

**Co-ordinating European sectoral policies
against the background
of European Spatial Development**

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by

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1. Introduction

“The spatial effects of Community policies do not automatically complement each other, in line with a more balanced regional development. Nor do they automatically correspond to the development concepts of regions and cities. Without a reciprocal fine-tuning process, they can unintentionally aggravate disparities in regional development if they are exclusively geared towards specific sectoral objectives.” (CEC 1999, paragraph 61)

Even within the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) it was stated that a fine-tuning process regarding the impacts of Community sectoral policies will be needed if an unintentionally aggravation of regional disparities among EU member states’ regions should be avoided. However, in terms of the co-ordination of European policies, the ESDP has had up to now an only minor impact.

Repeated demands by both the European Parliament and the EU Member States notwithstanding, responsibility for European spatial development policy remains unclear. Spatial development on the European level is actually “treated” as a coincidental outcome of EU sector policies. No unit exists in the European Commission with which to co-ordinate the spatial effects of Community policies.

There is no doubt that the lack of co-ordination between Community policies causes complex problems – in regard to the effective assignment of financial subsidies as well as the goals of Community sector policies. The spatial effects of these policies do not automatically complement each other, along the line of a more balanced regional, respectively spatial, development among European Union Member States. In particular after the declaration of territorial cohesion as one of the core Community objectives in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, co-ordination of Community policies is necessary more than ever.

Initially, in the following chapters the paper will set out from various perspectives the necessity for co-ordinating Community sectoral policies. Subsequently the effort will be undertaken to draw different possibilities for the organisation of such an co-ordination while taking into account the current legal general conditions.

2 The Necessity of Co-ordination of Community Policies with Spatial Relevance

“Bringing all public policies – in particular Community policies – with territorial impacts closer to the objectives and policy options of the ESDP, would undoubtedly constitute an effective means of strengthening in a sustainable way their reciprocal coherence and of

increasing their mutual synergy. Consequently, territorial coherence is likely to become a powerful vector for better global effectiveness of Community policies". (CEC 2001, 6)

In the integrated Single Market of Europe, development in the regions is nowadays much more interdependent than in the past. "The particular spatial structure of member states and their regions are to a considerable degree influenced by decisions beyond the reach of the authorities responsible for spatial planning. These decisions are made partly [...] by political and administrative authorities of the EU and the member states." (Benz, 2002, 140)

Based on the German understanding of spatial development policy - characterised as multi-disciplinary and under no circumstance attached to only one sector - one could justifiably claim that there is none such policy existing at European level. The core task of spatial development policy is to co-ordinate spatially relevant sector policies in order to achieve balanced and well-regulated spatial development and to align the development of subordinate areas with that of the area as a whole. With its compound focus this policy goes far beyond individual sector policies.

In the contrary to such a co-ordinating policy, spatial development on European level is actually "treated" as a "co-incidental effect" of EU sector policies (cp. Schäfer, 2003).

It is obvious that this lack of co-ordination causes complex problems – in regard to the effective assignment of financial subsidies as well as regarding the specific goals of Community sector policies. Spatial planning is the most important among policies negatively affected by deficient co-ordination.

Consequently there have been numerous attempts in recent years to reduce frictional losses during the implementation of these policies and to establish a reliable framework for European spatial development. The adoption of the ESDP was a milestone in this respect. The Perspective as approved by the informal Council of the Ministers responsible for spatial planning in 1999 concerns in its objectives and policy options a large number of actors. At Community level it calls for a better consideration of the territorial impacts of European Unions sectoral policies in order to enable a more effective co-ordination of these policies. However, in terms of the co-ordination of European policies, the ESDP has had only minor impact.

"The ESDP provides the possibility of widening the horizon beyond purely sectoral policy measures, to focus on the overall situation of the European territory and also take into account the development opportunities which arise for individual regions." (CEC 1999, paragraph 8)

Essentially like national planning systems, it is directed towards three dimensions of co-ordination:

1. “Coordination among European sector policies affecting territorial development [horizontal co-ordination];
2. Coordination of activities in different European regions that should be achieved by co-operation among member states’ governments (or the institutions responsible for regional planning in member states);
3. Coordination among spatial planning at different levels, i.e. European, national and regional planning [vertical co-ordination]” (Benz 2002, 142)

This paper’s focus lies on the horizontal dimension of co-ordination.

Being aware of the fact that the spatial impact of Community policies has up to now not satisfactorily been taken into consideration the European Commission itself stressed in its White Paper on European Governance that “the territorial impact of EU policies in areas such as transport, energy or environment should be addressed. These policies should form part of a coherent whole [...]; there is a need to avoid a logic which is too sector-specific.” (CEC, 2001a, 13). In line with this White Paper the aim has been for the Commission and the member states to jointly develop indicators with which to identify where coherence among several political areas is needed. In so doing, the development of indicators has to “build upon existing work, such as the ESDP [...]” (CEC, 2001a, 13). The establishment of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) can be seen as a logical outcome of these intentions. Nevertheless, and even taking account of the outcomes of ESPON, the problem of deficient co-ordination of spatially relevant Community sector policies has not yet been solved.

Beside the described general need for co-ordination of EU sectoral policies against the background of a future orientated European spatial development its necessity can be derived from various aspects.

2.1 Co-ordination as a Consequence of European Integration

Aside from political goals (the desire to establish peace through co-operation and integration after the experiences of two world wars), economic considerations were the primary catalyst of European integration in the 1950s. Consequently, the European Union began as a sector-based, transnational European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

Nowadays, after various milestones of reformatory efforts, altogether five enlargements of the Community and a more closely integrated Europe it has become increasingly clear that the Community cannot simply have an exclusively economic dimension. “For a harmonious overall development, a large number of other policy areas clearly have to be included.” (ARL 2003, 4)

Already with the Treaty of Rome in 1957 common policy was extended to all aspects of economy and a new phase of the integration of Europe was ringed in. The signatories went beyond economic policy and took decisive steps towards introducing the liberalisation of movement of people, capital and services as well as a common agricultural, trade and transport policy. For the first time policies were established on the European level that, in addition to their economic effects, had impacts on the spatial development of the member states. In regard to its fields of political activity the European Economic Community (EEC) had thus gone beyond a purely sectorally and economically active “co-operation of interests”.

But the commonly organisation and steering of economic policies was only the first step. Due to its success the Community was soon facing prime negotiations concerning the enlargement of the EEC. As a consequence new member states such as the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland (1973) as well as Greece (1981) and Spain and Portugal (1986) joined in the following years the Community. These enlargements had significant impact on the political agenda of the European Community.

While the founding states were rather homogenous and consisting of more or less similar regional structures, with the enlargements regional disparities within the European Community became more apparent. It could no longer be denied that market forces and common economic policies on their own could not reduce such disparities. A regional policy at European level invoking regulatory instruments to reduce development disparities became more important. Increasing integration and the redistribution of political responsibilities from the national to the European, i.e. supranational level resulted in growing influence of policies on economic and thus spatial development of member states.

The Single European Act, ratified in 1986, gave a new dimension to political integration and served as the starting point for tangible integrative steps and institutional reforms. Its main objectives were the reform of the Community treaties and to push the European integration through the creation of a European Single Market. In its political turn structural policy was incorporated into the European Treaties and EEC's general powers, especially regarding

research and technology, environmental protection and economic development were significantly enhanced.

This development was continued by the signing of the Treaty of the European Union in Maastricht 1992 and the ensuing treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001). These treaties and the related negotiations were milestones on the way towards an increasingly integrated European Union. The length to which European integration has gone is aptly illustrated by the recent enlargement of the Union with ten central and eastern European nations on 1 May 2004. The European Union has evolved from a partnership of states, solely active in the field of economic policy, into a union of nations with diverse policies.

It is obvious that the transfer of political responsibility from the national to the supranational, respectively EU level calls also for a responsibility to co-ordinate the impacts of exactly these policies. It is not understandable why decisions in sector policies with particular spatial relevance such as transport, environment or agriculture policy can be made on European level whereas nobody takes care of an appropriate co-ordination of both the policies and their impacts on spatial development in EU member states and the EU as a whole.

Spatially relevant European sector policies continued to operate independently from each other. The sector orientation of the Commission and of the political processes at Brussels continue to be strong. European policy is to a considerable extent formulated by experts in the various sectors. Territorial know-how is not, at least not in a structural manner, incorporated into the political process. Territorial aspects are, by their nature, strongly interwoven with each other and these interrelations are constantly on the increase. Examples are demographic changes, water management, conservation and the management of natural resources and cultural heritage, and also transport and infrastructure.

Because of this fact a co-ordination of Community policies is essential. Integrating the new objective of territorial cohesion beside economic and social cohesion in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe might be a first step in the right direction. Although the term of territorial cohesion is not at all clearly defined and a mutual understanding of what is exactly meant by this term is hardly existing. But one seems to be clear: territorial cohesion calls for a serious consideration of territorial aspects in sectoral policies on European level.

2.2 Co-ordination and the Objectives of the EU Treaty

Both the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community (consolidates versions of Nice) do not contain explicitly the demand for a co-ordination of sectoral policies on European level. But the necessity for co-ordination can be derived from the stated objectives of the Community.

Main objectives in this respect are the economic and social cohesion (Art. 2 EU Treaty) as well as a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development (Art. 2 EC Treaty), a high degree of competitiveness (Art. 2 EC Treaty) and the raising of the quality of live (Art. 2 EC Treaty).

The core Treaty Goals of a social and economic cohesion have been broadened and reinforced by the new goal of territorial cohesion added in the final draft of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The objective of territorial cohesion is to “help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, avoiding territorial imbalances and by making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent. The concern is also to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions.” (CEC 2004, 27). Attaining this objective is not possible without co-ordinating those EU sector policies that have significant impact on the spatial development of member states and thus on European spatial development.

All of this objectives are less sectoral influenced than on the contrary a result of a multi-disciplinary interaction between different political fields of action. They involve extremely complex areas of political activity; all of them interconnected as well as subject to various “internal” influences. The scope of necessary considerations to achieve these goals is broad.

Therefore achieving this objectives seems not realistic by focussing on political targets that are too sector specific. Particularly against the background of the recent enlargement of 10 new member states a political strategy capable of significantly reducing regional disparities and taking into account the diversified character of problems with a clear territorial dimension is of unprecedented importance. Such a political strategy can not be built up on only sectoral approaches. Co-ordinating spatially relevant sector policies could be a important step towards such a strategy and will contribute to the achievement of the Treaty objectives.

2.3 Co-ordination for the Purpose of Sustainable Development

Sustainability itself is not a target of only sectoral character. Although its roots lie in forestry the philosophy of sustainability encloses economical, social and ecological aspects. The goal of orienting European policies along the principle of sustainable development was endorsed in the Treaty of Maastricht. Since then it can be seen as the overall guiding principle of all political activities on European level.

In terms of the development of the European territory, the quest for sustainability entails that ecological and social aspects are to be harmonised with economic objectives. It follows that economic and structural policy instruments must adhere to environmental and social goals. In other words: in order to achieve sustainable and balanced development, sector policies must be co-ordinated.

Until now it appears as if this had only happened sporadically. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) provides a spatial development strategy, thereby supplying an initial approach towards establishing an appropriate framework for necessary co-ordination. To date, however, the Commission has taken hardly any steps towards introducing more co-ordination between EU sector policies in accordance with the guidelines of ESDP. If any attempts are made, then they are usually the result of activities by individual Directorates-General (e.g. environmental policy) and are only applied to their own sectoral – as opposed to general – goals.

It seems to be obvious that sustainable development is only achievable by developing a long term perspective for efficient and coherent co-ordination of Community sector policies. The reasons for that are twofold:

Firstly, the sector policies on European level are interdependent and are therefore influencing each other. Acting for a long term perspective in a sustainable way – even from a sectoral point of view – means consequently being aware of the activities in other sectors and collaborate at least with those sectors that show the largest intersection (see also the following chapter below).

Secondly, taking a more general standpoint sustainable development as leading principle for the whole European territory strongly asks for the co-operation of different sectors. The specialised knowledge can thus be used for drawing one coherent strategy for the spatial development of the European Union. Particularly the recent enlargement with its consequences for European integration and its broad challenges for economic, social as well as territorial cohesion in Europe underlines the need for such a strategy.

2.4 Co-ordination in Order to Improve the Effectiveness and Coherence of European Community Policies

“The need for coherence in the Union is increasing: the range of tasks has grown; enlargement will increase diversity; challenges such as climate and demographic change cross the boundaries of the sectoral policies on which the Union has been built. [...] Coherence requires political leadership and a strong responsibility on the part of the Institutions to ensure a consistent approach within a complex system.” (COM (2001), 428 final, 10).

Co-ordination of sector policies would also benefit the policies themselves. Concurrent Community policies cause frictional losses on two levels.

First, one must assume that the lack of co-ordination makes achieving the sectors’ goals all the more harder. In the early 1990s both the European Parliament and the member states pointed out that more co-operation between Community sector policies was a necessity (cp. Schäfer, 2003). They criticised the fact that the effects of the policies were at times counter-productive, their goals contradictory and that interdependencies between policies were not considered thoroughly. Activities towards remedying this situation were only hesitant at best.

While the ESDP was being developed it became clear that scientific advice to policy makers was of major significance to the success of such a process. At their informal meeting in Leipzig in 1994 the spatial development ministers of the member states agreed to strengthen the analytical capacity on the European level and to establish a European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON). The network was to provide specific information on the spatial effects of common policies and to identify future territorial challenges facing the EU. Appropriate indicators were to be employed to “measure” and map these spatial effects.

Regardless of ambitious plans, initially a Study Programme on European Spatial Planning (SPESP) was set up as a pilot action under Article 10 of the Structural Funds in co-operation between the EU Member States and the European Commission (1998-2000). “The Study Programme was also a test exercise, intended to provide insights on how a possible European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) could be organised and what could be expected of it.” (SPESP final report 2000, preface). It took until 2002 for ESPON to get off the ground under the INTERREG IIIB Community Initiative. The network has been established for a five-year period, i.e. it will receive financing until 2006. In this framework, the first attempt has been made to quantify the spatial influences of EU policies and thereby to

provide scientific evidence; a prerequisite as no other for improved co-ordination and greater effectiveness of these policies.

Second, the conclusion seems evident that improved co-ordination would also lead to a more effective implementation of European financial assistance. This has been confirmed by representatives of the European Commission. In order to collect more information on the spatial effects of policies and the potential costs resulting from the non-co-ordination, in 2001 DG Regio commissioned a study of these interdependencies. The study concentrates on the territorial impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Policy, the Common Transport Policy as well as the Common Environmental Policy. It aptly illustrates numerous imbalances regarding the allocation of European financial assistance and proposes that in the future the spatial effects of joint policies be better recognised and that more effective co-ordination of these policies be facilitated (cp. CEC 2001b, 160).

The recent EU Enlargement has posed substantial additional challenges concerning the integrative capacity of the Community. Despite the increased duties and responsibilities as a consequence of this enlargement, member states are unlikely to allocate more funds. Therefore, a more efficient use of EU Structural Funds will become of great importance. Now more than ever, European spatial development geared to co-ordination and territorial cohesion seems the order of the day. By means of such co-ordination, spatially relevant EU sector policies could be employed in such a manner that, together with the Structural Funds, they reinforce territorial cohesion.

2.5 The Necessity of Co-ordination against the Background of Competitiveness

The creation of the European Single Market has deeply affected the macrostructure of European space, by a reallocation of economic resources. The free flow of people, goods, services and capital has extended and intensified European-wide competition among private firms as well as among localities. The related processes lead to several changes in European spatial structures.

A new functional division of labour between regions is evolving. Attracting investors is no longer only a question of intranational but of Europe-wide competition. Regions with particular economic advantages and excellent infrastructure are able to attract enterprises from all over Europe. BENZ is stressing, that “the reallocation of investments in the larger European context is driven by the opportunities to reduce costs by adequately combining private and public activities in production clusters and networks.” (Benz 2002, 140). As a

consequence highly specialised functions are concentrated in a few regions while private investments are dispersed over the whole European territory. The increasing flexibility of people, goods and particularly money calls for an integrated European network of transport and communication infrastructure.

Especially larger city regions are facing growing pressure for land use in their whole agglomeration. They have to secure the availability of space for specialised activities whilst securing a high standard of live quality for their inhabitants. For those regions it seems essential to implement a sustainable development strategy in order to being prepared for the Europe-wide competition.

“Finally, regions that profited from the protective effects of national boundaries have lost in the competition among regions in Europe.” (Benz 2002, 141)

These changes relating to the economic dynamics of the European Single Market show that market forces alone are not able to steer economic development in a socially acceptable way. European regional policy is aiming at avoiding the decline of economically weaker regions and achieving a well balanced territorial structure for supporting the future cohesion of the Single Market.

Such a balancing regional policy seems only reachable by the consideration of spatial aspects and patterns within the specific policy targets. A harmonised strategy for the allocation of economic activities and financial aids for economic development will be needed for the whole European territory in order to fulfil the competitiveness goals laid down in the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. Through a fine-tuning between regional policy and other policies related to spatial development it will be possible to create a long term strategy aiming at exactly these goals.

3. Co-ordination of Community Sectoral Policies and the Competency Issue

“The competency issue and practical reasons both prevent the EU from resorting to unilateral control, or from setting binding goals for public or private actors. At the same time, member states and regions cannot be expected to act on their own to voluntarily adjust their spatial policies. Therefore, coordination in European spatial policy has to be accomplished through the process of negotiations and cooperation.” (Benz 2002, 143)

As BENZ mentioned the competency issue is one of the main questions that remains unsolved. Currently the responsibility for spatial planning lies on member states level.

Formally the Commission has no right to decide concrete measures in the field of spatial planning or spatial development. On the other hand Community sectoral policies as transport, environmental, agriculture and particularly structural policy are developing undoubtedly spatial impacts both in the whole European Union and the member states. This leads to the situation that, although there is no formal competence for spatial development on European level, European spatial development is steered by sectoral fiscal instruments. These are neither co-ordinated in terms of their spatial impacts, nor are they oriented along spatial criteria. Why then not simply give the competence for spatial development to the European Commission in order to improve this situation and create appropriate conditions for a comprehensive and real spatial development policy on European level?

To answer this question it is of great importance to gain insights in both the political background of the discussion concerning the responsibility for European spatial development and the varying aspects of this responsibility (cp. Schäfer 2003, 26-30).

First, regarding the political background it has to be stated that member states positions so far were not at all homogenous or concerted. This seems to be even more the case since the recent enlargement of the European Union. Particularly the Federal Republic of Germany stressed that spatial development is solely a matter of nation-state decisions. As a consequence a *European* spatial development policy will under no circumstances be supported. This strictly position can be explained by the federal organisation and the related powers as well as the long tradition in the field of spatial development in Germany.

Second, in order to seriously discuss the competency issue it has to be divided into three sub-issues: the co-ordination competence, the competence of the content and the spatial observatory competence.

As written above the present non-co-ordination of spatially relevant sector policies causes frictional losses. This is a fact and is regularly criticised by both the European Parliament and the EU member states. Consequently, and some member states' positions notwithstanding, this competence should be transferred to the European level. In this context another question is of immediate interest: It might be the case that the European Commission already has the co-ordination competence out of her organisational power. One can certainly be of the opinion that with the competence for the sector policies the Commission also has the right and the obligation to co-ordinate these policies in order to fulfil the defined sector targets in the best possible manner. However, from which treaty regulation the competence for co-ordinating European sector policies can be derived has not yet been established.

A bit more difficult is the situation with the competence of the content. Although gathering of guidelines on European level as a reference document is useful and needed – likewise as a basis for a spatial development related co-ordination – this has not to be done by the European Commission. In the contrast following the subsidiary principle this is undoubtedly a matter of national state level or even regional level. The rejection by member states of a content related competence for the European Commission is therefore a logical consequence.

Regarding the spatial observation a transfer of the competence to the European level might be absolutely reasonable. This solution was already discussed in advance to the ESPON (see above). But the present organisation of ESPON as a network based on national research institutes shows at the same time that a solely European competence is not urgently needed. As long as a extensive information flow between member states and the Commission is secured – and again following the subsidiary principle – the responsibility for spatial observation should be left with the member states.

The broadening and reinforcing of the core Treaty Goals of social and economic cohesion by the new goal of territorial cohesion – added in the final draft of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe – has opened a new capital in the discussion around a European competence for spatial development. Territorial cohesion falls according to the Constitutions regulations under the sphere of shared competence. However, what is exactly meant by territorial cohesion is up to now not at all clarified. Some experts' opinion is that the new terms in principle covers the same as European spatial development does. Whereas others do not agree and identify significant differences between territorial cohesion and European spatial development. Scientists as well as politicians and experts in European spatial development are urgently called on clarifying this question and defining the core aspects of territorial cohesion in contrast to European spatial development.

4. Possibilities for the Co-ordination of Community Sectoral Policies¹

As above mentioned this paper concentrates on the horizontal co-ordination of EU sector policies. On principle there are two ways of organising this kind of co-ordination: initiated by the European Commission (top down) or by the EU member states (bottom up). For both of these ways there are currently varying alternatives and instruments on the agenda.

¹ Currently, the author is working on a PhD under the provisional title “Possibilities and Limits of an Inner-European Coordination Responsibility for the Purpose of European Spatial Development”. The proposals presented here thus represent work in progress.

Due to the multilevel governance in the European Union co-ordination in European spatial development has to be accomplished through the process of negotiations between the European Commission and the member states – even if the organisation of co-ordination is initialised by the Commission itself. Particularly the involvement of member states is of great importance. The reason is twofold. First, Community policies have increasing influence on the spatial development of member states. After the recent EU-Enlargement the number of states affected member states affected by EU policies has increased. Their participation in the co-ordination process is of paramount importance; they must not be excluded from a co-ordination strategy. Therefore, any such strategy should be agreed jointly between member states and the Commission.

And second, member states have enormous knowledge about their specific spatial structures, imbalances and territorial diversities. A forward-looking co-ordination strategy should in no way ignore this tremendous potential.

Therefore organisational structures applied during the elaboration of the ESDP as the Committee on Spatial Development (CSD) might be also appropriate for a concerted effort for European spatial development. In this process a close communication and co-operation between member states and the Commission has been realised. The expectations of all involved actors were taken into consideration and the resulting perspective is jointly respected both by the member states and the Commission.

The already mentioned study “Spatial Impacts of Community Policies and Costs of Non-Coordination” (CEC 2001b, see above) made also several interesting recommendations for better integration of the territorial dimension in Community policies. This possibilities have to be analysed and further developed in order to identify their appropriateness for a forward-looking co-ordination of sectoral policies in European spatial development.

A more “bottom up approach” could be the engagement of EU member states in terms of co-ordinating sector policies’ impacts on spatial development in Europe. Among experts currently the application of the so-called Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) in this political field is under discussion. In its White Paper on European Governance the European Commission suggested the use of the OMC“ in order to complement or reinforce Community actions. This method is used on a case by case basis and can be a way “of encouraging cooperation, the exchange of best practices and agreeing common targets and guidelines for member states“ (CEC 2001a, 21). OMC is being applied in policy fields in which the European Commission has *no* competence but where there is a reasonable prospect of

Member State agreement. Therefore, the open method of co-ordination has been used particularly in decisions relating to social policy. How and to what extent the OMC could be a possibility for a member state commitment in terms of European spatial development is not yet identified and justifies more detailed study.

Of course these suggestions are not final. Various alternatives can be discussed further in order to find possible solutions for a practical and effective co-ordination of EU sector policies in order to achieve more balanced, coherent and well-structured European spatial development.

5. Concluding Remarks

The need for co-ordination as described above is undisputed. A co-ordination competence on European level could help to duly consider the wide cross-section of aspects of spatial development. Particularly according to the competency issue an objective and differentiated discussion will be needed to act in agreement with the principles of subsidiary whilst at the same time transferring those competences needed to the European level. A clear co-ordination responsibility offers the chance to instil in the sectoral policies a higher level of spatial effectiveness; and it serves to promote better use of financial assistance. It is urgently necessary to discuss the type of organisation, the form and content of the co-ordination of spatially relevant policies in terms of sustainable and comprehensive European spatial development and to decide on how to approach their implementation. This is especially true against the backdrop of the eastern EU expansion and the associated challenges. The aspects outlined above are intended as a contribution to this discussion.

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