



Axiology for a position of Atlantic cities with regard to the European cohesion policy and urban agenda

General Secretariat

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As reflected in the latest Declarations of La Rochelle and A Corunna of the CAAC, cohesion policy and the European urban agenda are the main concerns of Atlantic cities. Thus, this contribution wants to note a series of values (axiology) and priority axis the Atlantic Urban Forum considers fundamental with respect to the post-2020 reform of both policies and to the on-going analysis. This axiology will lead to a strengthened political position in June 2017, coinciding with the Cohesion Forum.

European Urban Agenda:

Atlantic cities manifest:

- ✚ That all work underway in the framework of the European Urban Agenda must contribute to the construction of a real urban policy and not just be limited to perishable instruments (such as partnerships) or to communication. This policy must settle in the different operational and cooperation programmes, and in the innovation and exchange programmes.
- ✚ That this urban policy should rely on a real system of governance represented by a European urban body capable of developing a structured dialogue, and serve as a sounding board for the issues of cities and citizens.
- ✚ That the European urban agenda should respect the territorial dimension and the network perspective, since cities are not spatial isolated dots, as well as the links between cities and their environment.
- ✚ That the existing “urban acquis” should be valued, not only by improving the contents of the web facility (for example, including more urban and territorial networks in the contents), but also through the creation of an urban section in the KEEP repertoire.
- ✚ That the international dimension is also part of cities’ development strategies and should therefore be integrated to the urban agenda.

Cohesion policy:

Atlantic cities reaffirm their engagement for the construction and the perpetuation of the European project alongside the States, the Regions and the socioeconomic actors, and to promote the values carried out by this European project.

Atlantic cities want to insist on the definition of cohesion policy as a pillar of European construction, which goes beyond the structural funds. Cohesion policy brings together principles such as subsidiarity, proximity to citizens and territories, the functioning of the single market, stability, convergence and socioeconomic insertion.

Thus, these principles wish to remind that at a time where uncertainty is predominant, the pillars of the EU project should be maintained. A scenario without cohesion policy or with it as a testimonial policy would be catastrophic.

Toward the next post-2020 reforms, Atlantic cities call for the retention of a European budget able to develop significant cohesion policy and common agricultural policy, pillars of the European project.

In this regard, Atlantic cities want to highlight:

- ✚ That the debate cannot wait until 2020. In the framework of the negotiations on Brexit, the necessary guarantees for the implementation of the current programming must be given.
- ✚ That new challenges can and must be taken into account from now on: example of the migrants.
- ✚ That the European project needs consolidation to confront new challenges. It is not time to reinvent the wheel by inventing new programs and/or diverting funds from cohesion policy; but to assume the difference between priorities and actions. For instance, as it occurs at present within the "European social fund" priority, solutions to the problems of employment and immigration already exist inside.
- ✚ That, with respect to the first analysis of the European Commission that emphasizes the slow progress of the policy in this period, Atlantic cities want to remind that the delay in the adoption of the EU budget as well as the architecture of the new regulations and requirements were significant obstacles for the launch of the program in 2014; and that all the European institutions must therefore undertake their share of responsibility.
- ✚ That the financial instruments must not substitute cohesion policy and constitute the unique mode of action, but remain a complementary instrument once their real added value is demonstrated.
- ✚ That for increasing the efficiency of cohesion policy, it is fundamental to carry on effort regarding flexibility, simplification and coordination, thus contributing to a real subsidiarity. Similarly, the partnership principle must consolidate the role of territories alongside managing authorities.
- ✚ That the macroeconomic conditionality and the alignment with the European semester must not represent an imbalance at regional level, but an incentive for better cooperation between levels of governance.
- ✚ That territorial cooperation is a fundamental dimension which should be strengthened to improve the relevance of the European policy in a transnational perspective. Initiatives that improve its efficiency such as macro-regions should gain in weight in the future.
- ✚ That similarly, the distribution of funds should improve its formula (Berlin formula) to include not only the more lagging regions, but also those which experience difficulties in their development because of their geography context.
- ✚ That in particular, considering the on-going process of Brexit, the "Atlantic Area" transnational cooperation programme must be reinforced via a specific financial engagement of the United-Kingdom to enable the participation of British stakeholders.