

Subject: Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee - Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. Turning territorial diversity into strength

Reaction by the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy – REVES aisbl

REVES welcomes the initiative of a Green Paper on territorial cohesion from the European Commission.

REVES notices that the European Commission preferred not to report the definition on territorial cohesion embodied in the third report on social cohesion. Nevertheless, it is of fundamental importance to overcome existing ambiguity in understanding of the meaning of territorial cohesion. This would be eased by a proposed definition.

Introductory remarks

- The convergence of social and economic conditions between territories is one of the key objectives of the EU. It has to be pursued with even more conviction.
- The aim of such a process must be to enhance the capabilities of territories, intended as communities living in specific geographic areas, to be able to establish links and ties with other territories.
- This should bring to seek a balanced relationship among territories, based more on cooperation and sharing of a common vision than on competitiveness.
- **Such balanced relationship could be reached through the establishment of common value-based and mutually recognised approaches and methods of local governance, as in the case of the TSR® (Territorial social responsibility), an approach developed by REVES¹.**
- **Such new technology of local (territorial) governance should bring together all local citizens and stakeholders, with a clearly defined division of roles, able to integrate the existing methods with processes of participatory democracy.**
- **Social Economy, in partnership with local and regional authorities, must play a pivotal role in the process of social and economic cohesion in the territory and among the territories,** as it provides links between public and the private concerns.
- The existing difference between access to goods and services and access to rights must always be kept in mind, in order not to create any disadvantaged areas.
- Considering these points of view, territorial cohesion must play a key role in getting citizens closer to the European construction.
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Responses to Questions

1. What is the most appropriate definition of territorial cohesion?

In the REVES-TSR vision, territorial cohesion is associated to the building of ties between territorial communities based on cooperative paths, collaborative distribution of tasks (wherever possible) and solidly behaviour. Territorial cohesion should not be separated from social cohesion, intended as the patrimony of

¹ "Guidelines for a tsr® process", by Martignetti, Giunta, Schlüter and others, Mesogea, Messina, 2006.

links between the members of a community finalised to the good and well organised life of the community itself. Territorial cohesion should be defined as correct social relationship among different communities, based on shared and mutually recognised values.

2. What additional elements would it bring to the current approach to economic and social cohesion as practiced by the European Union?

Economic and Social cohesion should be deeply linked to the creation of territorial capabilities allowing territorial communities to establish deep links to each other. In this view, it is of key relevance to distinguish between access to goods and services on the market and access to fundamental rights, which should always be considered as a key policy concern, at local and at EU level.

3. Scale and scope of territorial action

According to the subsidiarity principle, scale and scope of territorial actions should be adapted to the aim pursued and the task to be performed. Example: While the definition of key values should be carried out at the level that is closest to citizens, coordination among local communities should be performed at regional level.

8. What role should the Commission play in encouraging and supporting territorial cooperation

The Commission should encourage territorial cooperation both in a legal and structural way. Regarding the legal context, it should clarify possibilities and limits of new forms of cooperation in the EU legal structure, and propose possible way of enhancing them, through wide consultation. Regarding structure and methods, the Commission should promote the elaboration of new techniques of cooperation among territories and condition the access to resources by the capacity to cooperate in new forms such as strong European networking.

16. New territorial partnerships

New public private social partnerships (PPSP) have to be developed in order to contribute to the process of local programming (conception of policies and of programmes). Such partnerships should be built around community-defined values and should be able to pursue objectives in a strategic way (i.e. by taking into consideration multiple issues). They must therefore overcome the limits of PPP by embodying the social concern in the wider sense.

17 Does the pursuit of territorial cohesion require the participation of new actors in policy-making, such as representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders, voluntary organisations and NGOs?

Social Economy (in its wider definition) guarantees the continuity between public and private concern, by embodying these two aspects in its daily activities. This actor therefore has a pivotal role to play in the new model of governance, in partnership with local authorities. Social Economy based PPSP (Public-Private Social Partnerships) should be active since the starting up of participatory processes aimed at individuating the key territorial values, and continue in the conception of cohesion policies crossing such values with the national and EU context.