, the quality of government and governance at all levels varies across Europe. The largest differences are between countries, with variations also within countries. Poor quality of government and governance risks to diminish marginal utility and returns on investments in infrastructure, human capital and technology in an area.

People and places drift apart – increasing imbalances and inequalities
Europe’s changing social and economic geography is accompanied by increasing inequalities, in particular the intra-regional ones where in some countries the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, driving apart people and places. Some groups of society and communities have the perception that European and national objectives and outlooks do not address their concerns and prospects. This is expressed in the debate about the ‘geography of discontent’. Indeed, widening social and economic disparities in Europe have a spatial dimension, e.g. segregation within towns, cities, rural areas or regions, as well as places within countries or within Europe drifting apart. Increasing inequalities and disparities lead to a considerable diversity of future perspectives, which seem to be more promising for some than for others. The Territorial Agenda emphasises these challenges and brings them to the attention of policy makers.

Action is needed for:

• **Quality of life**: The underlying objective of all public policies should be to increase citizen well-being and quality of life. Well-being and quality of life go beyond economic performance, living standards and purely material aspects. They include among others also access to quality public services, freedom of movement and healthy environments. They have a territorial dimension ranging from disparities between neighbourhoods such as social exclusion, to disparities between regions and countries.

• **Services of general interest**: The accessibility, proximity, affordability and quality of public services is important to quality of life and business development. Needs for greater cost-effectiveness and efficient public management drive services to withdraw or cluster in certain locations. At the same time, expectations of service availability and quality increase. Differences in access to services of general interest risk driving service providers, enterprises and social activities to relocate to areas with better access in the medium to long run. New technologies for online services can reduce the sensitivity of peripheral areas to such relocation pressures. At the same time, there are increasing challenges in access to affordable housing in some areas, e.g. temporary accommodation and tourism services significantly reducing the housing stock, to homelessness, gentrification and social exclusion.

• **Demographic and societal imbalances**: Ageing, domestic and intra-European migration, including depopulation, pose challenges to Europe’s welfare systems and to local and regional development. These demographic dynamics have severe social implications including increased social exclusion and inequalities, as well as challenges for public service provision, labour markets and housing. Ageing and migration point to further concentration in urban areas along with depopulation for mainly rural and peripheral areas. This especially concerns remote areas that lack access to public services, economic and social opportunities. Extra-European migration flows, including outmigration of young and talented people and immigration of refugees, may exacerbate these challenges.

• **Digitalisation and the 4th industrial revolution**: Digitalisation and disruptive technologies will shape economic and societal development in Europe. The 4th industrial revolution will lead to fusions of technologies and blur the lines between physical, digital and biological systems and transforms the labour market. Economic concentration and an emphasis on new technical solutions rapidly rolled out globally increasingly create ‘winner takes all’ economies. This gives a new topicality to regions and
urban agglomerations in economic transition. Public authorities and decision makers need to innovate constantly and engage in stakeholder dialogues to prepare for transitions and shape policies effectively – taking into consideration data protection and privacy rights, digitalisation of government, and the European way of digital transformation. Divides in education, digital skills and broadband access are a major factor to increased territorial inequalities. Especially elderly and people living in rural and remote areas are often at the risk of being excluded from digital transformation processes.

- **Employment and economic development**: Local and regional economies in Europe are highly interconnected and interdependent through complex value chains. Economic and employment prospects are affected by local development conditions beyond the influence of local, regional, national and European decision makers. In particular, places with higher levels of competitiveness, research, development and innovation activities, access to good education, high skilled labour force, financial and investment capacity, good entrepreneurial and natural environments tend to have better economic performance and employment opportunities. This reinforces the relative position of better-off places compared to other places and further perpetuates disparities and imbalances. Another aspect is the importance of the urban system for growth and development.

- **Interdependencies between places**: While some places in Europe are drifting apart, there are also growing interdependencies between places. These positive and negative externalities mean developments in one place affect potential in another. Changes in one part of Europe can affect other parts of the continent. These interdependencies are most visible in economic concentration and increasing disparities between flourishing (often metropolitan) areas and declining (often rural) areas. It is visible in the persistent core-periphery division in Europe and nationally. Internal and especially EU external borders have disparities and differences in legal, social and political systems that affect local and regional development. Barriers to integration can result in underutilised human, cultural, economic and ecological resources in border regions, exacerbating their peripheral position and social exclusion.

- **Global embeddedness**: Europe is highly interwoven in the global economy. Local and regional development in Europe is affected by global strategies and geopolitical and socio-economic developments beyond the influence of local and regional decision makers, including dynamics in Eurasia and the Mediterranean. Many European citizens and enterprises participate in worldwide social and economic networks. Consequently, development in European regions, metropolitan areas, cities and towns is linked to other places and the flow of goods, services, investment, people and ideas around the world. In short, exogenous developments influence development perspectives for places in Europe. The potential and vulnerabilities linked to global developments are not equally distributed across Europe. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of global supply chains and the lack of resilience of several economic sectors and territories.

- **Sustainable development and climate change – increasing pressures on the environment**

- Global sustainable development challenges are highly relevant for local and regional development and the living conditions in Europe. This especially concerns climate change, environmental degradation and the
transition to a climate-neutral economy. The growing urgency to address climate change, resilience and transition to more sustainable development is emphasised widely in political and societal debates as underlined by the United Nations ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ and strategically translated into an EU agenda by the European Green Deal and in the European Semester country reports. A transition to sustainable development holds different potential and challenges for different types of rural areas, towns, cities and regions.

Action is needed for:

- **Climate change**: The impacts of climate change vary considerably across European geographical regions with different impacts and degrees of vulnerability. The increased risks of sea-level rise, heat waves, drought, desertification and other land and soil degradation, floods and other natural hazards call for place-based responses, cooperation and coordination of policies. Climate change mitigation and adaptation actions can even bring new development opportunities for places. This can concern agriculture, the bioeconomy, green / blue / circular economy and renewable energy production. Climate change impacts as well as mitigation and adaptation actions depend on the territorial context and require tailor-made responses at all levels.

- **Loss of biodiversity and land consumption**: The rapid man-made loss of biodiversity poses severe risks to ecosystems and long-term living conditions. This affects livelihoods, quality of life and local and regional economies. Increasing land and coast take and use, soil sealing and urban sprawl reduce open spaces, biodiversity and fertile soil, and contribute to urban heat islands impacting the functioning of ecosystems. At the same time, in some places abandoned, derelict, underused sites offer potential for land use changes.

- **Air, soil and water quality**: This is essential for human well-being. Air pollution, noise, contaminated soil and polluted ground and surface-water bodies cause serious health problems that can correlate with social inequality. Disparities in access to clean air, water and soil exist not only between countries and regions but also between urban and rural areas, as well as inside towns, cities and metropolitan areas.

- **Secure, affordable and sustainable energy**: European citizens and enterprises need access to sustainable, secure and affordable energy supplies. This is important for local and regional development. Significant imports from third countries vulnerable to economic or political instability increase problems for energy security. Volatile energy prices and rising emissions highlight the need for sustainable and resilient solutions such as renewable energy, greener, decarbonised economic activities and other measures increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy consumption. Insufficient energy infrastructure and dependence on existing networks call for diversified energy production and supply, as well as energy market development and integration.

- **Just transition**: Achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050 requires decarbonisation actions all over Europe. The economic, environmental and social costs of this transition are particularly high for territories and populations most heavily dependent on fossil and highly greenhouse gas emitting industries. The objective of just transition is to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral
economy happens in a fair way, leaves no one and no place behind, and delivers a high quality of life for all.

(43) • **Circular value chains:** Circular economy is an important aspect and objective of the transition to a carbon/climate-neutral economy. The circular economy aims to close material and energy loops through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing and recycling. Industrial symbiosis processes in regional value chains are important. The transition of Europe’s economies towards a place-based circular and carbon/climate-neutral model has a territorial dimension and can strengthen functional regions. The economic prosperity of places depends on the competitiveness and creativity of their enterprises and start-ups as well as on local assets, characteristics and traditions, cultural, social and human capital and innovation capacities. In general, urban areas are better positioned to pick up related trends than sparsely populated areas and inner peripheries which often lack critical mass. Towns and smaller cities as well as places with high levels of craftsmanship might nevertheless benefit from the circular economy in terms of repair, reuse and sharing activities at local and regional level.

(44) • **Nature, landscape and cultural heritage:** Natural and cultural heritage are local and regional development assets that offer unique opportunities for development and high-quality living environments. Sustainable use of resources should benefit local communities and promote local business opportunities. Overexploitation of these assets however can threaten a local or regional economy. Urbanisation, intense agriculture and fisheries, energy production, transport and other infrastructure developments, particularly when uncoordinated, can cause severe problems. Increased and uncoordinated exploitation of maritime space and marine resources may impact sustainable development. Changes in land and sea use, urbanisation and mass tourism threaten cultural assets and landscapes and may fragment natural habitats and ecological corridors.

(45) **Need to act**

(46) In Europe, increasing inequalities between places and between people as well as unsustainable developments have reached a critical level. They risk hampering Europe, its countries and thriving municipalities and regions to build on their success. It is time for concerted action at all geographical and governance levels to ensure positive future perspectives for all people, communities and places in Europe. It is time to better understand and adequately address territorial impacts of sector policies. We seek to contribute to sustainable development and to keeping Europe together by delivering on the following territorial priorities for Europe.
III. Territorial Priorities for Europe

Action is needed to ensure a sustainable future for all places and people in Europe. Actions must be based on

- a common understanding that development needs and impacts of future developments differ between places in Europe, the common understanding can be increased e.g. through exchange of knowledge and experiences as a solution and how to support these actions; and

- cooperation and coordination between places, levels of governments, policy sectors and groups of society to address complex issues and utilise diverse potential, e.g. through Cohesion Policy, Rural Development Policy, Interreg, or other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development.

We therefore define two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, which have six priorities for developing the European territory as a whole and all its places:

1. A JUST EUROPE that offers future perspectives for all places and people

The priorities for a Just Europe underline the territorial dimension and spatial planning contributions to overarching policy priorities, such as economic, social and territorial cohesion, the European Pillar of Social Rights, a Europe closer to citizens, a more inclusive, sustainable and integrated development of places, Just Transition and territorial integration in Europe.

1a. BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development utilising Europe’s diversity

Europe’s territorial diversity offers considerable development potential. This can contribute to better-balanced territorial development, counteracting excessive concentration in Europe, strengthening secondary growth poles and reducing inequalities between people and between places. Cooperation in polycentric networks of cities and regions contribute to spreading development potential more evenly. Therefore, we will take action to encourage neighbourhoods, communities, municipalities, counties, regions and Member States to cooperate on improving working, living and business conditions in all places as well as strengthening socio-economic prosperity, innovation capacity and global competitiveness across Europe.

Polarisation between Europe’s core and its periphery, its capitals, metropolitan areas, cities, towns, rural areas and areas with geographic and demographic specificities undermines a better-balanced territorial development. Especially, small and medium-sized towns have underexploited potential to cushion polarisation. They play a crucial role in economic development and social well-being at regional level, especially with regards to national and international accessibility and adequate access to services at local and regional level. Polycentric networks can also contribute to more sustainable transport including replacing short distance flights, where appropriate. We invite policy makers from all levels to promote polycentric development models that offer a role for all places.

Europe has diverse territories, such as coastal zones, islands, mountainous areas, inner peripheries, plains, river valleys and lake basins. All these territories have unique development challenges and potential though the remoteness and distinct characteristics of outermost regions mean they face particular development
challenges. We will take action to encourage decision makers at all governance levels to unleash the unique potential of territories with specific geographies and adequately address the constraints of these areas through integrated and cooperative approaches.

1b. FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Local and regional development, less inequality between places

Cities and towns of all sizes are motors of economic and social development and attractive places for living, working, visiting and investing. Cooperation and networking within and between cities, towns and their surrounding areas in the same functional region create development perspectives for all places. Such functional regions often break with existing administrative delineations, differ according to functional character and interconnection, are highly dynamic and can shift over time. Decision-makers in cities and towns looking beyond their administrative borders at functional regions and cooperating with their surrounding areas can help their places serve as motors for intra-regional growth. This is to the benefit, rather than expense, of their surrounding communities and rural areas. Together cities, towns and their surrounding areas can ensure a healthy and affordable living environment and avoid further urban sprawl. We will search for dialogue with decision-makers in cities and towns of all sizes to apply an integrated multilevel governance approach. This means involving people from different governance levels, in particular local and regional ones, policy sectors and groups of society.

Europe has diverse urban, peri-urban, rural, peripheral and sparsely populated areas. Some of these suffer from segregation or face severe depopulation. Their development is closely related to their unique local characteristics and relationships with other places, accessibility and access to public services, education opportunities and internet connections, diversified economic activities and entrepreneurship as well as their ecological functions and ecosystem services. At a smaller scale these aspects are addressed in the New Leipzig Charter. We will engage with local and regional decision makers to strengthen cooperation on long-term place-based strategies for these areas and address sustainable functional links between neighbouring areas, e.g. through spatial planning, instruments of EU Cohesion Policy, Rural Development Policy and other relevant EU policies, such as integrated territorial investments (ITI) or community-led local development (CLLD - LEADER) or any other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development. These may already be effectively present in the territory.

1c. INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Living and working across national borders

Territorial and maritime cooperation between places in different countries helps make better use of development potential and address common challenges. Joining forces beyond borders, including Interreg programmes and projects, can create critical mass for development, promote synergies and diminish economic, social and environmental fragmentation and negative externalities. This concerns ecosystems, natural and cultural heritage, labour markets, public service provision and city networks divided by internal, external, land or maritime borders. We will take action to embed stable cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in macro-regional, national, regional and local development strategies. Strategic Interreg cooperation, Horizon Europe cooperation, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), mainstream cohesion policy programmes, macro-regional strategies, inter-metropolitan, functional regions, cross-border planning and legal cross-border agreements are examples of stable approaches that facilitate
cooperation between administrative areas which go beyond single cooperation projects. Furthermore, we support the development of new strategic documents, where needed.

(60) Still today there are many legal and administrative obstacles to deepening cooperation beyond borders. We will intensify dialogue with policy makers at all governance levels to coordinate national sector policies between countries and diminish existing obstacles to cooperation.

(61) 2. A GREEN EUROPE that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

(62) Green Europe priorities underline the territorial dimension and spatial planning contributions to overarching policy priorities such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the European Landscape Convention, the EU Forest Strategy, Europe fit for the digital age, sustainable mobility and a fully integrated European transport network, as well as the transition to a circular economy in Europe and the application of an ecosystem-based approach.

(63) 2a. HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions

(64) Ecosystems, including agricultural, forest, grassland, fresh water and marine ecosystems, are fundamental to human existence and important for long-term sustainable development. It is a joint responsibility to ensure that they are sustainably accessible to the wider public, well-functioning, resilient, enhanced, in healthy conditions and generate income for local populations and businesses. This helps mitigate climate change, combat the loss of biodiversity and ensure the provision of ecosystem services and raise public awareness of all the above. Integrated management is particularly important, taking into consideration different geographical specificities. We support the development of nature-based solutions and green and blue infrastructure networks that link ecosystems and protected areas, in spatial planning, land management and other policies.

(65) Climate change and the loss of biodiversity risk eroding livelihoods. Risk and disaster management as well as prevention measures are important to building resilient communities. We will respect the natural limits of Europe’s common livelihoods and increase the resilience of all places impacted by climate change. This can be done by developing local and regional strategies for climate-neutral towns, cities and regions. Possible mitigating and adaptive actions include promoting sustainable land-use, open spaces and public green, restoration of degraded land and coast, combatting deforestation, preserving oceans and water bodies, preventing urban sprawl and urban heat islands, implementing green infrastructure, improving air quality, no net land-take by 2050, strengthening the delivery of ecosystem services, and improving the integration of terrestrial and maritime spatial planning.

(66) Europe’s natural and cultural heritage is a unique and diverse asset to be protected, managed and further developed. Areas rich in natural and cultural heritage or unique landscapes need to make best use of these assets and their untapped potential. They need to balance nature conservation, sustainable use of natural resources and economic development, e.g. by creating environmentally friendly jobs, fostering community
growth and well-being, or working with innovative social entrepreneurs. We will concentrate on strengthening awareness and empowering local and regional communities to protect, rehabilitate, utilise and reutilise their (built) environments, landscapes, material and immaterial cultural assets and other unique values, e.g. through instruments of Cohesion Policy, spatial planning or any other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development. These may already be effectively present in the territory.

2b. CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world

Circularity means managing material, water and energy flows. It includes reusing and recycling products such as buildings, building materials or wastewater based on life-cycle assessment, and energy renovation of buildings. The transition of Europe’s economies towards a place-based circular and carbon/climate-neutral economy depends on the competitiveness and assets of local and regional players. In a globalised economy, this implies a need to build industrial symbiosis processes which bring together global competitiveness and local assets. We support Europe’s transition to a circular economy and the development of place-based industrial symbiosis processes, also taking into account the need for sustainable soil and land use.

To better utilise Europe’s multifaceted territorial assets for the transition to a circular economy we support the development of local and regional circular economy strategies linking local and global economies. These strategies should build on local assets and the capacity to innovate and combine energy and economic transition processes for a place-based circular economy, including through smart specialisation strategies. European research and innovation policies such as Horizon Europe or the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe can play an important role toward the circular economy transition.

Local products, markets, business environments, training, entrepreneurship, increased self-sufficiency and local communities are important for resilient local economies, and create benefits for the environment. Diversified local economies help reduce vulnerability to external forces and assist energy and economic transition processes. We will encourage the diversification of local economies and efforts to strengthen innovation capacities in all regions, including local strategies for energy transition and measures in the building, transport and bioeconomy sectors.

2c. SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS: Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

Physical and digital connections are important for Europe’s societies and economies and pose major environmental challenges. Therefore, smart sustainable forms of transport and connectivity are needed, especially to support the priorities of a balanced Europe and functional regions.

The transition to a sustainable digital society can support decentralised and sustainable developments. The possibility for e-inclusion, where people, enterprises and places benefit from digitalisation, depends on fair and affordable access to high-quality internet and next generation mobile phone connections and digital skills – while taking into consideration sustainability and health issues. This particularly concerns access to e-governance and e-services of general interest affecting the quality of life and competitiveness of places. We will invite relevant players to enter into a dialogue on the need for adequate access to high-speed fixed and mobile communication networks in all places, and the need for a digital infrastructure with a low carbon
footprint and low impact on human health. This can help achieve adequate living and business conditions across Europe.

(73) In a globalised economy, access to intermodal freight and passenger transport is important for all places in Europe. To achieve climate, air pollution and noise objectives, efficient and environmentally friendly transport solutions are ever more important. This includes all transport modes individually, as well as combined transport. We will further improve links between regional planning and the development of Trans-European Networks (TEN), especially along core network corridors. Linking all places with major transport nodes supports international trade connections and local development opportunities. Cohesion Policy and Connecting Europe Facility will be important to achieve this.

(74) Secondary and local transport networks which link to transnational networks and urban centres are essential for the quality of life and for business opportunities. This is a particular concern for towns, rural, peripheral areas, sparsely populated areas, islands, mountain areas and outermost regions. We will invite spatial and transport planners to explore new socially and environmentally progressive models for local and regional mobility-as-a-service and to cooperate on multimodal and environmentally friendly accessibility of and within urban centres, e.g. through instruments of EU Cohesion Policy, sustainable urban mobility plans or any other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development. These may already be effectively present in the territory.

IV. Putting priorities into action

(76) The priorities spelled out in the Territorial Agenda 2030 need to be supported by the actions of committed players. Only then can Territorial Agenda priorities and concerns over spatial inequalities and the societal transformation toward a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately. Taken together, the actions should strengthen

- multi-level governance;
- coordination of sector policies in terms of their territorial impacts and coherence;
- cooperation between territories;
- territorial cohesion at European level;
- territorial cohesion at cross-border, transnational, inter- and intraregional level; and
- Member State and neighbouring countries contributions to territorial cohesion.

The above points are closely related to the five principles of good urban governance outlined in the New Leipzig Charter, namely urban policy for the common good, integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance and place-based approach.

(77) Calls on key players

(78) Application of the Territorial Agenda relies on informal multilevel cooperation between Member States, sub-national authorities, the European Commission, European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and other
relevant players. Application of the Territorial Agenda would benefit from cooperation with those in charge of the Urban Agenda, the New Leipzig Charter and EU Cohesion and Rural Development Policy, and the EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies.

- **Member States jointly in intergovernmental cooperation** will strengthen cooperation on Territorial Agenda priorities at European level with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Investment Bank. Every second year Member States will discuss the progress of the application of the Territorial Agenda, e.g. initiatives and actions, at a meeting of the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP). Findings on the progress of the application will be discussed at the meetings of the Directors-General on Territorial Cohesion (DGTC). To strengthen dialogue on the interplay between territorial development and sector policies, DGTC meetings could include a joint session with a corresponding meeting from policy sectors of territorial relevance.

- **Member States individually** will take steps to promote the Territorial Agenda priorities and engage relevant players in all sector policies and at all levels of government. This includes promoting and/or embedding the Territorial Agenda in national spatial planning, Partnership Agreements and programmes for EU Cohesion Policy and other EU funds, as well as in other relevant contexts. It includes also informing about the Territorial Agenda and working towards territorial cohesion at national level together with sector ministries, sub-national authorities and civil society players.

- **Sub-national authorities and bodies**, including those at local and regional level and their national associations, are invited to apply the Territorial Agenda and take steps to engage relevant players. This includes considering Territorial Agenda priorities in their spatial planning and overarching development strategies and policies, as well as taking inspiration from pilot actions and coming forward with own proposals for new pilot actions. In particular they are encouraged to cooperate with neighbouring territories and places facing similar potential or challenges, and with the main actors involved. In addition, sub-national authorities are invited to take an active role in regional, national and European debates concerning the application of the Territorial Agenda.

- **European Commission** is invited to contribute to the Territorial Agenda priorities and further strengthen its efforts to promote territorial cohesion in Europe, the territorial dimension in EU policies, and to coordinate sector policies. This may include strengthening the territorial dimension in the European Semester and the Impact Assessments using available tools to assess territorial impacts and stronger stakeholder involvement, as well as further promoting – under Cohesion Policy and other relevant EU policies – integrated territorial development, uptake of relevant tools and instruments, and territorial cooperation.

- **European Parliament** is invited to note the Territorial Agenda and to consider its priorities in the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) and other committees and intergroups which have a territorial dimension. This may include advocating Territorial Agenda priorities in EU legislative processes.] (tbc)
• **European Committee of the Regions** (CoR), as the European Union’s advisory body formally representing regions and municipalities at EU level, is invited to contribute to the implementation and further development of the Territorial Agenda. To this end, the CoR is in particular invited to inform its members about the Territorial Agenda and the state of play of its implementation and to encourage local and regional authorities in Europe to apply the Territorial Agenda, cooperating with neighbouring territories and places, learning from the pilot actions and coming forward with own proposals for new pilot actions. The CoR is also invited to promote through its consultative work, where relevant, the objectives of the Territorial Agenda at European level, and to promote the uptake and further development of territorial tools and instruments such as territorial impact assessments, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), and integrated territorial development under EU Cohesion Policy.

• **European Economic and Social Committee** is asked to inform its members about the Territorial Agenda priorities and encourage them to cooperate in implementing the Territorial Agenda. This includes underlining the importance of civil society partners to ensure a sustainable future for all places and strengthening CLLD, and any other tool facilitating integrated territorial development and cooperation. In addition, they are asked to advocate Territorial Agenda priorities in policy debates at European level. (tbc)

• **European Investment Bank Group (EIB)** is asked to reflect the priorities and relevant actions of the Territorial Agenda as appropriate in its lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach, taking into account the need to support sustainable territorial development strategies without jeopardising its financial discipline. Since the EIB can play an important role in financing sustainable investments of all sizes in areas covered by the Territorial Agenda, it is invited to contribute to pilot actions, in particular to support the development of better funding approaches in the territorial context in complement to the European Commission. This can include supporting place-sensitive investments through lending, grant-loan blending and advising Member States and key players about territorial project preparation and implementation and the use of financial instruments.

• **European and national associations** addressing spatial development and/or representing local and regional governments are invited to inform their members about the priorities of the Territorial Agenda, and encourage them to apply the Territorial Agenda, cooperate with neighbouring territories and places, learn from the pilot actions and come forward with own proposals for new pilot actions. In addition, they are encouraged to advocate the objectives of the Territorial Agenda in relevant policy debates at transnational and European level.

(79) **Implementation through dedicated actions**

(80) Actions putting the Territorial Agenda into practice can be taken at any governance level and can vary in character and focus. Every key player is asked to take action implementing the Territorial Agenda in the context of their regular mandate. Only then can spatial inequalities and the societal transformation toward a carbon/climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately.

(81) To inspire actions across Europe, pilot actions show, test and develop practices which contribute to achieving Territorial Agenda priorities. These actions mirror the increasing recognition of the importance of
place-based policies by showing how the territorial dimension of regional, national and European policies can be actively addressed. They focus on learning, sharing best practices, joint working groups developing ways forward, or on implementation. Everybody is encouraged to closely follow them, take inspiration and come forward with proposals for new actions. Actions addressing priorities of the Urban Agenda, New Leipzig Charter and Territorial Agenda can strengthen the link between urban and territorial policies.

Coordination

The activities of the Territorial Agenda will be coordinated by meetings of the Directors General on Territorial Cohesion (DGTC), prepared by the National Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP), and supported by Territorial Agenda Working Group (TAWG). A focal point within an existing structure could support the coordination process and Presidencies of the Council of the EU in the monitoring of activities and basic communication on the Territorial Agenda.

Coordination activities of the Territorial Agenda 2030 will

- endeavour that activities and pilot actions are transparent, conceived with and supported by (representatives of) Member States, sub-national players and the European Commission, mutually reinforcing and optimally impacting EU and national policy making;
- regularly review progress on implementation and pilot actions of Territorial Agenda 2030; and
- communicate Territorial Agenda objectives and priorities as well as progress in implementation to relevant players at sub-national, national and European level.

Follow up

The forthcoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU are asked to follow up on the Territorial Agenda 2030 and further strengthen its communication, application and governance:

- **Communication** on the progress of the application of the Territorial Agenda and marking the occasions of the 25th and 30th anniversary of the European Spatial Development Perspective (1999) in 2024 and 2029 and the 20th anniversary of the Territorial Agenda (2007) in 2027.
- **Application** of the Territorial Agenda including a discussion on the progress of the application of the Territorial Agenda and the progress of the pilot actions and the initiation of new pilot actions.
- **Governance** with a focus on a stocktaking in 2024 including reviews of the governance system, progress of the implementation and relevance of the priorities. This will be conducted in the light of the preparations for the EU Cohesion Policy post-2027. The Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2025 is invited to organise an informal ministerial meeting, informing a decision on the possible renewal of the Territorial Agenda 2030.