

14th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) (Lisbon, Portugal: 26-27 October 2006) on "Networks for sustainable spatial development of the European continent: bridges over Europe"

Lisbon Declaration on Networks for sustainable spatial development of the European continent: bridges over Europe

Adopted by the ministers responsible for spatial/regional planning at the 14th session of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT), in Lisbon, on 27 October 2006

We, the ministers of the member states of the Council of Europe attending the 14th session of CEMAT in Lisbon on 27 October 2006, considering:

- the commitment of the Council of Europe to the promotion of human rights, pluralist democracy and sustainable socio-economic development, put into concrete form by various European conventions and charters,
- the commitment of the Council of Europe to sustainable development, as stated by the heads of state and government of Council of Europe member states at the 3rd Summit (Warsaw, 17 May 2005), and particularly of the CEMAT to the specific goal of sustainable territorial development, reconfirmed through the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent, adopted by the 12th session of the CEMAT in 2000 and recommended to the member states by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe through Recommendation Rec(2002)1, as well as by the Ljubljana Declaration on the territorial dimension of sustainable development,

Having regard to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) agreed at the informal meeting of ministers responsible for spatial planning of European Union member states at Potsdam in May 1999,

Taking note of the territorial agenda of the EU being elaborated by EU member states and to be agreed upon by EU spatial development ministers at their informal ministerial meeting to be held in Leipzig on 24/25 May 2007,

Following the premises and objectives suggested in the work programme of the Committee of Senior Officials for the period 2004-06, highlighting the theme

“Networks for sustainable territorial development: bridges over Europe”, and its priority topics,

- the high relevance and recognition of the principles and postulates of polycentricity and governance, in building increasingly consolidated and dynamic frameworks of balanced socio-spatial development and territorial cohesion across European territories and societies,

- the particular geographical situation of our common Europe, presenting a variety of opportunities which can be realised through adequate policies and their accountable implementation in agreement, co-operation and solidarity between the people and authorities of our states, regions and local communities,

- our readiness to continue to promote an integrated approach to territorial cohesion and territorial integration through a more balanced social and economic development of regions, improved cohesion and greater competitiveness that nonetheless respects the diversity and uniqueness of Europe, and the identities of its people,

- the role of local and regional authorities of Europe in the implementation of the principles of sustainability,

- the ongoing processes of European integration – the accession of new member states to the Council of Europe and the greatest enlargement of the European Union since its foundation – which are important steps in the building of Europe-wide cohesion.

Adopt the following declaration:

The growing importance of networks

Networks, consisting of a number of nodes and their direct or indirect links, are a fundamental element of contemporary societies. Networks are a crucial tool in establishing new bridges over Europe because they support enduring interdependence among different agents and territories.

Every network node contains a limited number of resources and is therefore also dependent on the resources contained by other nodes. It is the quality of resources (namely the people and organisations) of each node, along with the quality of interaction and resource-sharing, that determines the role and efficiency of a network. This is particularly relevant in the contemporary knowledge society, where co-ordination of resources devoted to research and development (R&D) and the diffusion of information and knowledge are critical to creativity, innovation and competitiveness. In this sense, networks are a crucial tool for achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy.

Constructing the future of Europe presumes the strengthening of interactions and interchanges at regional, national and European levels, but also globally because dynamic networks require external links to other networks and systems. It is necessary to devise and build networks as “bridges” for the sustainable spatial and socio-economic development of the European continent, which is better achieved by boosting interactions between systems. Strong networks may help to promote sustainability.

Virtual networks (co-operation networks) need infrastructural networks that support communication and interchange. In particular, transport (including inland waterways and sea lanes) and information and communication technologies (ICT) are crucial to the integration of European territory. The European Union report, *Networks for Peace and Development*, on extension of the major trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries and regions is an important step towards good pan-European connections.

Networks are tools for better governance: sharing knowledge and best practices, benchmarking and collective constant learning, engagement, monitoring and accountability form a new way of promoting competitive adaptation to the challenges of globalisation and territorial cohesion.

Identifying priorities for co-operation and networking

Cities and regional development poles are the primary nodes of national and trans-national exchange, and distribution of goods and commodities; they are hotbeds of knowledge, culture, information and innovation. City networks are irreplaceable in their roles in disseminating good practice and developing and testing new ideas on the dynamics of sustainability, competitiveness, polycentric development and social integration. Urban co-operation and urban networks, such as the recent European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), need to be strengthened. Council of Europe member states should build on this experience to disseminate information and targeted knowledge to better inform urban policies.

There are new roles for cities and regions in a global and knowledge economy that justify the need for more thematic networking among European cities. Local action for innovation, employment and economic growth, sustainable mobility, urban regeneration and integration of migrants are some areas where urban networks can be a particularly efficient way of gathering new knowledge and information. One must stress the contribution of the URBACT Community Initiative Programme and the Interreg III Community Initiative, and hope that future programmes in the framework of the objective of European territorial co-operation will continue to emphasise thematic co-operation among European cities.

The existing diversity of cultures and territorial identities represents an invaluable potential for territorial development. Networks of civil organisations and social groups, as well as social networks evolving during or resulting from societal processes and migration flows, represent a complex web of the social dimension of spatial relations. Cultural and civic networks, not only those which promote the enhancement of European built heritage but also those that support exchanges to promote creativity and innovation, must also be more widely encouraged in the future on European territory.

Creating and benefiting from nature conservation areas, even if they have very different levels of protection and legal frameworks, is strategic for Europe's identity and sustainability. Strengthening pan-European ecological networks represents the building of "green bridges" which should be promoted for the benefit of conservation, biodiversity and landscape character.

Landscapes, in particular cultural ones, being a significant part of European natural and cultural heritage, contribute to European identity and development potential. Their diversity and quality should provide the basis for a European landscape network in the framework of the European Landscape Convention.

All European countries face the challenge of integrated rural development. Rural areas are usually spaces of low density, ageing population and a weak urban network, besides being sometimes remote. The low density of economic and social actors emphasises the strategic role of networking and co-operation. The concept of the "rural development pole" may be suitable for organising co-operation in rural areas with one or more small towns, using their endogenous potentials in different ways. The experience accumulated by the EU Leader initiative should be analysed, as it may be the basis for an European knowledge network on rural development action.

It is fundamental to enhance the capacity to produce, assimilate and disseminate knowledge on issues of integrated spatial planning and development. Member states should analyse and improve the methodological aspects, management, follow-up and evaluation of projects, plans and policy measures, and set up appropriate knowledge dissemination and training strategy. Capitalising on existing European experiences, such as ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network), member states should participate actively in constructing pan-European networks, so as to generate public policies that contribute to more balanced and integrated development.

The ongoing discussion on maritime issues in Europe should be taken into consideration. Spatial planning of the sea and integrated management of coastal zones, particularly in regard to sea lanes and the diverse uses of maritime areas, can play significant roles in developing networks over Europe.

Contribution of networks to sustainable spatial development

Pan-European networks can strengthen competitiveness and innovation, while promoting territorial cohesion, but should not be regarded as a panacea to cure poor territorial cohesion, unsustainable development and territorial disparities. The asymmetrical nature of networks should be overcome by highlighting the role of co-operation between peripheral areas and enhancing networks as instruments in the dissemination of knowledge.

Member states should take into consideration the scales at which networks operate and how these overlapping scales can interact. Trans-national level is the scale where more creative patterns and co-operation experiences at territorial level can occur. Cross-border networks can be achieved by embedding strategic co-operation between cities and regions, and by building social, economic, ecological or cultural networks. Spatial development policies should take this into consideration in their design and implementation.

The Internet is a powerful tool to support networking and general access must be a priority aim, but networking is interaction among people, organisations and territories. A website is no substitute for a real and effective network.

From all that has been mentioned above, we, the ministers responsible for spatial/regional planning of the member states of the Council of Europe:

Highlight that:

- The European Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) of the Council of Europe is the only European forum uniting EU and non-EU member states with the aim of sustainable spatial and socio-economic development of the European Continent.
- CEMAT provides a framework to support multiple initiatives favourable to the emergence of national and transnational strategies for sustainable spatial and socio-economic development of the European continent.
- CEMAT should devise supra-national spatial planning strategies with a focus on an integrated approach and co-ordination of sector policies with a spatial impact, based on the experience of the Pan-European Network of CEMAT Regions of Innovation and on the co-operation of member states in the framework of the Interreg Community Initiative. These strategies should be based on ongoing complementarities between CEMAT and EU co-operation initiatives, not duplicating them.
- CEMAT has a fundamental role in developing, strengthening and diversifying the European dimension of co-operation networks, which are crucial to its sustainable spatial development and territorial cohesion.

- It is fundamental to overcome the asymmetrical nature of these networks, highlighting the role of co-operation not only among central areas, but also among peripheral ones, and between both of them, in order to promote territorial cohesion and boost competitiveness, innovation and creativity in Europe

- It is fundamental to secure co-ordination and co-operation among networking member states and their authorities, at national, regional and local levels, in key public policies on spatial development or policies with impact on different levels of action. Such co-ordination may act as a driving force towards benchmarking processes. Territorial thematic networks should stimulate constant learning in the field of spatial development and boost innovation in the different countries.

- It is necessary to promote the setting-up of specific “network creation environments” at several levels of action, and in different sectors of administration and society, that can mobilise network creation and thus stimulate more efficient and wide-ranging constant learning. In the framework of CEMAT, European territorial co-operation and the New Neighbourhood Policy, member states shall act to increase pan-European networking and co-operation.

- The development of networks needs increasing attention to people and organisations in order to improve the capacity to interact, assimilate and absorb external knowledge in the different member states.

- Research in the field of territorial development is necessary as a basis for adequate territorial policies, but should not be duplicated. Increased co-operation and participation in the framework of existing research networks, such as ESPON, is important to improve territorial knowledge at European level.

- The Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent (CEMAT Guiding Principles) provide a framework for evaluating important projects and measures from the perspective of spatial planning policy and for building an agenda of co-operation between CEMAT and the EU, aiming at developing new forms of territorial governance by the expansion of networks across the whole European continent.

Appeal to:

- The member states of the Council of Europe to strengthen, diversify and implement co-operation networks in the field of territorial development, thus creating synergies for sustainable spatial and socio-economic development of the European continent.

- The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, as well as the European

Union, to support the strengthening of the network approach at trans-European level as an efficient way to foster sustainable spatial and socio-economic development and create bridges over Europe.

– The Council of Europe and the European Union to consider extending the final recommendations of the report *A sole ambition for the European continent* to include the increase in co-operation in issues of spatial development,

– The Council of Europe and the European Union to enhance their co-operation in the field of spatial development by defining tools that would facilitate territorial trans-European co-operation between EU and non-EU member states, as well as with neighbouring countries, in order to prevent unbalanced and unsustainable development of the European continent.

Commit themselves within their means and competencies to:

– Continue to implement the CEMAT Guiding Principles, within the framework of our competencies;

– Continue to work towards promoting the territorial dimension of sustainable development, according to the Ljubljana Declaration, adopted at the 13th session of CEMAT;

– Create conditions, at national and trans-national levels, for promoting and strengthening networks of territorial co-operation in the framework of CEMAT, for the sustainable spatial and socio-economic development of the whole European continent.