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*Committee on Regional Development*

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## **DRAFT REPORT**

on Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state for the debate on the  
future reform of Cohesion policy  
(2008/2174(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state for the debate on the future reform of Cohesion policy (2008/2174(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Fifth progress report on economic and social cohesion - Growing regions, growing Europe (COM(2008)0371),
  - having regard to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion - Turning territorial diversity into strength (COM(2008)0616),
  - having regard to Articles 158 and 159 of the EC Treaty,
  - having regard to the Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (COM(2007)0273)
  - having regard to the Territorial Agenda of the EU and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, and the implementation of the Action Programme of the Territorial Agenda,
  - having regard to its resolutions of 21 February 2008 on the fourth report on economic and social cohesion<sup>1</sup> and on the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion<sup>2</sup> and to its resolution of 21 October 2008 on governance and partnership<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the report by the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) entitled Territorial Futures – Spatial scenarios for Europe and that of the European Parliament Regional Disparities and Cohesion: what Strategies for the Future?
  - having regard to the conclusions of the Conference on territorial cohesion and the future of cohesion policy held in Paris on 30-31 October 2008,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A6-0000/2008),
- A. whereas the Lisbon Treaty, which enshrines territorial cohesion among the fundamental objectives of the Union alongside economic and social cohesion, has not yet been ratified by all EU Member States;
- B. whereas the concept of territorial cohesion has always been implicit in cohesion policy since its inception and at the core of its development; whereas the Lisbon Treaty and the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion have managed to make this concept more visible and

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<sup>1</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2008)0068.

<sup>2</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2008)0069.

<sup>3</sup> Texts Adopted, P6\_TA(2008)0492.

explicit;

- C. whereas cohesion policy has already been successful in creating important synergies with other Community policies with the aim of increasing their impact on the ground and for the benefit of European citizens and synergies that established between cohesion policy and research and innovation or the Lisbon strategy represent success stories that have delivered tangible positive results;

#### **State of the debate on the future of EU cohesion policy**

1. Endorses the main conclusions of the public consultation on the future of EU cohesion policy, as presented in the Fifth Progress Report on economic and social cohesion; is satisfied by the great interest that different stakeholders in the field of regional policy have already attached to this debate;
2. Notes with pleasure that these conclusions correspond to a very large extent to the view expressed in its resolution of 21 February 2008; recalls that this resolution represented the first contribution of the Parliament to the public debate;
3. Observes that the view expressed in its above-mentioned resolution of 21 February 2008 includes the rejection of any attempt for re-nationalisation and the commitment to a single Community policy, which should also be in a position to address common challenges like globalisation, climate and demographic change, migration, energy efficiency; the strong belief that this policy should cover all EU regions, by representing an added value for everyone; the need to set priorities in the spending of EU structural policies and actions and the endorsement of the "earmarking" exercise; as well as the need for synergies on the ground and an integrated approach between the different sectoral policies in order to achieve the optimal result for growth and development on the ground;
4. Believes that territorial cohesion is central to the development of EU cohesion policy; considers, therefore, the debate on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion to be directly linked to the future reform of EU regional policy;

#### **Assessment of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion**

5. Strongly welcomes the adoption of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion by the European Commission, which responds to a long-standing demand of the European Parliament; fully endorses the decision to proceed with the analysis of "territorial cohesion", which has long been at the forefront of any debate on regional policy, despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty has not yet been ratified;
6. Considers that the Green Paper lacks ambition to the extent that it does not provide for a clear definition of territorial cohesion, and does not, therefore, advance significantly the understanding of this new concept; regrets, moreover, that the Green Paper does not explain how territorial cohesion will be integrated in the existing framework of cohesion policy and be made operational for the next programming period;

7. Welcomes the analysis contained in the Green Paper which defines three key concepts that should be central to the development of territorial cohesion: concentration, connection and cooperation; considers that these concepts can provide the solution to some basic obstacles that hinder the harmonious development of the Union, like the negative effects associated with the concentration of economic activity, the inequalities in terms of access to markets and services that result from distance, and the divisions that are imposed by boundaries between Member States but also regions;
8. Welcomes the launching of the public consultation on territorial cohesion, as requested in the Green Paper; considers that the success of any public consultation is directly linked with the widest possible participation of the different stakeholders and civil society; calls on the competent national and local authorities to disseminate without delay the relevant information, in order to raise awareness about the importance of this new concept;
9. Considers the coordination of all sectoral Community policies that have a strong territorial impact to be central to the development of territorial cohesion; regrets, therefore, that the relevant analysis in the Green Paper is confined in listing these EU policies without suggesting ways of improving synergies between them or even methods to actually measure the territorial impact of these policies;
10. Agrees with the approach of not including any references to possible budgetary and financial implications of territorial cohesion in the Green Paper and the public debate; considers that such an analysis would be premature until the concept itself is clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders; suggests that these considerations should be made in the framework of the next financial perspectives;

#### **Analysis of the concept of Territorial Cohesion**

11. Endorses the position of the Green Paper that territorial cohesion is about ensuring the harmonious development of places with different characteristics and specificities, and about making sure that their citizens are able to make the most of inherent features of different territories; places emphasis on the fact that territorial cohesion is a horizontal concept that underpins the development of the Union as a whole by turning diversity into an asset of all its regions; strongly believes that territorial cohesion should prevent the prospect of an asymmetric Union;
12. Believes that territorial cohesion is a distinct concept that should provide tangible added value to economic and social cohesion; stresses that the three component parts of cohesion (economic, social and territorial) should be complementary and mutually reinforcing, albeit maintaining their own separate mission in a single integrated concept; considers, therefore, that there should be no hierarchy between these objectives;
13. Welcomes the conclusions of the research by ESPON on future development scenarios for the European territory until 2030, which bring tangible data in support of the policy debate on the shape of EU and national policies, so as to create the right instruments to avoid polarisation and depopulation of EU territories and develop optimal conditions for a quality life for their citizens;

14. Emphasizes that one of the main objectives of territorial cohesion is to ensure that progress and growth generated in one specific territory should provide benefits for the whole region and across the EU territory; considers, in this respect, that excellence centres and clusters of research and innovation are vital to economic success, scientific discovery, technological innovation and jobs and that more interaction and knowledge transfer should be stimulated between those centres and their surrounding regions;
15. Emphasises the single market's vital contribution to economic, social and territorial cohesion; stresses the importance of public services in relation to sustainable economic and social development as well as the need for socially and regionally equitable access to services of general interest; takes the view that in light of the subsidiarity principle and of EU competition law, responsibility for defining, organising, financing and monitoring services of general interest should rest with the national, regional and local authorities; considers however that a reflection on the fair access for citizens to services should be included in the debate on the territorial cohesion;
16. Notes that the Green Paper acknowledges the particular development challenges of regions with specific geographical features, such as mountainous regions, island regions and sparsely populated regions; also notes that border regions face specific policy challenges in terms of accessibility, quality and efficiency; rejects the view that territorial cohesion should be a policy exclusively dedicated to addressing the problems of those regions; considers, however, that special consideration should be given to the development of those regions in order to offset their handicaps and enable them to effectively contribute to the harmonious development of the Union as a whole;
17. Believes that territorial cohesion should not only be limited to the effects of EU regional policy on the European territory, but to also be concerned with the territorial dimension of other sectoral Community policies with a strong territorial impact; underlines, in the context of territorial cohesion, the importance of improving synergies between the different Community policies in order to coordinate and maximise their territorial impact on the ground; notes, however, that all Community policies will always keep their autonomy, and that this process does not imply the subordination of one policy to another;

### **Recommendations for the future of territorial cohesion**

18. Expects that a clear definition of territorial cohesion should result from the public consultation, which will be commonly agreed, shared and understood by all stakeholders in the field; considers that this definition will provide clarity and transparency and should focus on the added value that territorial cohesion is expected to bring in the traditional framework of cohesion policy;
19. Strongly urges the Commission to proceed with the publication of a White Paper on Territorial Cohesion, following the end of this consultation process; believes that a White Paper will be instrumental in consolidating the notion of territorial cohesion as well as proposing concrete provisions and policy actions, which should be introduced in the post-2013 legislative package on Structural Funds;

20. Expects that the three concepts of concentration, connection and cooperation, on which the Green Paper's analysis on territorial cohesion was based, need to be further developed and translated into concrete policy options; urges the Commission to explain how these concepts will be integrated into the post-2013 legislative framework;
21. Calls for a significant reinforcement of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective for the next programming period; is convinced of the European added value of this objective, not least because of the direct involvement of regional and local authorities in the planning and implementation of the relevant programmes of cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation; to that effect, stresses also the importance of the cross-border dimension and the relevant operational programmes of the European Neighbourhood Policy;
22. Is of the opinion that territorial cohesion should develop as a horizontal principle that underpins all Community policies and actions; believes that the evolution of the principle of sustainable development and environmental protection should serve as an example on how to integrate territorial cohesion in the future development of all relevant Community policies;
23. Stresses the need to elaborate, in the context of territorial cohesion, additional qualitative indicators with the purpose of better designing and implementing the corresponding policies on the ground, taking into account the different territorial specificities; underlines, however, that the GDP remains the only eligibility criterion for receiving financial assistance from the Structural Funds;
24. Believes that in order to better coordinate the territorial impact of sectoral Community policies, there needs to be a better understanding and measurement of those impacts; urges, therefore, the Commission to proceed with a territorial impact assessment of those policies; expects that the Commission will also present concrete ways of creating synergies between these territorial and sectoral policies;
25. Reiterates its long-standing request for the development of a comprehensive EU strategy for regions with specific geographical features, which will enable them to better address problems and challenges they are facing; believes that an EU strategy should also be concerned on how to adapt Community policies to the specific needs and assets of these territories;
26. Underlines, however, that the elaboration of additional indicators and the conduct of territorial assessments should not lead to more bureaucracy or further delays in the implementation of new policies and actions in support of territorial cohesion; stresses the need for direct results resulting from the incorporation of territorial cohesion in the next set of Structural Funds programmes;
27. Urges the Member States to intensify their efforts to meet the objectives of the heading 4 of the First Action Programme for the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union in creating knowledge on territorial cohesion and sustainable spatial planning, building perspectives and analysing impacts and acknowledges the central role played by ESPON in this process;

28. Notes with great interest that the 5th Progress Report makes for the first time specific reference to "Transition Regions", which are situated between "Convergence Regions" and "Competitiveness and Employment Regions"; acknowledges the need to deal separately with these regions that are now scattered as "phasing in" or "phasing out" regions between the two Objectives; calls on the Commission, in the context of territorial cohesion, to establish a more comprehensive system of gradual transitional assistance to regions that will soon be above the 75% GDP threshold, in order to provide them with a clearer status and more security in their development;
29. Considers that taking an integrated approach will have a greater chance of success if the regional and local authorities, as well as stakeholders who can provide an overall view and understanding of the needs and specificities of a given territory, are involved from the beginning in the designing and implementation of the development strategies of each territory;
30. Recognises that territorial cohesion introduces some new ideas on how to improve the governance of cohesion policy; agrees with the view that different territorial scales are needed for different problems and that therefore the establishment of real partnerships between all the parties involved in regional and local development at different levels is a precondition in the process of designing territorial cohesion and calls on the Commission and Member States to make all efforts to develop such a multi-level territorial governance; considers that territorial cohesion should be about identifying the appropriate territorial level for addressing each policy or measure;
31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

This initiative report responds to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and also includes some general considerations about the state of the debate on the future EU cohesion policy, as presented in the Fifth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion. It provides an analysis of the Green Paper and brings forward some initial ideas in response to this important policy paper. The Committee on Regional Development believes it is important that the European Parliament adopts a clear view not only on the understanding and role of territorial cohesion, but also on the future of EU regional policy.

### **Background**

In its own-initiative report on "The role of territorial cohesion in regional development" (rapporteur: Ambroise Guellec), adopted in plenary on 28 September 2005, the European Parliament urged the European Commission to proceed promptly with the publication of a "White Paper on Territorial Cohesion". At that time, this was a clear indication on the side of the European Parliament, that the concept of "territorial cohesion" would be instrumental to the future development of EU regional policy. For that reason, it needed to be properly defined. The inclusion of "territorial" alongside "economic and social" cohesion in the Lisbon Treaty (Article 3 TEU and Article 174 TEU), further consolidated this concept, which nonetheless remained somewhat unclear in its definition, methods and approach.

However, since the 90s, a general debate on territorial cohesion has already been in progress. In 1999, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) initiated a process leading up to the 2007 adoption of the "Territorial Agenda of the European Union" by the EU Ministers responsible for spatial planning and urban development. These policy documents placed great emphasis on the role that territorial cohesion would be called to play in ensuring a harmonious, sustainable development across the Union. The European Parliament responded positively to this approach in its report on the "Follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter" (rapporteur: Gisela Kallenbach), reiterating its request for a clear definition of territorial cohesion in the forthcoming Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion.

### **State of the debate on the future of cohesion policy**

The results of the public consultation on the future of EU cohesion policy are presented in the Fifth Progress Report on economic and social cohesion. This progress report consists of two parts. The Parliament can endorse the main conclusions of this consultation process (for which more than 100 contributions were received). They correspond entirely to the positions adopted in the EP's report on Fourth Cohesion Report (rapporteur: Ambroise Guellec). Those include the rejection of any attempt for re-nationalisation and the commitment to a single Community policy, which should also be in a position to address challenges like globalisation, climate and demographic change. The report also expresses the strong belief that this policy should cover all EU regions, by representing an added value for everyone, and not just the poorest convergence regions. It also stresses the need for synergies and an integrated approach between the different sectoral policies in order to achieve the optimal result for growth and

development on the ground.

### **Content of the Commission's Green Paper**

The European Commission finally adopted the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion on 6 October 2008 with the title "Turning Territorial Diversity into strength". The paper does not provide a definition of "territorial cohesion"; instead, it launches a wide consultation with regional, local authorities, associations, NGOs, civil society aimed at furthering the shared understanding of this new concept and its implications for future EU regional policy. To do this, it provides a list of concrete questions that cover different aspects including a definition. This public consultation will be open till the end of February 2009.

According to the Green Paper, territorial cohesion is about ensuring the harmonious development of all EU territories, and about making sure that their citizens are able to make the most of the inherent features of these territories. The Green Paper suggests that diversity should actually be transformed into an asset and competitive advantage that contributes to the sustainable development of the entire EU. The main challenge is thus to help territories make the best use of their assets. For that purpose, the Green Paper acknowledges that effective solutions often require an integrated approach and cooperation between the different authorities and stakeholders involved. It also makes special reference to the need for improved governance of cohesion policy in order to make it more flexible and capable of adapting to the most appropriate scale of intervention needed.

The Green Paper focuses on the need to ensure a balanced urban-rural development and suggests means to avoid depopulation and urban sprawl. It elaborates on three key concepts, on the basis of which specific policy actions need to be developed: concentration, connection and cooperation:

- ❖ **Concentration** brings advantages such as higher productivity and creativity, but also has negative effects especially in terms of environmental costs, congestion, land prices and social exclusion. Thus, territorial cohesion is about building on gains stemming from concentration, but also avoiding excessive concentrations of growth and facilitating the access to the increasing returns of agglomeration in all territories.
- ❖ **Connection** highlights the need to move toward an integrated Europe which offers fast and efficient access to markets, services and people. This includes transport, but also infrastructures underlying the effective functioning of the Single Market - such as those guaranteeing access to health and education, to broadband internet or to energy networks. All these connections remain unevenly distributed across the Union today.
- ❖ **Cooperation** has always been an important pillar for cohesion policy. The Green Paper argues that even more needs to be done in that respect, in order to address issues that are cross-border by nature and range from commuting to environment. This cooperation should occur at many levels and involve new partners.

The Commission also acknowledges the particular development challenges that three types of regions with specific geographical features (mountains, islands, sparsely populated areas) face, and looks at whether special policy measures are required in order to offset these

problems. Finally, the Commission highlights a number of sectoral EU policies, which have a strong territorial impact (e.g. transport, energy, first pillar of CAP, employment, environmental), pointing to the importance of creating synergies between them.

### **General remarks by the rapporteur**

#### *A. THE GREEN PAPER*

- **Adoption of a Green Paper**: The rapporteur welcomes the adoption of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, as it responds to a long-standing demand of the European Parliament. Despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty is not yet ratified and, therefore, “territorial cohesion” does not currently have a formal Treaty basis, this Green Paper provides for a first analysis of this concept that will be a key priority for the Union, alongside economic and social cohesion.
- **Definition**: This Green Paper, however, lacks ambition to the extent that it does not provide a concrete definition of this new concept, as originally anticipated. In concrete terms, this implies a further delay in making operational the notion of "territorial cohesion". It should be stressed that the European Parliament expected a clear definition of territorial cohesion to result from the public consultation, which will be commonly agreed, shared and understood by all stakeholders in the field of regional policy.
- **Public consultation**: In that sense, the rapporteur welcomes the launching of a public consultation on territorial cohesion. The success of this process being directly linked with the widest possible participation of the different stakeholders and civil society in this debate, the Members of the European Parliament have also an active role to play in contributing effectively to promoting the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion to the European Citizens.
- **Awaiting the publication of a White Paper**: The rapporteur believes that the European Parliament should be firm in demanding the publication of a White Paper on Territorial Cohesion, following the end of the consultation process. The rapporteur also considers that the publication of a White Paper could only pave the way for translating "territorial cohesion" into concrete provisions, which should be introduced in the next legislative package on Structural Funds for the post-2013 programming period.
- **Financial aspects**: The rapporteur agrees with excluding all references to budgetary and financial implications of territorial cohesion from the current debate. He considers that the position by the European Parliament should rather confine to the political aspects of this new objective and to reflect at a later stage on whether, how or to what extent this new concept might affect the EU budget for the post-2013 period.

#### *B. THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORIAL COHESION*

**Analysing the new concept**: The rapporteur believes that territorial cohesion is a distinct concept that should provide tangible added value to economic and social cohesion. The three component parts of cohesion (economic, social and territorial) should be

complementary and mutually reinforcing, maintaining however their own separate mission in a single integrated concept. Therefore, there should be no hierarchy between these objectives. The current debate should not only attempt to determine the added value of territorial cohesion, and the concrete benefits that European citizens are expected to derive from its implementation on the ground, but also to consider how this concept will be mainstreamed into future EU regional policy.

Rejecting the prospect of an asymmetric Europe: The rapporteur feels that the harmonious development of the Union will effectively contribute to raising the competitive advantage of the EU economy. Therefore, territorial cohesion can only be interpreted as a horizontal concept that underpins the development of the Union as a whole. The challenge is to focus on more efficient instruments that can achieve this goal. The work of the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) is particularly important to that effect, as it attempts to present the implications of different development models on the territorial development of the EU. This work should also lead to the elaboration of additional qualitative indicators to address the territorial specificities and support the design and implementation of the corresponding policies on the ground;

Transfer benefits across the Union: This idea becomes particularly salient with regard to the creation of excellence centres across the Union that are vital to economic success, scientific discovery, technological innovation and jobs. It is important to stimulate more interaction and knowledge transfer between the centres and clusters of research and innovation and their surrounding regions. Such booming centres should provide benefits that are distributed evenly across the EU territory, in order to maximise the effect of the investments made.

Making the most of the potential of each region: There is no "one-size-fits-all development" model for the European Union, which would work equally well for all its regions. The diversity of the Union is actually its strength. It is important to determine the assets of each European region and build on those, in order to increase their competitiveness and guarantee growth and prosperity. The rapporteur considers very important in that respect the contribution of former Finnish Prime Minister Esko Aho in a recent article he published in the Financial Times (published on 16/07/2008). Mr Aho argues that the European Union needs to focus on creating "Silicon Valley" type of clusters across the Union. It is crucial to focus resources to a few existing clusters, rather than only scattering the money far and wide, with limited chances of success. In other words, not every region has the potential or the resources to become a centre of excellence; this is not the objective that we should try to achieve. EU should limit its approach in that respect.

Enhancing the European Territorial Cooperation Objective: The undeniable European added-value of this objective has already been proven beyond any doubt. The direct involvement of regional and local authorities in the planning and implementation of the relevant programmes of cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation gives another positive sign to the future development of this policy objective. The importance of the cross-border dimension and the relevant operational programmes of the European Neighbourhood Policy should also be highlighted in that respect. This is a success story

for the EU regional policy and it should be significantly boosted for the coming programming period.

Regions with specific geographical features: The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion acknowledges the particular development challenges especially for three types of region: mountainous regions, island regions and sparsely populated regions. The European Parliament has long called for a comprehensive strategy that would enable these regions to offset their severe and permanent natural and demographic handicaps. Therefore, special consideration should be given to the development of those regions, in order to ensure precisely a harmonious development for the Union and achieve "territorial cohesion". However, the rapporteur stresses that territorial cohesion remains a horizontal concept that concerns all EU regions; it cannot be interpreted as a new policy for regions with specific geographical features.

Territorial impact of sectoral Community Policies: The rapporteur is disappointed that this specific section of the Green Paper is confined in listing the EU policies that have a strong territorial impact, without, however, placing territorial cohesion as a priority objective or a precondition for the development of these policies. The European Parliament has on a number of occasions supported the need for an integrated approach of all EU actions and policies on the ground. In policy terms, it can be argued that this idea corresponds entirely to the need of coordinating the territorial impact of all sectoral community policies on a given territory. At the same time, however, the following observation needs to be made: by putting the accent on the territorial dimension of other sectoral EU policies, the European Parliament does not attempt to diminish the importance and autonomy of EU regional policy. On the contrary, the aim of an integrated approach is to maximise the effect of structural interventions on the ground and for the benefit of European citizens.

Territorial governance: The Green Paper looks at an improved territorial governance as the key for the successful future implementation of cohesion policy. Drawing from the conclusions of the report on "Governance and partnership at national and regional levels and a basis for projects in the field of regional policy" (rapporteur: Jean Marie Beaupuy), adopted by the EP on 18 September 2008, the rapporteur raises the need to promote a system of multi-level governance and to determine the appropriate territorial level to which intervention would be more effective at the different stages of programme planning and implementation. Due account being also made to the importance of creating new territorial partnerships, which must be at the focus of all relevant analyses on the Green Paper.

Transition regions: The rapporteur notes that the Commission made for the first time in the 5<sup>th</sup> Progress Report a specific reference to "Transition Regions", which are situated between "Convergence Regions" and "Competitiveness and Employment Regions". This appears to be a first attempt to deal separately with these regions that are now scattered as "phasing in" or "phasing out" regions between the two Objectives. The rapporteur fully endorses this approach in the context of territorial cohesion, not only because it gives a clearer status to these regions, but mainly as a recognition to the fact that a more comprehensive system of gradual transitional assistance to regions that will soon be above the 75% GDP threshold needs to be designed and put in place.

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion also alludes to a number of other issues that have to be taken into consideration, like access to services of general interest or the creation of additional indicators to better monitor characteristics and trends in territorial cohesion. The report brings forward the rapporteur's views on all these matters.

### **Conclusion**

The present report formulates a number of considerations on the reference communications by the Commission and addresses suggestions to the Commission, Member States and regional and local authorities with the scope of preparing the ground for a better understanding of what territorial cohesion could be and what would be the implications for all parties involved of the integration of the territorial dimension in cohesion policy.

However, more importantly, the report is expected to consolidate a position of the European Parliament in the Europe-wide debate on territorial cohesion, as this debate will influence greatly a larger debate on the future of regional and cohesion policy after 2013 and the shape of the structural funds in the next programming period.