



Atlantic Arc Commission
Territorial Cohesion Working Group

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MINUTES

List of participants

Francisco SABINO	CCDR-Alentejo Portugal
Fátima MALHEIRO	CCDR-Lisboa e Vale do Tejo Portugal
Nuno ALMEIDA	CCDR-Norte Portugal
Jean-Michel ARRIVÉ	Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine
Sheila ZECOVIC	Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine
Christophe LE FOLL	Conseil Régional de Basse-Normandie
Julie MICLOT	Conseil Régional de Basse-Normandie
Mikel ANTÓN ZARRAGOITIA	Gobierno Vasco
Rafael HUESO VICENT	Gobierno Vasco
Helen RICHARDSON	Hampshire County Council
María José RODRÍGUEZ CARBAJAL	Principado de Asturias
Manuel CARRERO DE ROA	Principado de Asturias
Raquel GONZÁLEZ DACAL	Xunta de Galicia
Hélène DONNART	ATN (CESR Limousin)
José Luis RUIZ GARCÍA	ATN (CES País Vasco)
Arantza LÓPEZ DE MUÑAIN	ATN (CES País Vasco)
Benoît CUVELIER	CAAC (Nantes Métropole)
Fabien MESCLIER	Atlantic Arc Commission
Damien PÉRISSÉ	CPMR

1- Welcome: After the welcome speech given by Mikel Antón Zarragoitia, Director of European Affairs of the Basque Government, the two co-chairing regions of the Territorial Cohesion Working Group, Basse-Normandie and Asturias, introduced the agenda and items to be addressed during the meeting.

2- State of play of the Green Paper consultation at European level

Presentation of the work led by CPMR: Damien Périssé, Director at the CPMR General Secretariat, presented the CPMR's activities related to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion. The policy position paper (PPP) was due to be adopted at the next CPMR Political Bureau meeting on 23 January 2009 in Aarhus (Denmark) before being sent out to the European Commission and all other relevant actors in February.

In order to prepare this reaction and to feed into the debate at European level, the CPMR had established close links with the European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, French Presidency and European Economic and Social Committee.

The policy paper was divided into three parts. Part one consists of general comments reaffirming the fundamentally political character of territorial cohesion and calling for the consultation on the Green Paper to be followed up by the publication of a White Paper. Part two focuses on the political approach to territorial cohesion. The CPMR recalls here the very close link between cohesion policy and territorial cohesion while regretting the confusion made between territorial cohesion and regional development. It also regrets that issues related to governance are no longer developed through its multi-sectoral and multi-level aspects. The CPMR also recalls that although the concept of territorial cohesion is of course applied as a priority to Regions with specific handicaps, it also concerns all Regions, hence the CPMR's proposal to create a European territorial pact. Finally, part three refers to the link between territorial cohesion and EU sectoral policies, e.g. cohesion policy, the CAP, transport, energy, climate change, research and innovation, etc.

Following this presentation, Christophe Le Foll from Basse-Normandie Region expressed his concern about the possibility of territorial cohesion "dying a third death" (after the adoption of the 2007-2013 regulations and the still unratified Lisbon Treaty) with this now "minimum" notion of the concept of territorial cohesion by the EU. He also stressed that it was important not to set territorial cohesion against competitiveness. Finally, he asked Damien Périssé to specify the concept of the European territorial pact.

Maria José Rodríguez from the Principality of Asturias also asked for details on the notion of a European territorial pact. Moreover, she recalled that in the White Paper on Governance published several years previously, the European Commission had made some interesting proposals on new forms of partnership such as tri-partite contracts. It would be useful to look at what had worked, and where it had not, the reasons for failure.

Damien Périssé explained that the European territorial pact was a fundamentally political concept designed to give concrete form to the debate on territorial cohesion. There was therefore no set definition as yet. This should emerge from an analysis of past experiences (tri-partite contracts, open coordination method), of sectoral policies and also from a contribution from the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament. It went without saying that the European Commission would also be feeding into the debate.

Benoît Cuvelier from Nantes Métropole asked why the notion of polycentrism did not appear in the CPMR's contribution. Damien Périssé explained that, though no explicit reference had been made to it, this was indeed one of the values defended by the CPMR. He agreed that it should be added into the text.

Jean-Michel Arrivé from Aquitaine Region considered that the Atlantic Arc Commission's contribution should distinguish itself from that of the CPMR by adopting an approach related to the specific characteristics of the Atlantic area. He also upheld the idea that cohesion policy and sectoral policies should not be opposed. With regard to future territorial cooperation, Jean-Michel Arrivé felt that this should not be developed to the detriment of mainstream cohesion policy. Damien Périssé affirmed that the CPMR agreed with this approach and referred to the initiative on *Regions for Economic Change* which showed that things were moving in the right direction. Taking the discussion further, Jean-Michel Arrivé said that he was convinced of the need to move on to a new and more ambitious stage in cooperation where cooperation areas would be used to deliver EU policies. If no thought was given to this issue, he believed that territorial cooperation would be destined to disappear after 2013.

Rafael Hueso from the Basque Government spoke of the relevance of the ESPON studies mentioned in the Green Paper but regretted that the paper failed to mention regional development strategies, which illustrated how the concept of territorial cohesion was being implemented. He approved Aquitaine's suggestion for cooperation areas to be places where EU policies are defined, implemented and decided.

Maria José Rodríguez from Asturias deplored the fact that specific geographic characteristics in the territories lacked definition, taking as an example the mountainous regions in the Atlantic area.

Her colleague, Manuel Carrero de Roa, stressed the closely-knit urban network of medium-sized towns specific to the Atlantic area.

Draft opinions of the Committee of the Regions and European Parliament

Damien Périssé gave a brief presentation of the two draft opinions, explaining that on the whole their content was along the same lines as the CPMR's contribution

Julie Miclot from Basse-Normandie Region wondered about the fact that the Committee of the Regions was wishing to review the existence of transnational cooperation areas and felt that the Atlantic Arc Commission should fight to strengthen this type of cooperation within the Atlantic area. Sheila Zecovic from Aquitaine Region thought that before stepping up cooperation, changes needed to be made for it to be more effective. Moreover this should not represent the only instrument for territorial cohesion. Jean-Michel Arrivé agreed with this idea and explained that the example of the Baltic Sea strategy initiated by the European Commission was an embryo of what future territorial cooperation could be.

3 - Results of the Atlantic questionnaire on the Green Paper

Fabien Mesclier, Executive Secretary of the Atlantic Arc Commission, presented the results of the questionnaire sent out to all Atlantic actors involved in cooperation (Atlantic Arc Commission, CAAC, AC3A, ATN and RUOA - see Powerpoint presentation).

Manuel Carrero de Roa from the Principality of Asturias believed that it was essential to give a concrete definition to territorial cohesion. He considered that the concept went beyond an idea of equal opportunities and services throughout the European territory or solidarity. Reference should be made also to a notion of circulation of persons, goods, knowledge, etc. within a territory allowing it to withstand external shocks. Finally, a territorial cohesion policy was only possible if it was reflected in coherent spatial planning designed to promote balanced and harmonious development.

4- Presentation of a first draft of the Atlantic contribution to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion

Fabien Mesclier resumed the first draft contribution from the Atlantic actors. In his introductory remarks he recalled the aim of this joint contribution, namely to make the voice of the Atlantic actors heard on this priority issue, to illustrate the assets and needs of the Atlantic territories depending on their specific characteristics and to initiate the thought process on the future of cohesion policy. Fabien Mesclier then went on to explain the content of the contribution.

- In the introductory part, a number of strong principles are recalled such as the need to reaffirm the values of solidarity and cohesion in the European project, the call for a White Paper on territorial cohesion and the key role played by cohesion policy in implementing the objective of territorial cohesion. Point 5 is an outline definition that purposely remains general.

Next, the draft contribution is organised around three keywords "Maritime dimension - Governance - Territoriality" which symbolise how the concept of territorial cohesion is applied to the Atlantic Area.

- Maritime dimension: this part refers to the challenges and opportunities related to the Atlantic Area's maritime nature in terms of economic, social or environmental activity. The underlying idea is that by implementing a maritime policy integrating these different aspects and applied to the Atlantic area, this can contribute towards territorial cohesion.

- Governance: the aim of this part is to call for a renewed approach to multi-sectoral and multi-level governance for policies within the EU. To achieve this, all actors must be mobilised from the time policies are formulated, and concerted action needs to be taken at the different decision-making levels. In this context, the European Commission has a key role to play. This presentation of the principles of good governance is supplemented by examples of good practices from within the Atlantic Area.

- Territoriality: this part looks at how the concept of territorial cohesion is applied to EU policies. Firstly, it presents the added value of cooperation within the Atlantic area, but calls for a new more ambitious and strategic approach. With regard to sectoral policies, it has been decided to stick to four main policy areas that are of particular interest for the Atlantic area, namely transport-ICT-SGI, research & innovation, energy & climate and urban-rural relations.

Following this presentation and by way of an introduction to the debate, Christophe Le Foll resumed several key points of the paper. This contribution had to have a real Atlantic added value in order to provide input for the EU debate, to show how the actors from this area are keen work together and the positive results of their cooperation, while making proposals to define more strategic and integrated cooperation. Finally, he wondered whether or not it was necessary to give a precise definition of territorial cohesion.

Sheila Zecovic felt that a definition was necessary but that it should not be too strict. She also asked about the aims of the contribution and what was to be asked of the Commission: should we ask for more resources for the Atlantic area, for contractualisation following the Baltic example? In her view, the time was not yet ripe to make such detailed proposals. Christophe Le Foll answered that the aim was not to legitimatise the Atlantic area but rather to highlight its needs and its strong points.

With regard to relevant projects developed within the Atlantic Area, , Fátima Malheiro from CCDR de Lisboa Vale do Tejo recalled the ASDP (Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective) that had brought together over 20 Regions and inspired the new transnational cooperation programme.

Jean-Michel Arrivé felt that everything was there and agreed with the choice of three keywords Maritime Dimension - Governance - Territoriality, but wondered whether we should be more ambitious. He considered in particular that the Atlantic area should become an area for delivering EU policies. That was perhaps the key element of the contribution.

5- Conclusion and timetable

To conclude the discussions, Christophe Le Foll recapitulated three points that needed to be reviewed in the contribution:

- Complete the definition of the concept of territorial cohesion;
- Although the contribution addressed all the relevant issues, it needed to be taken further;
- With regard to the projects, it was necessary to show positive results proving the added value of Atlantic cooperation.

It was agreed that a new draft would be sent to all the Atlantic actors by mid January for comments. On the basis of the comments received, a version would be prepared for the end of January to be tabled for approval by the Atlantic Arc Political Bureau at its meeting on 12 February 2009 in Caen.