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Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

Revision of the Territorial Agenda 2030 - Towards a more integrated and civic approach with stronger links with the cohesion policy

(own-initiative opinion)

(C/2025/773)

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. Despite the fact that the resources provided by the EU are in no way sufficient to counteract trends towards the centralisation of the single market, the EESC highlights the strategic role that the Territorial Agenda 2030 plays in promoting territorial cohesion and in addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges faced by the various regions.

1.2. The EESC considers that the Territorial Agenda should promote the fifth freedom of the internal market – referred to in the Letta report as 'the freedom to stay' in the place where one has chosen to live – thus ensuring full economic, social and territorial cohesion by: providing public services of general interest; ensuring connections to adequate transport infrastructure; and fostering a sustainable place to live and quality of life. On the other hand, as mentioned in the Draghi report, it should also ensure that all regions are able to make use of local development opportunities through measures to guarantee and strengthen their competitiveness (incentivising investments in innovation, further education and training, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, digital development etc.).

1.3. The EESC highlights the fact, that with its emphasis on creating a fairer and greener Europe, the Territorial Agenda 2030 is aligned with the EU's long-term goals and creates a solid foundation for integrated spatial planning.

1.4. The EESC notes that, despite EU measures to test and implement the Territorial Agenda 2030, the benefits it could bring to support cohesion and equitable development have not yet been fully exploited at local and subnational level.

1.5. The EESC highlights the importance of enhancing the interconnection between the Territorial Agenda 2030 and cohesion policy. The Territorial Agenda 2030 is a strategic instrument to support regions, setting priorities to address the challenges they face, while cohesion policy makes sure it is implemented through the financing of targeted projects, helping to reduce disparities and promote sustainable growth in the various EU regions.

1.6. The EESC believes that efforts inform civil society and involve it in planning and implementing the Territorial Agenda 2030 need to be stepped up, highlighting the risk that initiatives and projects will be introduced that do not fully take into account the needs of the target beneficiaries of EU policies and strategies – individuals and social and economic partners.

1.7. The EESC draws attention to the crises and systematic changes that affect the EU, and the consequent increase in disruption and risks they cause (be they social, economic, environmental or other), and proposes explicitly highlighting the need to systematically factor resilience into the Territorial Agenda 2030.

1.8. The EESC welcomes the way that the Territorial Agenda 2030 has been developed and tested through pilot actions, but also highlights the considerable room for improving the adoption of integrated territorial development processes (social, economic and environmental) to support the implementation of territorial cohesion processes based on the principles of responsibility and subsidiarity. In this context, the EESC considers that pilot projects should nevertheless involve one or more regions in all Member States, which is currently not the case.

1.9. Taking into account endogenous and exogenous factors, the EESC believes that the cohesion, sustainability and resilience of the EU's various territorial dimensions cannot be tackled separately with ordinary instruments. Therefore, the EESC recommends including the Territorial Agenda in the European Semester process, following the guidelines of ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network).

1.10. The EESC recommends that the Territorial Agenda 2030 be coordinated as much as possible with cohesion policy. This can be achieved through functional partnerships between urban and rural areas, and through integrated projects aimed at enhancing the sustainability and resilience of the local economic, social and environmental systems of urban places, their functional areas and the surrounding rural areas.

1.11. The EESC points to the need to increase the presence of social and economic representatives within the framework of the partnership principle in local and regional territorial development. A good example of fair representation is provided by the community-led local development (CLLD) programme ([1]), in which a maximum of 50 % of partnership members may come from public administration.

1.12. The EESC stresses the need to develop processes and initiatives for better aligning the Territorial Agenda 2030 with the EU's needs and challenges and for strengthening synergies with the Leipzig Charter and the EU Urban Agenda.

1.13. The EESC believes it essential to organise the activities of the Territorial Agenda 2030 according to the following priorities: tackling climate change; adapting to demographic change; consolidating an integrated approach for balanced territorial development; and encouraging a civic approach and civil society participation.

1.14. The EESC points out the need to invest in upgrading social infrastructure to improve access to health and social care services, especially in rural and remote areas ([2]). It is essential to implement initiatives that promote the integration of migrants and that support communities in demographic decline through social inclusion programmes.

1.15. The EESC highlights the need to support developing the silver economy ([3]), creating employment and training opportunities for young people and women, by providing incentives for digitalisation and innovation in sectors that meet the needs of ageing populations.

1.16. The EESC believes it is a priority to promote balanced and sustainable territorial development through closer cooperation between all levels of government, and through joined up coordination of regional, transport, healthcare and treatment, environmental, energy and agricultural policies. It is essential to ensure that resources and opportunities are fairly distributed among all European regions, improving transport infrastructure and reducing the digital divide to ensure better connectivity.

([1]) LEADER/CLLD explained | The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

([2]) Report of the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe, 2018, Boosting Investment in Social Infrastructure in Europe. Fransen, L., del Bufalo, G., Reviglio, E. Discussion Paper 074/January 2018. European Commission – European Association Long Term Investors.

([3]) The EU Commission promotes the Silver Economy | Interreg Europe.

1.17. The EESC considers it essential to boost the skills of administrators and civil servants on the Territorial Agenda 2030 through capacity building. Training and upskilling will enable them to address complex territorial challenges and integrate the Agenda's priorities into local policies, promoting more effective and sustainable governance.

1.18. The EESC points to the need so support more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes at subnational level, increasing public consultation and participatory processes in order to actively involve civil society organisations, social partners, foundations and other philanthropic organisations and citizens. It is essential to provide local communities with the necessary tools and means to influence decisions that concern the areas in which they live, improving the complementarity between EU public funds in order to further empower these communities.

1.19. The EESC stresses the importance of guaranteeing transparency in decision-making processes, ensuring that the people have access to relevant data and information, and clearly communicating to them the reasons for decisions made. In order to achieve a fairer society it is crucial that all social groups, including minorities and vulnerable groups, be represented in subnational decision-making through the adoption of policies that address inequalities and foster social integration.

1.20. The EESC encourages collaboration between public administrations and stakeholders in implementing subnational projects, and insists that local authorities be involved in strategic planning and interregional cooperation efforts.

1.21. The EESC believes it essential to support more democratic, inclusive and responsible governance, in which citizens and civil society organisations are active participants in shaping the future of the areas in which they live.

2. **Background and general comments**

2.1. The Territorial Agenda 2030 ([4]) is an intergovernmental document that promotes territorial cohesion in the EU, with a view to bringing benefits to all European territories and to all European citizens. Although EU resources for cohesion have been insufficient to counteract trends towards the centralisation of the single market, the Territorial Agenda 2030 and the Cohesion Fund have addressed economic, social and environmental challenges. While the Territorial Agenda 2030 has no direct implementing instruments, it calls for the territorial dimension of all government policies to be integrated, with the aim of making Europe fairer and greener.

2.1.1. The resources allocated by the EU for cohesion have never even been close to sufficient to counteract trends towards the centralisation of the single market. However, the Territorial Agenda (to the extent that it was considered a priority) and the Cohesion Fund have played a crucial role in addressing economic, social and environmental challenges affecting the various regions.

2.1.2. Through the Territorial Agenda 2030, tools are strengthened to ensure sufficient prospects for development and cohesion in all EU regions and the people living there (a fairer Europe). Processes and strategies to protect the environment and assist the development of regions and economic systems are also implemented through processes that are consistent with the priorities of environmental sustainability and the circular economy (A greener Europe).

2.2. The governance of the Territorial Agenda 2030 is based on multilevel cooperation between European, national, regional and local institutions. Key elements include: the coordination of territorial policies by the European Commission and the Member States; the active participation of local and regional authorities; and monitoring and assessment mechanisms to guarantee transparency and continuous improvements.

2.2.1. In 2021, seven pilot actions were launched to encourage key actors to take action, demonstrating how the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030 can be pursued in practice at local and regional level. These actions, financed through national funds from the Member States involved, aim to trial innovative place-based approaches adapted to specific local situations.

([4]) https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/brochure/territorial_agenda_2030_summary_en.pdf.

2.3. Civil society plays a crucial role in implementing the Territorial Agenda 2030, but its involvement is not yet sufficiently appreciated, as demonstrated by the difficulties encountered in actively involving social and economic partners, with particular reference to the most vulnerable groups. It is crucial to increase the participation of civil society in order to guarantee inclusive governance that takes into account the requirements of the various regional actors and that improves quality of life in the various European regions.

2.4. The Territorial Agenda 2030 helps to strengthen the territorial dimension of all policies at all levels of governance for the following priority objectives:

— territorial cohesion: promoting the balance and sustainable development of the EU's various regions, reducing economic, social and cultural disparities;

— partnership and multilevel governance: actively involving regional players at all levels of decision-making, encouraging dialogue and cooperation between the various regional authorities and promoting participatory and inclusive governance;

— economic development and competitiveness: supporting the economic development, innovation and competitiveness of European regions and territories, promoting entrepreneurship, employment, digitalisation and access to infrastructure;

— environmental and social sustainability: guaranteeing the environmental and social sustainability of European regions by promoting the transition to a circular, low-carbon economy, protection of the environment and natural resources and harmonious co-existence of human activities and the environment.

2.5. The Territorial Agenda 2030 is a useful tool for helping European regions address challenges that cannot be dealt with by individuals using ordinary instruments, due to their complexity and significance, specifically:

— territorial cohesion: ensuring that all EU regions have equal economic and social development opportunities;

— sustainable development: promoting sustainable development that takes into account environmental needs and guarantees the conservation of natural resources, in line with the SDGs;

— economic competitiveness: promoting economic growth and innovation in all European regions to ensure job creation and economic prosperity;

— territorial governance: improving regional and local governance by involving all actors involved in territorial policymaking;

— policy coordination: promoting greater coherence and coordination between European and national policies in order to ensure that resources and opportunities used effectively;

— social inclusion: ensuring that all people, regardless of where they live, have access to the same opportunities for economic, social and political participation.

2.6. The links between the Territorial Agenda 2030, the Leipzig Charter and the European Urban Agenda (see the opinion on the *Revision of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU* ([5])) are clear when it comes to their common goals, guiding principles and strategic approaches. While these documents have different focuses and different development contexts, they intersect and reinforce each other to promote sustainable and integrated territorial and urban development across the EU.

2.6.1. With regard to the link with the Territorial Agenda 2030, it is worth highlighting the priorities identified in the Ljubljana Agreement and its 2022-2026 multiannual work programme, namely: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge (the three pillars of the agreement which, according to the political declaration, should be coordinated with other European and international sustainable urban development programmes).

([5]) Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Revision of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU' (OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 145).

2.7. The Territorial Agenda 2030 is closely interlinked with various EU strategies and policies. These connections take the form of common objectives, complementary action and synergies in funding.

2.7.1. **Cohesion policy** ([6]) – the Territorial Agenda 2030 aims to reduce territorial disparities and promote balanced development, which are also key objectives of EU cohesion policy. The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), support projects that mirror the agenda's priorities, such as environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

2.7.2. **European Green Deal** – the Territorial Agenda 2030 contributes to the European Green Deal, the EU's strategy to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The territorial initiatives promoted by the agenda, such as sustainable urban development and the integrated management of natural resources, are in line with the objectives of the Green Deal.

2.7.3. **Common agricultural policy (CAP)** ([7]) – the Territorial Agenda 2030 promotes balanced territorial development that includes both urban and rural areas, ensuring territorial cohesion.

2.7.4. **Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** ([8]) – the Territorial Agenda 2030 contributes to the protection of biodiversity by promoting sustainable land use practices and preserving natural habitats, in line with the objectives of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

2.7.5. **Circular Economy Action Plan** ([9]) – the Territorial Agenda 2030 supports the transition to a circular economy by promoting the sustainable management of resources and recycling, in line with the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan.

2.7.6. **European Digital Strategy** ([10]) – the Territorial Agenda 2030 encourages digital inclusion and technological innovation in the regions by supporting the objectives of the European Digital Strategy to improve digital connectivity and literacy.

2.8. With regard to cohesion policy and the implementation tools for the 2021-2027 period, there is a direct link between the Territorial Agenda 2030 and Policy Objective 5 – A Europe closer to the citizens ([11]). With this in mind, we point to the strategic role played by integrated programming tools such as integrated territorial investment (ITI) tools ([12]) and CLLD tools ([13]), and by European territorial cooperation programmes (Interreg) ([14]) in implementing the Territorial Agenda 2030.

2.8.1. Introduced in 2014, based on the LEADER experience and strengthened for the period 2021-2027, ITI and CLLD tools highlight the importance of integrated territorial strategies for cohesion. These tools promote a bottom-up approach to territorial development, involving local and regional governments, facilitating dialogue between the various stakeholders, as well as fostering public-private cooperation and cooperation between the different levels of government.

2.8.2. Interreg programmes play a crucial role in supporting the Territorial Agenda 2030, a strategic framework that aims to promote balanced and sustainable territorial development in Europe by encouraging the co-development of border areas (cross-border dimension), supporting the integration of transport networks, environmental protection and management of natural resources more generally (transnational dimension) and fostering the exchange of knowledge and expertise for a more homogeneous territorial development (interregional dimension).

([6]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.
([7]) https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cap-introduction/.
([8]) COM(2020) 380 final.
([9]) COM(2020) 98 final.
([10]) COM(2020) 67 final.
([11]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.
([12]) InfoRegio – Integrated Territorial Investment (europa.eu).
([13]) https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2014/guidance-on-community-led-local-development-in-european-structural-and-investment-funds.
([14]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94.

2.9. As it does not have a specific financial allocation, the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030 is supported by various financial instruments that are available to the Member States and the regions; they can be split into two main categories: indirectly managed and directly managed programmes. These programmes contribute to achieving the economic, environmental and social objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030 in all its regional dimensions. There is a lack of capacity when it comes to implementing processes for taking up programmes on the basis of complementarity and synergy.

2.9.1. With regard to indirectly managed programmes active for the 2021-2027 period, the following tools should be singled out:

— European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) ([15]);

— European Social Fund (ESF) ([16]);

— Cohesion Fund ([17]);

— European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) ([18]);

— European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) ([19]).

2.9.2. With regard to directly managed programmes active for the 2021-2027 period, the following programmes are highlighted:

— Horizon Europe ([20]);

— LIFE ([21]);

— Erasmus+ ([22]);

— Invest EU ([23]).

3. **Results produced by the Territorial Agenda 2030**

3.1. At territorial level, the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030 has produced results, both in the context of pilot projects designed to test the feasibility of actions and to measure their effectiveness, and in relation to processes implemented in NUTS 2 ([24]) and NUTS 3 ([25]) regions by public and private entities.

3.2. On pilot projects ([26]), the results show the importance of multilevel cooperation and a place-based approach for achieving the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030. The combination of innovation, participation and adaptation to specific local situations has proven to be a successful strategy for addressing the challenges of sustainable development.

3.2.1. **Strengthened multilevel cooperation:** pilot actions have fostered close cooperation between local, regional and national governments. This has led to greater cohesion in regional development policies and strategies;

([15]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60.
([16]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21.
([17]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60.
([18]) OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1.
([19]) OJ L 247, 13.7.2021, p. 1.
([20]) OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1.
([21]) OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 53.
([22]) OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.
([23]) OJ L 107, 26.3.2021, p. 30.
([24]) NUTS 2: basic regions for the application of regional policies.
([25]) NUTS 3: small regions for specific diagnoses.
([26]) Territorial Agenda 2030 | A future for all places.

3.2.2. **Innovative and adapted solutions:** innovative solutions, tailor-made to specific local situations have been developed and implemented. These solutions have addressed specific problems in the different regions, improving the effectiveness of measures.

3.2.3. **Participation and involvement of stakeholders:** consensus-oriented dialogues have made it possible to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, NGOs and academic institutions. This has ensured that the solutions adopted are widely shared and supported by the community.

3.2.4. **Improved quality of life:** the pilot actions have made tangible improvements to the quality of life of the communities involved. For example, progress has been made in terms of environmental sustainability, infrastructure, public services and local economic development.

3.2.5. **Replicable models:** the pilot projects have served as successful models that can be replicated in other regions. These models provide practical guidelines for the implementation of territorial development strategies in various contexts.

3.2.6. **Economic prosperity and sustainability:** the initiatives have promoted local economic growth in a sustainable way, reducing environmental impacts and enhancing local resources. This has helped create more resilient and sustainable economies.

3.2.7. **Greater institutional capacity:** through collaboration and knowledge exchange, local and regional institutions have increased their capacities for planning and implementing effective policies.

3.2.8. Although 52 projects, initiatives and instruments were identified during the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030 as encouraging the take-up of a territorial approach to planning and implementing cohesion policies, the pilot actions are in fact totally unbalanced geographically.

3.2.8.1. German national and regional authorities are involved in five pilot actions, Polish authorities in three pilot actions, and Austrian, Swiss, French, Luxembourg, Portuguese, Slovenian and Norwegian authorities in two pilot actions. The Belgian, Czech, Spanish, Croatian, Irish, Dutch, Romanian and Swedish authorities are involved in only one pilot action. Some Member States are not involved in any of them. It is surprising that some of the Mediterranean Member States are not involved in any of the pilot actions (Italy and Greece) or are involved only to a very limited extent (Spain), and the same applies to the Member States in Eastern Europe.

3.3. With regard to the implementation of measures by public and/or private entities for NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 regions, results have been produced on an economic, environmental and social level, especially through the implementation of initiatives supported by European indirectly managed programmes:

3.3.1. **Improved territorial cohesion:** reducing social and economic disparities with a view to greater territorial cohesion through targeted allocation of the ESIF that have financed infrastructure and urban and rural development projects, as well as social and economic initiatives.

3.3.2. **Integration of territorial policies:** promoting an integrated approach to spatial planning, fostering cooperation between different EU policies such as cohesion policy, the CAP and the European Green Deal. This has led to greater synergies between spatial planning objectives and other EU policies.

3.3.3. **Local and regional capacity building:** improving the technical and administrative capacities of local and regional authorities by facilitating the design and implementation of complex and sustainable projects.

3.3.4. **Promotion of sustainable development:** increasing environmental sustainability, for example the regeneration of deprived urban areas, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility and the integrated management of natural resources.

3.3.5. **Strengthened territorial cooperation:** promoting cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation through programmes such as Interreg, which have facilitated the exchange of best practices and the implementation of joint projects among different regions in Europe.

3.3.6. **Stakeholder involvement:** increasing the participation of the social and economic partners, including citizens, businesses, NGOs and academic institutions, in the decision-making process and in spatial planning. This has increased the transparency and approval of territorial policies.

4. Future perspectives for the Territorial Agenda 2030: the way forward

4.1. The future of the Territorial Agenda 2030 is closely bound to the transitions involved in the development and cohesion processes of European regions. As part of these processes, particular attention must be paid to demographic changes.

4.1.1. Strategic initiatives and actions must be supported to enable all European regions to adapt in a sustainable and inclusive manner to the effects of these demographic changes in the short and medium term. Specifically:

— social infrastructure must be strengthened by improving access to health and social care services, especially in rural and remote areas;

— social inclusion must be promoted through initiatives to improve the integration of migrants and to support communities in demographic decline;

— the local economy must be developed with a view to the silver economy by creating employment and training opportunities for young people and women through incentives for digitalisation and innovation.

4.2. The Territorial Agenda 2030 must strengthen its integrated approach to promote balanced and sustainable territorial development within the EU, promoting a holistic vision that takes into consideration the interplay between various sectoral policies and governance levels.

4.2.1. **Territorial cohesion:** promoting a balanced distribution of resources and opportunities across Europe's regions, reducing regional disparities; strengthening actions aimed at ensuring that all regions, including the less developed regions, have access to economic and social development opportunities.

4.2.2. **Multilevel governance:** promoting close collaboration between local, regional, national and European levels of governance to ensure coherence in policies and actions.

4.2.3. **Integration of sectoral policies:** ensuring that regional development, transport, environment, energy, farming and other policies are coordinated and mutually reinforcing, encouraging the use of integrated regional development tools such as ITI and CLLD, which can together enhance economic, social and environmental aspects, bearing in mind the various subnational dimensions.

4.2.4. **Sustainability and resilience:** promoting practices that reduce the environmental impact and favour long-term sustainability; supporting measures to reinforce the resilience of the regions and territories to climate change by improving the adaptability of communities and infrastructure.

4.2.5. **Territorial competitiveness:** promoting innovation, research and development to improve the competitiveness of European regions by supporting the development of local economies through policies that encourage entrepreneurship, digitalisation, access to global markets and adapting workers' skills.

4.2.6. **Accessibility and connectivity:** improving transport infrastructure to guarantee better connectivity between the regions and with the rest of the world, and reducing the digital divide to encourage the participation of all regions and local communities in the opportunities provided by the digital economy, with a particular focus on areas with a geographical handicap.

4.2.7. **Quality of life and well-being:** ensuring that all regions have high-quality essential public services such as health, education and social services, and promoting a healthy and safe living environment, with a particular focus on the quality of air, water, soil and green spaces.

4.2.8. **Monitoring and evaluation:** using specific indicators to monitor the progress of territorial policies and assess the impact of actions, not just through a quantitative analysis but also by defining indicators that can assess the quality of the actions undertaken.

4.3. Incorporating the Territorial Agenda 2030 into the European Semester is crucial for balanced development in the EU's regions. This approach aligns territorial policies and economic strategies, ensuring a coordinated response to local challenges and raising the visibility of cohesion issues. It also contributes to reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusive growth, maximising the impact of public policies.

4.3.1. Strategic coordination: the EESC believes that the cohesion, sustainability and resilience of the EU's various territorial dimensions cannot be tackled separately with ordinary instruments. Therefore, the EESC recommends including the Territorial Agenda in the European Semester process, following the guidelines of ESPON.

4.4. Strengthening the civic approach and involving civil society more in the Territorial Agenda 2030 are mandatory for ensuring more inclusive, democratic and sustainable territorial development. Participation mechanisms that allow civil society organisations and citizens to actively contribute to decision-making processes – from the design to the implementation and evaluation of territorial policies – must be strengthened.

4.4.1. **Participation of the social and economic partners:** more use must be made of the public consultation tools and participatory processes in order to involve civil society organisations, foundations and other philanthropic organisations and EU populations in the decision-making process.

4.4.2. **Empowering communities:** it is essential to provide local and regional communities with the tools and skills needed to actively participate in and influence decisions concerning the areas in which they live. Enhancing the knowledge and skills of administrators and civil servants working in local authorities on the instruments and methodologies made available by the Territorial Agenda 2030 is a priority. The goal is to support participation in and access to the opportunities provided by the Territorial Agenda 2030 as well as to promote complementarity between all EU public funds supporting implementation processes.

4.4.3. **Transparency and access to information:** guaranteeing access to relevant data and information on territorial development and public policies, and ensuring that decision-making processes are transparent and that the reasons behind these decisions are clearly communicated to all.

4.4.4. **Social integration and inclusion:** ensuring that all social groups, including minorities and vulnerable groups, are represented and that they have a say in regional decisions. Moreover, it is crucial that policies promote integration and social cohesion by tackling inequalities and discrimination, thus promoting and implementing the horizontal approach of intergenerational solidarity and fairness ([27]).

4.4.5. **Collaboration between sectors:** collaboration between public authorities, private companies and civil society organisations must be encouraged in order to implement regional projects. Local authorities are essential in turning the objectives of the Territorial Agenda 2030 into specific actions through strategic planning, resource management, interregional cooperation and community involvement.

4.4.6. **Participatory evaluation and monitoring:** making sure that representatives of civil society take part in the evaluation and monitoring processes for regional projects and policies.

([27]) Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee – Promoting European intergenerational solidarity OJ C, C/2024/6869, 28.11.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6869/oj.

4.4.7. **Democratic governance:** promoting more democratic, inclusive and responsible governance, where citizens and representatives of civil society do not merely benefit from the policies but play an active role in shaping the future of the areas in which they live.

Brussels, 5 December 2024.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Oliver RÖPKE