

# **IX BIENNIAL OF EUROPEAN TOWNS AND TOWN PLANNERS**

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Genoa **September 14-17 2011**

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**Smart planning for Europe's gateway cities. Connecting people, economies and places.**

## **PLENARY SESSION 2**

**Maria Krautzberger**

State Secretary for Transport and Urban Development, State of Berlin

## **EU Regional Policy – Potential of the German capital city region and the challenges it faces**

President Bresso,  
Mr Barca and Mr Barbieri,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We all know that one of Europe's great strengths is its diversity, the diversity of cities and landscapes, of spaces, regions, and cultures that inspire each other. History and developments always happen within a certain space. Each strategy, each euro that is spent, unfolds its effect within this space. This space, in turn, also has its own potential, the mobilisation of which is decisive for the effectiveness of European concepts and strategies.

We in the German Capital Region were able to experience this very much at first hand very immediately in the last twenty years. The reshaping of Europe could be felt much more acutely here than in Paris, Rome, London or Brussels. Germany's reunification in 1989 and the EU's enlargement to the East in 2004 have left very tangible traces in our region. Anyone Everyone who comes to visit will be able to discover this in our "space".

Berlin has evolved

- from a city divided into two halves into one of Europe's most creative capital cities with more than 3.4 million inhabitants;

- from a literally walled-in island into the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg with approximately 6 million inhabitants;
- from a city at the eastern margin of the West into a city in the heart of Europe.

European cohesion policy has made a major contribution to this development. But even if the historical wounds have healed step by step and (also real) bridges were built, the fault lines have not yet entirely disappeared. We have today the metropolitan corridors that connect and sometimes almost “synchronise” the global and European capital city regions. However, there is always the danger that other regions are not able to keep up with this tremendous pace of development. We can and we have to make sure that this does not happen. The Territorial Agenda sets spells out the right steps to take and ESPON has provided a good starting point for debate with its Spatial Development Scenarios for 2030.

The EU’s 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth will form the strategic framework and guideline for its future cohesion policy. However, although “territorial cohesion” was anchored in the Lisbon Treaty, there was no concrete reference to space in this framework. The European ministers in charge of spatial development added this spatial approach in May by revising the Territorial Agenda. This means: European policies have to put more emphasis on the situation in a given place and they have to be better co-ordinated. That would be the right way forward.

Ms Bresso, you participated in the informal ministerial meeting in Gödöllő and called for prompt implementation of the Territorial Agenda. I can assure you of my wholehearted support. Only if we manage to mobilise

the inherent potential and strengths of the different regions and to find place-based approaches for implementing the EU 2020 strategy, will it unfold its full effect. From the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg's point of view, it is particularly important, for example, to promote the urban dimension, the metropolitan regions and co-operation between urban and rural areas.

The EU's draft financial framework for 2014-2020 already takes some positive steps in this direction:

- The preservation of a cohesion policy that covers all of the European Union – with some transitional arrangements – is of vital importance for Berlin and the East German federal states.
- The development of a joint strategic framework for the four funds (EFRD, EAFRD, ESF and EFF) should help to integrate these specialised policy areas.
- A new “Connecting Europe” fund – although there are still a lot of open questions - should help foster this integration by pooling transport, energy and communication networks.
- The slight increase in Interreg funds that was proposed will invigorate the territorial approach (Of course, we like the European Parliament's proposal to triple Interreg funds even better!).

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me elaborate a little on the last two points. The “Connecting Europe” fund has led to the tabling of far-reaching and sometimes creative proposals for the future Trans-European Transport Network. However, if

people suggest corridors that would disconnect the Berlin-Brandenburg capital city region and the East German federal states from the existing priority axis No. 1 (Berlin-Palermo), then this is highly counter-productive and detrimental to territorial cohesion. I believe that there is urgent need for corrections in this matter. A swift and clear word from the Committee of the Regions could also be very helpful in this situation.

I welcome very much the idea of focusing EU funds on the priorities of the EU 2020 strategy. Nevertheless, a spatial or place-based approach can only mean that local specificities have to be taken into account. And we can expect these to differ, depending on whether we are talking about the Alps or the Baltic Sea, about Berlin or Oradea in Romania. This is why the regulations have to leave enough room for flexibility; they have to facilitate this place-based approach, to “promote experimentalism and mobilise local actors” (Barca Report).

The buzzword “flexibility” is also significant in a different context: macro-strategies are becoming increasingly important as approaches to integrated spatial development. Whereas the Baltic Sea Region Strategy and the Baltic Sea Region may be more or less identical, the Danube Strategy covers several co-operation areas. We want to make sure that the proven spaces of transnational co-operation are given precedence. They have to be preserved, but they need to become more flexible in order to enable the application of macro-strategies and work across different functional spaces (e.g. Odra Partnership, metropolitan regions).

This, of course, refers to projects spanning several co-operation areas in particular, such as the SCANDRIA corridor. Due to the multitude of

individual projects, co-ordination currently requires too much effort. That is why I think that the system should become much simpler in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me make one more general comment in conclusion: with the Lisbon Treaty (2007), territorial cohesion has become one of the European Union's key goals. It can increasingly be found in the major documents and certainly soon in legislative proposals. I expect the Commission to do further work along these lines. We have the Committee of the Regions as an advisory body and the informal ministerial meetings of the ministers in charge of spatial development to represent the regions and the member states. However, it seems to me that the current structure is slightly skewed towards the Commission.

In his report on reforming the EU's cohesion policy, Mr Barca suggested the establishment of a cohesion policy council with the aim of creating a more balanced structure. Germany has expressed its interest in this approach. There are unambiguous legal positions claiming that such a council – at least for the topic of territorial cohesion – is a legal requirement. The German Conference of Ministers of Spatial Development has just initiated a debate on how to make this a reality. I would like to encourage you to take this idea home with you. We should find out together how we can most effectively strengthen the role of the member states and regions, also institutionally, for achieving the goal of “territorial cohesion”.

This will also help to create better connections between people, economies and places in order to bring about smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

I would like to thank you for your attention, and I invite you most warmly to come and visit us in the Berlin-Brandenburg capital city region.