



Federal Ministry
of the Interior, Building
and Community

TerritorialAgenda

A future for lagging regions



Putting the Territorial Agenda 2030 into practice

Local and regional pilot activities to strengthen spatial development in Europe

Documentation of the public conference
6 May 2021



BBSR



MORO

SUMMARY

On May 6, 2021, the kick-off conference of the pilot action led by Germany to implement the goals of the Territorial Agenda of the EU took place. Under the title “A Future for lagging regions”, new solutions are to be tested that improve people’s everyday lives in these regions – for example in the areas of mobility, medical care and education. In this way, the pilot action links the topic of equal living conditions in Germany with the implementation and realignment of the Territorial Agenda 2030. It was clearly shown that demographic change and economic transformation processes are particularly challenging for the regions in Europe. At the local level, there are already a number of adaptation strategies and good examples to deal with this change. In the future, it is important to operationalize and consolidate these approaches by integrating them into regional planning.

The Territorial Agenda (TA) 2030 is a central political framework agreement of the EU member states on the key objectives of spatial planning in Europe. It was adopted on 1 December, 2020 and is intended to contribute to a sustainable future for all places and regions in Europe. To achieve this, the agenda takes up the challenges of recent years. The strengthening of development opportunities for structurally weak regions, cross-border planning processes or the use of the potential of small and medium-sized towns should make a contribution to provide all places in Europe a sustainable future. The renewed agenda calls for the TA 2030 goals to be implemented on site. With the acceptance, six pilot actions were started under the leadership of Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Norway, Switzerland and Germany. Other Member States and institutions also take part in each action.

As part of the pilot partnership “A Future for lagging regions: Fostering the implementation of spatial strategies”, which is led by Germany, a kick-off conference took place on 6 May, 2021. The conference contributed to a broader understanding of how the goals of TA 2030 can be put into practice. Over 300 actors such as representatives of the pilot actions, those responsible from the local to the European level as well as experts from science, administration and politics from various European countries took part.

The conference focused in particular on the presentation of the German project. The pilot action focuses on securing services of general interest in structurally weak regions. It will be implemented by 2023. A partnership with actors at European, national and local level, as well as other associated partners and multipliers was formed around a group of three German model regions and three model regions from Portugal, France and Austria. The partners in the six model regions of the pilot project will analyze existing spatial planning concepts and implement future-oriented measures. This creates a common understanding of how actions

at all spatial levels can contribute to the implementation of the goals of TA 2030. Another important goal of the pilot action is to sensitize decision-makers to the challenges of structurally weak areas. The continuous exchange of knowledge and experience is the focus of all activities in order to transfer results to other regions.

These goals were taken into account in the kick-off conference. „The pilot action is intended to counteract the drifting apart of the regions and contribute to securing services of general interest in structurally weak areas,“ said the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Community, Volkmar Vogel, in his opening statement. The event also gave an insight into the goals and content of the other European pilot actions. It became clear that many regions in Europe are facing similar challenges due to demographic and economic transformation processes. Dr. Peter Jakubowski, Head of the Spatial and Urban Development Department at BBSR, added: “Many rural regions in Europe are losing their population. People are also on average older than in urban areas. We have to work on offering and securing suitable services of general interest. The challenges are similar, so it is obvious to develop ideas together - across borders.“

Anna Geppert, professor at the Institute for Town and Regional Planning at the University of Paris-Sorbonne addressed these challenges and called on for spatial planning guiding principles to be more firmly anchored in framework strategies and documents. She found that in the past, economic development too often had priority over spatial planning and that the issue of regional disparities was lost in the sectoral orientation of programs and framework strategies. In her keynote speech she formulated a strong plea for the support of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. This support should go hand in hand with a strengthening of the role of spatial planning and planning, which decouples itself from the logic of economic efficiency. By this way a more balanced development of municipalities and regions is possible. The balance between sectoral arrangements of measures and the territorialization of public policy depends on the concrete nature of local decisions. Therefore, she considered it a very important step to link the TA 2030 with concrete pilot actions.

From the presentations of the partners that take part in the German pilot action, it became clear which long-term challenges are concretely facing peripheral regions and which possible instruments are needed to set positive development impulses. The partners in the pilot action will examine how regional planning can be linked more closely to existing sectoral policies by implementing overarching key strategies. The aim is to address the overriding challenges such as securing services of general interest or maintaining basic infrastructures, but also to moderate conflicting goals if, for example, the economic basis of entire regions is reshaped by the dismantling of CO₂-intensive industry in favor of important environmental policy goals. Digitalization plays an essential role and, on the one hand, holds great potential, especially in the areas of education, public services and health care. In the discussion, on the other hand, it became clear that the public sector must assume an important control function in this field, so that digital support for services of general interest can be provided in the sense of the common good. The human factor is decisive. Many places in the participating regions are characterized by an aging and shrinking population, the decline in population can often only be stabilized by internal and external immigration.

The online conference looked at the question of which measures the EU Commission can use to support the goals of TA 2030. Marek Teplansky, Head of Unit of the Directorate General for Regional Policy and Urban Development of the European Commission, presented the range of European support mechanisms. The challenges of structurally weak peripheral regions and the issue of demographic change are anchored in both the strategic orientation and the instruments of the EU funding period 2021–2027 and the Commission program of President Ursula von der Leyen. As the central funding instrument of the EU, the Structural Funds play an important role in balancing the different competitive conditions of the regions. Territorial instruments and funding priorities target peripheral areas and require integrated spatial strategies in order to be able to fund projects with EU funds. With a long-term strategy for the development of rural areas, the European Commission is directing its future attention more strongly to the development of rural areas and the challenges of demographic change.

The other European pilot actions take up various TA 2030 topics. These pilots and their different priorities were presented at the conference. The focus is on joint cross-border planning processes, which are of enormous importance for the energy transition or the conversion of sustainable transport for cross-border commuters (Luxembourg), but also the role of small towns and rural communities in ensuring equal living conditions and balanced polycentric settlement development (Norway) the adaptation and resilience of urban centers in the Alpine region to noticeable climate changes (Switzerland) or fundamental conceptual questions such as strengthening the coordination of sector policies through spatial planning and the instrument of territorial impact assessment (Poland).

In the final panel discussion it became clear that it is up to the practitioners at the local level to put the goals of the Territorial Agenda 2030 into practice. They combine spatial requirements with strategic considerations and only then create concrete solutions. A large number of positive approaches already exist, but must be operationalized and consolidated through integration into regional planning. Creating the right framework is essential to reach practitioners at the local and regional level, but also to encourage them to actively address problems. For this, a strengthening of spatial planning competence and the integration of sector planning at all levels is essential - this is how the goals of TA 2030 can be implemented.

Clear communication with citizens is necessary. Kerstin Schöniger, the mayor of the small town of Rode-
wisch (Saxony), underlined the relevance of a broad public participation, especially for small towns, and reported exemplary from her city on how the dialogue with the public, significantly increased the variety of ideas and the acceptance of the measures. Bernd Lange, head of district council (district of Görlitz) emphasized the added value of rural areas as a living space and above all emphasized the goal of keeping people there. “It shouldn’t just be about managing stretches of land, but we must give people the freedom to choose where they would like to live. As soon as essential elements such as mobility, health care, education and digitization break away, the free decision is no longer given and people are pushed more and more into the urban centers”. These can only be made possible by flexibly designed framework conditions on both sides in order to combine the different levels and legal norms. Following on from this, Martin Orth, head of the department responsible for spatial planning at the Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of the Interior, reaffirmed the cross-border cooperation in spatial planning, especially in the border area between Germany and Luxembourg, in order to manage important issues of climate protection, but above all the

fundamental reorientation of the mobility of daily cross-border commuters to be able to. It is important to integrate the issues of spatial planning into the other sectoral policies. Through the decentralization of jobs by federal authorities, with which 15,000 jobs have explicitly been relocated to structurally weak regions in recent years, this has already been achieved in the first step, according to Ms. Vera Moosmayer, head of department in the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

From a European perspective, by initiating the pilot measures of the TA 2030, the conference succeeded in giving spatial development concerns a „face“ and making the sometimes abstractly formulated goals more tangible for local actors. Slovenia would like to continue this work under the main objective of “increasing the quality of life” during its Council Presidency, said Aša Rogelj, Deputy Director General in the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia. “It must now be a matter of producing good and tangible results that can be transferred and consolidated across Europe. If we succeed in that, we will also succeed in gaining new partners for further pilot projects,” said Dr. Daniel Meltzian (Head of Unit European Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion, BMI) in his final statement. The topic of the circular economy could possibly be suitable for this.

Annex

I – Agenda of the conference

II – Photos of the Conference

Annex I – Agenda of the conference

9h30 **Technical-Warm up // open access to meeting room**

10h00 **Welcome and Introduction**

Volkmar Vogel, *Parliamentary State Secretary to the German Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI)*

Welcome note by the Portuguese EU Presidency

Elisa Vilares, *Head of Division of Territorial Development and Urban Policy, Directorate-General for Territory, Portugal*

10h20 **Opportunities for lagging regions – the role of spatial planning**

Prof. Anna Geppert, *Town and Regional Planning Institute, University Paris-Sorbonne*

From strategy to practice – working with model regions

Peter Jakubowski, *Head of Department, German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR)*

Interactive Input, followed by Interview and Q&A from the moderator/audience

11h00 **The Pilot action “A future for lagging regions”**

Sina Redlich, *Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR)*

- Challenges, strengths, strategies and topics of partner regions
- Discussion of selected topics: strategies, demography, regional mobility, general services

*Topic-related presentations by partners of the Pilot Action from **Région Grand Est/ANCT** (France), **Rostock Planning Region** (Germany), **Walgau Region/Land Vorarlberg** (Austria), **CCDR Alentejo** (Portugal), **Schleswig-Flensburg District** and **Görlitz District** (Germany)*

12h00 **Lunch break**

13h00 **Framework conditions – How can Europe support the implementation of the TA 2030?**

Marek Teplansky, *Head of Unit Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission*

13h20 **Priorities tackled by Territorial Agenda Pilot Actions – Lead stakeholders’ input**

- Which aspects of the TA and which types of territories are addressed by the Pilot Actions?
- How are the local and regional levels involved?
- Which results are expected?

Pilot Action: “Small Places Matter”

Jan Edøy, *Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, Norway*

Pilot Action: “Understanding how sector policies shape spatial (im)balances”

Patrycja Artymowska, *Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Poland*

Pilot Action: “Cross-border spatial planning”

Frederik Richters, *Ministry for Energy and Spatial Planning, Luxembourg*

Pilot Action: “Climate Action in Alpine Towns”

Marc Pfister, *Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE, Switzerland*

14h00 **Panel discussion: How can we bring the Territorial Agenda objectives towards a practical implementation?**

- What does the local level need to implement the priorities of the TA 2030?

Kerstin Schöniger, *Mayor of the city of Rodewisch*

Bernd Lange, *Head of Görlitz district council, Member of the European Committee of the Regions*

Martin Orth, *Head of Department for Spatial Planning, Ministry for the Interior and for Sport, Rhineland Palatinate*

Vera Moosmayer, *Head of the Directorate for Spatial Development and Policy, German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI)*

14h50 **Final remarks and closing words**

Outlook to the EU-Presidency of Slovenia

Aša Rogelj, *Deputy Director General, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia*

Closing words

Daniel Meltzian, *Head of the Division for European Spatial Development Policy Planning and Territorial Cohesion, German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI)*

15h00 **Closure of the meeting**

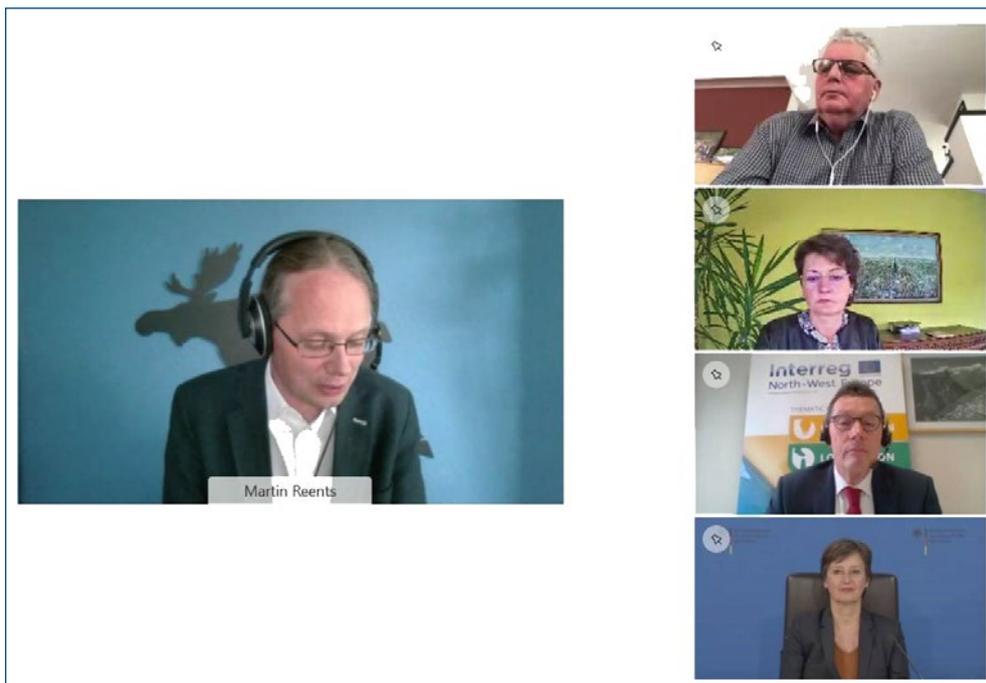
Annex II – Photos of the Conference



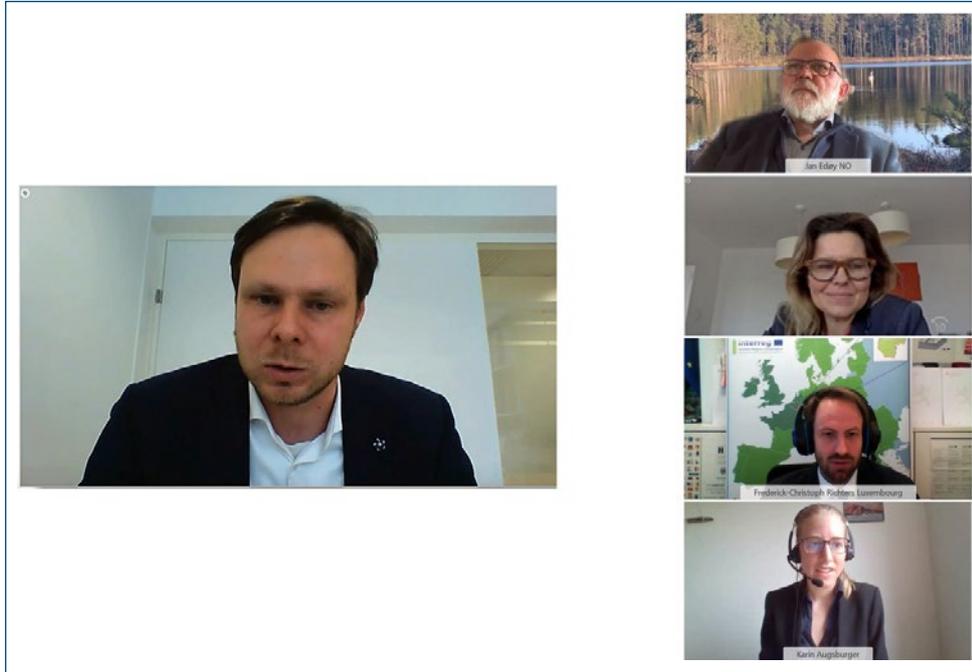
Dr. Peter Jakubowski, BBSR



Marek Teplansky, EU KOM



Paneldiscussion:
 Bringing the objectives
 of the TA 2030 into
 practice



Introducing further Pilot Action by the partners from Norway, Poland, Luxemburg and Switzerland

