

PLUS
C/o SERUS
Teknikringen 1E
S-583 30 Linköping Sweden



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Consultation on Green Paper of Territorial Cohesion

PLUS (Partnership for Local Development and Social Economy) is a non-profit organisation promoting local development and social economy in the East Mid Sweden region. PLUS is an umbrella organisation gathering organisations active in rural development, immigration, disability, cooperative movement, social mobilisation, association development and urban development. The aim of PLUS is to support local development initiatives within the social economy as well as represent the actors in national and international issues related to the work.

We welcome the opportunity to reflect on the Green Paper of territorial cohesion.

1. Definition

“Territorial” has different meaning in different countries. We underline the importance that territorial cohesion is not limited by geographical boundaries but as a term describing functional alliances no matter regional, national or sectorial limitations. Territorial cohesion shall be defined as functional cooperation, and that restrictions in form of geographical conditions only limits the definition of territorial cohesion.

The definition of territorial cohesion need to ensure that equality of opportunities and quality of life, no matter circumstances, are included in the definition. The active participation of civil society and the social economy is vital.

Territorial cohesion is not only a complement to the economic and social cohesion. It involves both a restructuring of the current structural policy as well as a stronger coordination between Cohesion Policy and other Community policies.

2. Actions in favour of the territories: scale and scope

EU has a vital role to play in order to ensure that national specific interests not dominate the implementation of the Territorial Cohesion. Subsidiarity - proximity to the citizen - is very important in the implementation of the cohesion policy, and should be conducted in a bottom-up approach involving the social economy and the civil society. The aim must be that EU citizens should be given equal opportunities, no matter location, on the basis of their potential at local and regional level.

3. Better cooperation

Continuously, the European Commission has an important role through its responsibility for that the resources within the cohesion policy are used efficiently in order to meet the EU's common goals set up in the Lisbon Strategy. We do though call for facilitated implementation of in particular Interreg IV programs ensuring full involvement of civil society and social economy actors on the same manner as public authorities. Learning process beyond regional and national borders is not a public issue solely, but needs to include EU citizens.

4. Better coordination

Today's Objective 2: Territorial Cooperation, better known as Interreg, would be the most appropriate to be the basis for the implementation of cohesion policy, which includes territorial cohesion. The cross-border aspect is the key to the development of European competitiveness in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy. The focus of the future cohesion policy must be to facilitate the implementation and decrease the importance of formalities in order to ensure full participation of the citizens, civil society and the social economy.

5. New territorial partnerships

We believe that cohesion policy should imply wider participation in the implementation phase including the social economy actors and the civil society, which is a necessity for equality and democracy. Therefore we do believe that territorial cohesion should be constructed in a way that ensures participation of local and regional actors; private, NGOs and social economy actors. This is also important in order to construct the territorial cohesion in a form of functional alliances and not as geographical areas.

Especially, we would like to draw attention to the importance of the social economy, which stands for approximately 10% of EU employment, and its role in local cohesion and sustainable development.

6. Improved understanding of territorial cohesion

In order to promote a better understanding of territorial cohesion, several elements have to be carefully considered. Selection as well as implementation criteria's and statistical evidence must be clear, comparable and applicable to all EU regions, such as demography, disposable income and access to various services such as transport, education, health and energy.



Gordon Hahn
Chair
PLUS (Partnership for Local Development and Social Economy)