R.E.D. contribution to the territorial cohesion

Scale and scope of territorial action

The territorial cohesion should not only be seen among the Regions of the European Union, but must also be put into practice at the heart of each region, which will allow its territorial components, urban as well as rural, to define and achieve their development objectives. In the pursuit of territorial cohesion, European rural areas must be associated, on an even footing with urban centres, with the preparation and implementation of development strategies for the Regions and States of the European Union. The recognition of the rural territories as «poles of development» rather than natural and agricultural spaces only, is a key condition.

If we are to avoid territorial imbalances resulting in urban over-concentration, with its consequent social and environmental problems, it is essential to concentrate in rural areas on the creation of local partnerships and the right methods of establishing collective and multi-sectoral actions. Here is the clear evidence of the necessity for a specific policy for rural territories, so they can be a dynamic part of an equal relationship with urban areas. The establishment of a genuine European Rural Development Policy is an essential requirement to ensure territorial cohesion within the EU. Its implementation through the various Community funds that are likely to intervene in rural territories, has to be inspired by a European rural strategy whose guiding lines have to be set up as the joint reference; it would then permit the connection between the diverse programmes.

Crossing multi-polar approach and subsidiarity principle may be put into effect by building territorial strategic projects thanks to more co-operating process open to both “bottom” and “up” actors and including national and European guidelines. The territorial strategic project, with a governance process largely drawn from Leader approach, becomes the basis and the reference of European aids on a given territory. Worked out at infra-regional level, it makes local communities closer to European means and reinforce their local impacts.

The territorial scale of policy intervention

Giving a quantitative answer to this question is not possible but we need considering that each problem has two efficiency thresholds, one minimum, the other maximum:

- many projects supported by the European Union are connected, by their nature, with infra-Regional strategies and they are all the more efficient for being thought and carried out at this scale. Merging these projects in a too large territorial scale would waste a part of their dynamics. But, insofar as these strategies integrate both objectives of internal development and external positioning, trans-national and inter-territorial cooperation must come within the framework of thought.
- other projects, specially for infrastructure, are to be led at a wider scale and call for national or supra-Regional perspective.

The geographical delimitation of poles of development, rural or urban, is based on the local dynamics and validated by the Member States and/or the Regions.
The coherence of political action: integrated plan, EGTD and EGTD Council

The coordination and the coherence of the policies depend on the joint adequacy of the territory, the plan and the governance.

**As regards territory.**

R.E.D. promotes a multi-polar approach of the European space, based on rural poles and urban poles of development in positive interrelation. As a reminder, the definition of rural pole proposed by R.E.D. is the following:

"A rural pole of development is an inhabited, significantly rural area where the social, economic and territorial evolutions are led within the framework of an integrated and prospective development plan. A rural pole is not an agglomeration but a rural territory as a whole, which may include one or more small towns."  *Extract from the Glossary of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional/spatial planning - CEMAT)*

**As regards designing plan.**

The territorial development plan can be regarded as a business plan for the territory concerned. It defines short-, medium- and long-term targets, development guidelines, and the human and material resources required to achieve the set objectives. The formulation and implementation of the territorial development plan must be participative. Civil society, public and private actors, must be partners in such an undertaking. Local participative development in France and the European Union’s LEADER programme are among the mechanisms setting out this approach, although similar approaches do exist in other States.

The coherence between the measures supported by the various European Funds is given by their validation with regard to the objectives expressed in the development pole strategy.

**As regards governance.**

R.E.D requests the Commission to take initiative in adopting a new tool of territorial cohesion, the European Grouping of Territorial Development (EGTD). Modelled of the concept of the LEADER LAGs (Objective 4 of the EAFRD) and the EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation linked to the Objective 3 of the ERDF), the role of the EGTD is, for a given territory, to facilitate and to accompany actions which contribute to strengthening social, economic and territorial cohesion. Transcending the experiences and procedures of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation and Leader Local Action Groups (LAGs), this instrument of cohesion would be mandated, more particularly, to implement the territorialized programmes and projects co-financed by the European Union, by the Regional Development Fund, the Rural Fund or other. As a reminder, the adoption of the concept of “Local Action Groups” by the Commission was crucial key in the success of Leader approach. In order to give efficient tool for territorial cohesion, the Commission should take similar initiative by the European Grouping of Territorial Development (EGTD)

The implementation of the territory plan must be based on patterns of cooperation between public and private institutions within a collective dynamic. This implies democratisation and local governance, through the expression of local actors needs in relation to their own issues, and the access to development opportunities by the animation.

To enlarge its partnership, the European Grouping of Territorial Development (EGTD) would be assisted by a Council of the EGTD. The Council’s members would be from one hand institutional partners of the EGTD and from the other socio-economic and associative actors on the territory.

Its mission would be twofold:

- valuation and development of the strategy development centre;
- selection and programming of actions financed within the framework of the strategy.

That process of participative governance should be strengthened through support to engineering, territories animation and support actions by training.