



MINISTERSTWO
ROZWOJU
REGIONALNEGO



VASAB Annual Conference
Integrated Approach to Spatial Development of Europe – Meaning of Territorial Cohesion
7-8 February 2011, Warsaw, Poland

CONCLUSIONS

The conference participants welcome the progress achieved recently in advancing territorial cohesion. Its implementation will be possible only as a joint effort of local, regional, national authorities, EU Commission, European Parliament and macro-regional organisations. EU neighbours should also be invited.

Territorial Cohesion can provide a frame of co-operation e.g. between cities or regions, it can stimulate creation of functional areas and harmonisation of sectoral efforts in a given territory. For instance thematic networking in tourism has proven to be a very successful tool that contributed to the harmonious development of the entire Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

Updated Territorial Agenda of the European Union (TA2020) provides a European policy framework towards territorial cohesion as a territorial complement for the EU2020 Strategy. The Agenda should be used for better integration and alignment of EU and national policies i.e. for more cohesive decision making.

Marine activities are essential for territorial cohesion in the BSR. Economic activities such as energy production and transport are increasing rapidly in the BSR. There is a need to solve use conflicts by co-operation in the maritime spatial planning. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive and EU Maritime Policy demand actions from the Member States on Maritime Spatial Planning. TA2020 should reflect this demand.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a striking example of multi-level governance. It has originated from the needs of a given territory. However, the Strategy would benefit from more efforts on voluntary policies coordination. One should also encourage more systematic examination of its overall impact on different BSR territories. Territorial dimension of the Strategy can be strengthened in the course of its evaluation and monitoring.

The conference participants welcome the EcoRegion project, a CBSS Baltic 21 Lighthouse project that has collected good practises on Territorial Cohesion in the BSR.

Having said this, the Conference participants would like to **underline the following**:

1. BSR is a genuine functional region with a tradition of multi-level governance, active multilayer interactions and voluntary policy coordination. All this is a core of territorial cohesion.
2. BSR has potential to become a model region for territorial cohesion thanks to the EU Strategy for BSR and long lasting co-operation of pan-Baltic organisations and networks. It can offer a testing ground for implementation of TA2020 provisions.
3. Although the territorial cohesion has been debated at many fora, networks and conferences there is still an urgent need to share this concept with sectoral policies and sectoral decision makers as well as using it for better guiding financial allocations/investment decisions.

4. TA2020 should be followed by an effort of the next EU Presidencies focused on:
 - Translating territorial cohesion into territorial guidelines for using structural funds;
 - Finding together with the most important sectoral policies their “meeting points” with TA2020 and territorial cohesion in particular in order to influence territorial impacts of those policies.

It is important to ensure participation of the EU Commission and the European Parliament in this effort.

5. Authorities responsible for sectoral policies should become aware of spatial development policies and should incorporate relevant issues when designing their own policies, especially of those with significant territorial impact (transport, environment, agriculture, building, economy, competition etc.). Whereas spatial planning authorities have to analyse trends and territorial impacts of sectoral policies and have to communicate those findings to the relevant policy makers.
6. Territorial Cohesion is still too abstract to become easily communicated to decision makers outside spatial planning domain. One should overcome political appeals and theoretical constructions and have to create concrete working examples. Case studies, good practices, benchmarking should be used as dialogue tools.
7. Territorial cohesion should become a part of development and investment partnership contracts; Territorial specificities for developmental priorities should be respected in line with place-based approach.
8. The system of structural funds programmes and sectoral programmes needs to be recognised and fully exploited to promote territorial cohesion.
9. Territorial objectives, considerations of territorial conditions and impacts should be integrated into all appropriate programmes step by step possible with use of the concept of thematic concentration and conditionality.
10. Authorities of different EU programmes need to be aware of territorial and sea dimensions as well, and need to be trained on the functioning of the system, complementarities of programmes, mutual interdependence, ways of coordination.
11. Territorial cohesion should become also incorporated to National Reform Programmes.
12. The territorial dimension becomes more and more important for sea territories. A harmonious and balanced development of the sea space as common resource for many countries is an enormous challenge. It is also a chance to demonstrate how the territorial dimension is taken into consideration.
13. The cross-border aspects of territorial cohesion deserve better attention. For instance, the examination of territorial capital as a source of regional competitive edge should not be confined to the EU-Europe, but cross-border connections with EU neighbours should be also taken into consideration. Specificity of connectivity needs of the border regions should also be taken into consideration.
14. Monitoring systems should pay attention to effects of different interventions on territorial cohesion. Regional development should be monitored and policy strategies developed in terms of functional regions at various spatial scales. ESPON programme should provide methodological basis for that.

VASAB has important role in contributing to the process of spreading the news on territorial cohesion in the BSR. Possible ways would include propagating VASAB-relevant case studies, good practices and concrete examples of implementation of the territorial cohesion by sectoral policies, national, regional and local authorities.

The conference participants also ask VASAB to contribute to the process of updating the EU Strategy for the BSR in order to strengthen its territorial profile, as well as continuing its pioneering work together with HELCOM on development of maritime spatial planning to secure territorial cohesion of the sea space. VASAB is also asked to give an input and participate in the preparation of transnational territorial co-operation programme for BSR 2014-2020 to strengthen its territorial approach and relation to TA2020 and VASAB Long-Term Territorial Perspective.