



MINISTRY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMY  
STATE SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

**Hungarian contribution  
to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion**

## **I. Background in Hungary**

The interpretation of territorial cohesion as specified in the Green Paper is very close to the vision and system of objectives formulated in the National Concept for Regional Development (NCRD), a basic document in Hungarian territorial policy. The NCRD adopted in 2005 has formulated, in a pioneer way, the most important elements of territorial cohesion currently being clarified at EU level:

- setting territorial harmony as an objective;
- the importance of the territorial dimension in sectoral policy-making;
- territorial integration and coordination of various sectors;
- the nature of territorial diversity as a potential asset.

It is also important to mention that the inclusion of the concept of territorial cohesion in the National Strategic Reference Framework (New Hungary Development Plan) signifies a kind of national innovation in this field since the fact that it has been formulated as the third horizontal objective of the NSRF falls very close to the concept of territorial dimension in the large sense, also promoted by the Green Paper, and creates (in principle) the opportunity so that this aspect is validated by each sectoral program alike.

Since besides the inclusion of territorial cohesion in principle it is also of key importance to put it into practice, Hungary makes serious efforts in order to validate it in the action plans of the individual operative programmes, in their implementation, calls for application, as well as in the course of project selection and evaluation.

Hungary belongs to those few nations that have initiated measures of treating the issue of territorial cohesion as a horizontal priority. The Territorial Cohesion Guidelines and evaluation system that had been elaborated in relation to the implementation of the operative programmes can also be considered as an innovation on a European scale.

In this framework:

- A territorial cohesion guideline has been prepared, which clarifies, on the one hand, the basic notion of territorial cohesion, and on the other hand, makes proposals for the eligibility and professional evaluation criteria serving the purpose of territorial cohesion and to be applied in the applications.
- The relevant calls for applications have been reviewed by operative programmes and explanatory texts have been drafted by schemes for the integration of the territorial cohesion approach into the action plans and calls for applications.
- So called Spatial Category Tables have been prepared about the regions intended to be given priority in the individual tenders, that serve as a basis for drawing up lists of settlements that are preferred by the calls for applications and furthermore they will allow later the development of territory-based monitoring of EMIR (European Monitoring Information System).

In 2009 the State Secretariat for Regional Development and Construction will publish a handbook on territorial cohesion presenting in detail the practice as realised in Hungary in this field (with "öbest practice" examples). The book will be translated into English and it will be distributed not only in Hungary but in the EU Members States as well.

## **II. General remarks to the Green Paper**

Hungary welcomes that an EU level joint reflection has been started on the issue of territorial cohesion. Territorial cohesion draws our attention to the spatial dimension of development, to the diversified nature of the European area and to the tasks deriving from it, thus making the policies of the EU more complex.

The importance of the Green Paper lies in the fact that it integrates the issue of territorial cohesion in the framework of the European development policy, and launches a far-reaching joint reflection process. This helps make the informal cooperation that has been existing between the ministers responsible for regional development for years more successful, also including EU- and Member-State-level implementation of the Territorial Agenda adopted in May 2007.

The Green Paper and the results of the public consultation will, on the one hand, have an impact on the future of the EU's development policy (cohesion policy and sectoral policies), on the other hand, it may serve as a basis, depending on the prospects of the Treaty of Lisbon, for shared competencies between the European Commission and the Member States.

Just for this reason the European Commission has a major responsibility in not to restrict the concept of territorial cohesion only to the issue of regions with specific geographical features, all the more because it is contrary to the principles of the EU's aid policy. It is hardly questionable that certain attention must be paid to regions with specific geographical features in the framework of a comprehensive and integrated concept of territorial cohesion, however, even in that case distinction has to be made between rich and poor areas and problems intended to be addressed at the level of the EU or at national level. It is highly desirable to avoid that territorial cohesion become exclusively a matter of lobbying by certain countries and regions.

A great insufficiency of the Green Paper is that it practically does not address the problems of areas whose economy lags behind (most probably considering such problems as pertaining to the scope of economic and social cohesion) and focuses almost exclusively on geographically disadvantaged regions or to ones with specific geographical features. Hungary recognizes the importance of exploiting territorial diversity; however, it must be validated in the case of all types of territories and regions.

Unfortunately, the Green Paper devotes less attention to other interpretations of territorial cohesion, such as to taking territorial aspects into account within sectoral programmes, and to the comprehensive and integrated management of territorial cohesion.

It is rather reticent about what should be done at the level of the EU and in the national policies in the interest of validating the aspect of territorial cohesion, or about its institutional, planning, regulatory and financial pre-conditions. The Green Paper should have pointed out at least those general legal frameworks or limits and the problems related to them, in the framework of which the issue of territorial cohesion should/could be treated at EU level.

The document emphasizes that the Green Paper and the public consultation associated with it do not cover any financial aspects of cohesion policy within the current financial framework. We agree that the debate on territorial cohesion should be governed by professional aspects and not by the strife for enforcing interests in relation to the allocation of financial funds, however, a reform of the cohesion policy cannot be implemented without taking the results of the debate on territorial cohesion into consideration. Therefore we attribute high importance to channelling the professional aspects related to territorial policy in the process of planning the future of the cohesion policy and other EU policies.

### III. Responses to the questions for debate

#### 1. Definition

*Territorial cohesion brings new issues to the fore and puts a new emphasis on existing ones.*

#### What is the most appropriate definition of territorial cohesion?

Territorial cohesion contributes to the establishment of harmonious, conflict-free relations between the economy, society and the environment within the regions, and on the other hand, to the creation of harmonious and prosperous economic, social and environmental links between the individual regions. It also contributes to the more efficient use of the resources through optimizing the system of material, energy and knowledge flow. Territorial cohesion encourages the exploration of the internal resources of the regions, the ensuring and restoration of their sustainability, as well as the creation and maintenance of the conditions for their competitiveness<sup>1</sup>.

The European and national concept and interpretation of territorial cohesion are not identical with making underdeveloped regions catch up, since it means more than that. Its purpose is to promote harmonious, balanced, conflict-free social, economic and regional development. Its main elements are the 'place-based' approach and decentralisation that take into account the differences between the various regions and within the regions themselves, as well as their capacities and potential for development. Its implementation requires multilevel and multiplayer governance activity, by way of horizontal (within the individual levels) and vertical (between the different levels) coordination.

#### What additional elements would it bring to the current approach to economic and social cohesion as practised by the European Union?

Territorial cohesion goes well beyond economic and social cohesion; it complements and reinforces them and it signifies an implementation of their objectives in a way so that they contribute to the most efficient use of geographical assets and capacities. Territorial cohesion is a validation of the objectives of economic and social cohesion, by taking territorial and geographical features and conditions into account.

Territorial cohesion reaches farther than the limits of cohesion policy; it is in a sense a reconsideration of cohesion policy. It should pervade each sectoral policy, thus 'spatial planning' should arise as a general basic need. Cohesion policy – just like territorial cohesion – can only be successful if its objectives signify a requirement not only in terms of the cohesion policy but if they are validated in the case of each intervention (budgetary, regulatory or other) that has territorial impact.

Based on the aforesaid, the new elements introduced by territorial cohesion in the EU's economic and social cohesion policies are as follows:

- Taking territorial and horizontal/sectoral objectives mutually into account.
- A more comprehensive approach to spatial planning, including the assessment and evaluation of the territorial potential of settlements and regions, and their reciprocal effects.

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<sup>1</sup> The elements of regional sustainable development include the reduction of energy and material flow needs, the development of inter-/intra-regional relations, strengthening of local markets and regional identity, as well as reinforcement of the internal cohesion and strength of local and regional communities.

- Paying more attention to the specific features of the individual regions, which provides opportunity for territories of different nature (e.g. rural ó urban), and with different features (e.g. mountainous or basin-like) for fulfilling their potential, becoming successful and more competitive along different development paths.

## **2. The scale and scope of territorial action**

*Territorial cohesion highlights the need for an integrated approach to addressing problems on an appropriate geographical scale which may require local, regional and even national authorities to cooperate.*

Is there a role for the EU in promoting territorial cohesion? How could such a role be defined against the background of the principle of subsidiarity?

The European Commission has a decisive role to play in promoting territorial cohesion, since it may fulfil an important stimulating and orientating role.

The EU should first of all support the implementation of development plans building on local capacities and features by granting financial funds, orienting territorial co-operations and encouraging the exchange of experiences gained on innovative solution options. It is also important to ensure that financial funds serve development projects that are in harmony with regional/local specific features.

The Commission should be given a key role in designing and enforcing a spatial development concept extending to Europe as a whole. From the five-year elaboration period of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) the lesson can be drawn that the European Commission has to perform a kind of organising and coordinating task as well. In addition, there are several cross-border, pan-European and transnational spatial planning tasks that can be solved only with the collaboration of the Commission.

The general directorates of the European Commission also play a major role in shaping the territorial structure of Europe; therefore, it is justified to better coordinate from territorial aspects the steps and actions taken by them, as well the objectives and implementation of the individual community policies having a territorial impact. Cohesion policy must not simply serve financially the goals of other community policies and cannot succeed in implementing its own objectives if other community policies do not respect its goals.

It is advisable to realise the validation of territorial cohesion by a less fixed and regulated cooperation of the European Commission and the Members States, when the Commission provides guidelines. At certain points standardisation would also be necessary:

- o the countries should provide regular reports about their territorial processes,
- o introducing certain common elements in spatial planning methods would also be required since it is a pre-condition for a European-level spatial planning,
- o a uniform action plan should be elaborated in the interest of coordinated progress,
- o multi-language dictionaries may also be useful that contain the terms and notions of regional policy and spatial planning of the individual countries.

How far should the territorial scale of policy intervention vary according to the nature of the problems addressed?

In the individual regions competitiveness can be increased by building on varying economic activities, in line with local specific features. Exploiting and taking comparative advantages and regional specific features into account is indispensable. Development should take place on the basis of local conditions and specific features in an organic way and a reduction of external interventions is justified.

Solutions must be adapted to the nature of the problem as far as possible, and we should break out from the current fixed system of territorial hierarchy (EU-country-region), since uniform areas are often found within such territorial units or by crossing the borders of such units. Most often the problems arise in a territorial dimension different from the administrative regions (for instance, rivers and their catchment areas, lakes and their environment, urban neighbourhoods of cities, chains of mountains, functional urban spaces, urban-rural regions, impact areas of important transport corridors, nature protection zones, and commutation zones). Since territorial cohesion cannot be implemented by an introverted policy, the measures must, as needed, extend beyond the borders of individual geographical and administrative areas, regions, even beyond those of countries.

The success of achieving cohesion goals depends on specific territorial features, therefore it is important that development instruments can adapt in an appropriately flexible way to the special nature of the problems. In contrast, based on current practice and rules, the strict delimitation of the objectives of cohesion policy according to administrative units and budgetary allocations associated with it make it impossible or allow the integrated management of territories belonging to a specific geographical unit or delimited by economic processes only subject to extremely bureaucratic requirements.

In the interest of managing territorial cohesion, areas of different nature and their relations should be highlighted within the regions and special goals and tasks should be defined for the individual territorial units. The definition and setting of objectives for such areas should be the task of the national and regional authorities with the involvement of the areas concerned and of the local key actors.

Do areas with specific geographical features require special policy measures? If so, which measures?

There has been room so far and will be in the future, too, for taking specific geographical features into consideration when designing the cohesion policy of the European Union. However, "territorial cohesion" should not be interpreted as embracing only this dimension since it would mean a rather distorted concept of the notion.

Concentrating only on certain areas implies the risk that special treatment is given to regions with well-organised lobbying activity, while the ability of other areas to enforce their interests might be weaker.

It is why we do not esteem it good to highlight regions with specific geographical features, as it is represented in the Green Paper. In the concept of territorial cohesion as laid down in the Green Paper it is just the emphasis on diversity that is important. In this respect it is also

necessary to refer to the sub-title of the Green Paper and to specially stress that not only the exploitation of diversity but its preservation is also an important task.

As a consequence of the territorial diversity of the EU, each region has special features (e.g. areas threatened by floods and affected by the negative effects of climate change ó droughts, desertification ó, special territory types of rural areas, regions with small-village settlement structure, regions characterised by mosaic ethnic composition). Moreover, certain geographical disadvantages (such as the risk of floods) can be mitigated by appropriate supports and thus do not require constant aid, in contrast with the case of mountains and islands where the geographical features will not change even despite supports granted since mountains will remain mountains and islands will remain islands.

In our opinion special measures are justified also in the case of regions highlighted in the Green Paper if their specific geographical features are coupled with problems such as poverty, decline, high unemployment, otherwise in spite of promoting long-term development and competitiveness compensation on grounds of geographical features (essentially a kind of subsidy) would be implemented. We consider the interpretation of territorial cohesion in this sense as an erroneous one.

Furthermore, part of the disadvantages evoked in the Green Paper (e.g. mountainous nature, island nature, coastal location) prove, in many cases, to be a significant economic advantage and serve as a basis for the rise and progress of several regions (tourism, local products). It is just for this reason why it is necessary to encourage each region to develop by building on its internal features and by exploiting the advantages of its geographical features, since this will lay the foundations for their sustainable development and competitiveness.

### **3. Better cooperation**

*Increased cooperation across regional and national borders raises questions of governance.*

What role should the Commission play in encouraging and supporting territorial cooperation?

Political frontiers separating regions obviously constitute an obstacle to exploiting territorial potentials and territorial capital in an optimum way. Owing to frontiers capacities in one region may be overloaded while those located to some kilometres from the frontier may be under-exploited. A pre-condition for implementing an optimum development policy at the European level is overcoming frontiers.

The European Commission plays an important role in encouraging and stimulating cooperation reaching beyond national frontiers. A significant part of it is the supporting of cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes and ensuring that such programmes be an integral part of the national level planning in the future. The Commission should encourage cooperation in the field of planning, too, so that the individual regions/countries coordinate their respective development programmes in each case with the neighbouring regions/countries. In this respect a special emphasis is to be laid on the coordination and alignment of the programmes of regions located along the borders as well as to that of nation-wide infrastructure developments.

Strengthening of transnational cooperation is equally important since transnational projects serve European-level spatial planning the best, for which the European Commission does not have a mandate for the time being.

In case of transnational territorial units it is worth paying special attention to areas lying along riversides since the concerned countries are often faced with special (positive or negative externalistic) effects (e.g. environment pollution, climate change) or share common interests (e.g. encouraging and organisation of water transport as an alternative sustainable transport method). Common planning by the riverside countries affecting several sectors is a fundamental part of transnational cooperation projects that must be addressed.

Is there a need for new forms of territorial cooperation?

As far as the current objectives of European territorial cooperation are concerned, there is no need for elaborating new forms of territorial cooperation; however, it would be required to fill up the current ones with more content, to strengthen them and to review their thematic structure.

Is there a need to develop new legislative and management tools to facilitate cooperation, including along the external borders?

Economic discontinuity in areas lying along the Eastern external borders of the EU significantly hampers their social-economic development. Progress in the field of legal and management tools is especially needed along the EU's external borders, since besides economic obstacles several legal obstacles hamper cooperation in that area. At the internal borders the possibility has already been opened for incorporating EGTC-s but the success and efficiency of this new form cannot be measured yet. Very often, the local players can interpret and put into practice the notion of EGTC still with difficulties, therefore dissemination of good examples of EGTC will be necessary in the future, thus helping local and regional players in exploiting the opportunities offered by the EGTC.

#### **4. Better coordination**

*Improving territorial cohesion implies better coordination between sectoral and territorial policies and improved coherence between territorial interventions.*

How can coordination between territorial and sectoral policies be improved?

Only a relatively small proportion of the regulatory and budgetary instruments of economic policy are such that directly serve territorial policy objectives. The great majority of them belong to the scope of competence of sectoral or professional policy and their task is the implementation of the professional policy objectives of the sector in question. At the same time, such "non-territorial" regulations and development instruments have far-reaching territorial impacts and these impacts are not always identical with the objectives of territorial policy, they are often even contrary to them. In some cases they might even set-off completely the impacts of territorial-purpose instruments and regulations, or may even reverse them to the contrary. Such impacts setting off each other might ultimately lead to the non-coordination and a loss in efficiency of the entire development policy.

By bearing in mind territorial correlations, such impacts can not only be mitigated, but, what is probably more important, it can be ensured that sectoral developments strengthen each other and provide synergies. A further added value of developments along territorial aspects is that they integrate the economic, social and environmental impacts of sectoral policies. Coordination of sectoral and territorial aspects can be implemented by an integrated

development of the territorial unit in question, where territorial cohesion intertwines economic efficiency, social cohesion and ecological balance.

Since spatial planning policy is an important tool for strengthening and exploiting territorial capital in an optimum way, territorial aspects must be taken into account and it is justified to validate them not only in the spatial planning programmes and projects in the narrow sense but in each professional, sectoral and horizontal objective that affects spatial development.

Even though it is a question of Member State competence, it is still worth mentioning in relation to the promotion of territorial cohesion that if the proportion of funds used via the regional programmes increases within the national development programmes it might result in that territorial aspects are more markedly taken into account. It is a relevant issue especially in the case of the new Member States since the weight of regional programmes attains only 20-30% in their cases, while in the old Member States it can reach 60-100%. The territorial dimension and the internal territorial correlations could be taken into account to a higher extent if programmes are organized along regional aspects, compared to the ones organised sectorally or horizontally. Of course, all this requires that appropriate capacities and structures are available at regional level and the regions have suitable development strategies.

The introduction of territorial impact assessments for the individual policies would also be useful, as well as the implementation of adjustments in compliance with the results of the analysis. In this case territorial impact assessments should be prepared not only for individual projects but also for the individual operative programmes and sectoral policies as a whole. By carrying out the territorial analysis, the territorial (cohesion) aspects could be validated already in an early stage of the elaboration of the plans and programmes ó following the example of the validation of environmental aspects.

Beyond all this and in addition to supporting the above-mentioned activities, the creation of a clear and transparent planning system would also be needed, which is able to:

- ensure a consistent and equal validation of territorial aspects besides that of sectoral ones
- lay down the rules and competences for sectoral-territorial planning in a unequivocal way (e.g. in case of sectoral policies the territorial features should appear among the evaluation aspects)
- exploit and build on territory-related knowledge and information
- continually intertwine with the creation of problem-oriented territorial knowledge (territorial researches and monitoring)
- set a clear, stable progress and development path that is predictable also in the long run.

Which sectoral policies should give more consideration to their territorial impact when being designed? What tools could be developed in this regard?

There are sectors in the case of which territorial impacts are unequivocal but it is reasonable to analyse the potential impacts for each sector. Taking the territorial aspect into account makes the implementation of sectoral concepts more complex but at the same time more realistic as well.

By reason of their close territorial implications, cohesion policy, transport policy<sup>2</sup>, agricultural and rural development policy<sup>3</sup> must be highlighted. Furthermore, in this respect economic development policy, competition policy, tax policy, employment and social policy, environment protection and nature conservation, energy policy and tourism policy should also be mentioned.

Education and health care constitute a system not only from professional aspects but both are at the same time territorial systems as well, which has to satisfy the needs of a population living in a specific territorial structure and having different expectations depending on their place of living. Similarly, employment policy and social policy also have to take the territorial aspects into consideration. A similar situation is true for R&D since the research centres, and institutions of higher education play an important role in and have a multiplier impact on the economic, cultural and intellectual life of their region.

Possible tools for strengthening consideration given to territorial impacts are:

- territorial analyses and evaluations of sectors;
- introduction of territorial impact assessments in the ex-ante and ex-post phase, at the level of projects, programmes and policies alike;
- taking into account and monitoring of territorial utilization of sectoral budgetary funds;
- common sectoral-territorial planning;
- ensuring appropriate territorial coordination;
- encouraging a more marked space sensitivity for the sectors, by formulating requirements<sup>4</sup> and reckoning them, by providing trainings and studies;

#### How can the coherence of territorial policies be strengthened?

The natural and physical capacities and features of a region, the man-made assets and structures located there, and people who live there themselves ó together with their knowledge, customs and institutions ó constitute a closely interrelated system, in which each component has its own potential. However, these potentials can be used in an optimum way if the specific opportunities offered by them and their impacts, correlations and relations exercised on each other are taken into consideration.

It is why it is so important to lay the foundations for sectoral planning and decision-making by carrying out territorial analyses and impact assessments. In addition to that, sectoral and regional coordination would also be necessary under a fixed framework and well-defined responsibilities/obligations.

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<sup>2</sup> Transport policy has to extend to the improvement of accessibility within the regions since this could create the conditions for the inclusion of the most underprivileged regions in the social and economic circulation.

<sup>3</sup> It has to be noted here that the current treatment of rural development is one of the examples for how important it is to improve coordination between the individual policies. A great part of rural development aids has been transferred from the Structural Funds to the competence of the Common Agricultural Policy during the 2007-2013 programming period, although the greater ó and constantly increasing ó proportion of the rural population does not depend on agriculture and does not make its living from it any more. Therefore, especially close and comprehensive coordination is needed between territorial development and local development policy and rural development.

<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian National Concept for Regional Development sets priorities for the policies. Taking these priorities into consideration, the sectoral development projects implemented in different areas may contribute to the achievement of territorial objectives.

With regard to the interpretation and implementation of territorial cohesion, efficient coordination between the various levels as well as mutual consideration given to sectoral, regional and local aspects is of key importance. However, it can operate efficiently only if (in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity) the individual tasks are addressed at the levels most appropriate for fulfilling them, by involving the most affected actors. Consequently, the scopes of tasks and responsibilities should be delimited in a flexible (that can be adjusted to the changes in economic and social processes) but clear way, and appropriate partnership has to be guaranteed.

The concordance within different directorate generals of the European Commission and within the units of the DG REGIO, with special regard to interrelations between the specific funds and programmes are also of utmost importance.

It would be also important that the strategies and development concepts implemented at different levels should be designed on the principle of mutualism in the interest that the developments and measures having a territorial impact and implemented at the individual levels are oriented towards the same direction and serve the same goals.

How can Community and national policies be better combined to contribute to territorial cohesion?

On the one hand, compatibility between the planning systems should be encouraged and it should be ensured that national development policies and Community programmes are aligned in a common planning system by Member State, hereby promoting complementarity and synergic effects between the two systems.

The Member States and the Commission should prepare a report annually or every second year on territorial development with regard to their own areas, on the basis of a common methodology. Thus differing views on territorial cohesion could also be brought closer to each other.

## **5. New territorial partnerships**

*The pursuit of territorial cohesion may also imply wider participation in the design and implementation of policies.*

Does the pursuit of territorial cohesion require the participation of new actors in policy-making, such as representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders, voluntary organisations and NGOs?

If they are organised on a territorial basis, participation of local NGOs and civil organisations could be justified. However, it is important to clarify their competence and role in the process, first and foremost in the framework of planning systems operating in a transparent and system-structured way.

Since the local level plays a major role in implementing territorial policy, those bottom-up initiatives are very important which strengthen joint thinking in terms of territorial cohesion. It is also important because internal cohesion at the lower levels is required in order to achieve higher-level (e.g. EU-level) cohesion. If the implementing party or the stakeholder taking part in the implementation participates in the decision-making process, the intensity and rationality of implementation will become more optimal and efficient.

The exchange of experiences is also important because it can facilitate the exploitation of opportunities offered by diversity. Cities and regions having similar features may help each other to a large extent in exploiting their resources.

#### How can the desired level of participation be achieved?

By establishing a system that goes beyond formal partnership and in which the possibility of exercising real influence is inherent and it is sufficiently clear when, who and for what someone has competence. Such partnership must be especially strengthened at regional and sub-regional level.

### **6. Improving understanding of territorial cohesion**

#### What quantitative/qualitative indicators should be developed at EU level to monitor characteristics and trends in territorial cohesion?

Development based on territorial diversity is difficult to measure by standardized indicators just because of its diversity. The system of indicators should reflect the diversity since different indicators are appropriate for describing the performance of a region characterized by large cities that provides financial services and takes part in global competition and for a basically rural region consisting of small villages. Measurability should be a requirement in comparing regions with similar features.

Since it is in correlation with very many indicators, the economic output per capita (GDP) or the employment rate could be adequate indicators for measuring the degree of development but of course as regards the contents of the different problems and of the development programmes, specific indicators are required.

It is most probable that we will not have one single öblissfulö indicator for territorial cohesion in the near future. It can partly be attributed to its not-yet clarified definition, partly to the lack of the necessary indicators in break-down by regions. But there are indicators by which certain elements of the different concepts of territorial cohesion can be quantified and shown in a map.

If we measure the degree of territorial cohesion by the extent of territorial differences such maps can be suitable tools for it that show the extent of difference in the degree of development or in other complex indicators between two neighbouring regions. The deviation of differences can be measured and illustrated as well. If we want to measure not only the differences but the correlations, too, our task will be more complicated, especially because the related regional-level data are rather insufficient and incomplete.

Further indispensable tools for measuring territorial cohesion are the indicators and maps showing accessibility. State-of-the-art computerised methods allow that the length, time, cost of travel from each region of Europe to each other European city is calculated, the relations are weighted by most various methods (population, GDP, etc.) and the accessibility of each European region/city is determined and illustrated on the basis of such calculations. This latter determines to a large extent their territorial potential.

Similarly to accessibility, the polycentrism of the city network is also an important criterion of territorial cohesion and this notion can also be analysed according to several aspects (e.g. distribution of cities in terms of size, location of cities within a given space unit and their accessibility).

Partly thanks to the ESPON projects the social and economic structure of the European Union could be presented in several dimensions by now and the argumentation and illustration of the cohesion reports also serve as a proof for it. With the enlargement of the EU the scope of indicators and required data has also characteristically undergone change since the society, economy and problems of the Community now comprising 27 members are different from and sensitive to other factors than previously. European-level comparability has been possible for years in the major areas (e.g. demography, macro-economy), however, the evolution of indicators and their acceptance (when making political or financing decisions) is a very slow process despite the fact that there is a demand for renewal and several experiments have been made for creating a complex and better (system of) indicators.