

Speech by the Portuguese Minister of Territorial Cohesion, Ana Abrunhosa

Thank you.

I would like to congratulate the German Presidency for the Territorial Agenda and all of those who worked on this document.

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to be here today and have the opportunity to gather with such distinguished colleagues and agree to the vital importance of territorial cohesion and the crucial role of the renewed Territorial Agenda for the future of Europe.

As you know, in the first semester of 2021, Portugal will take over its fourth Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and, as in 2007, this will happen after the adoption of the Territorial Agenda. As before, we want to ensure its continuity and momentum. Only, today, the challenges are even more significant. Which leads me to conclude that the Territorial Agenda is more relevant than ever.

We are living a truly difficult moment in history. It has become clear that the economic and social effects of the pandemic can, and probably will, increase disparities and inequality across and within the Member States. Those disparities are causing some people and territories to be left behind.

Indeed, if Europe is to emerge stronger from this pandemic, we need, more than ever, to lay firm foundations for lasting territorial cohesion.

We need to strengthen the territorial dimension of all policies in all levels of government. We need, of course, to stimulate a just and green recovery. And more than ever, we need to focus on policies for a shared sustainable future for all places, for all people.



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It is in the face of this critical challenge that I ask:

Will we, collectively, find the political will to put the renewed Territorial Agenda on the political, European agenda?

Will we, collectively, demonstrate the commitment to put the political priorities of territorial cohesion into action?

Will we, the European Union and its Member States, regions, and cities, be able to put together this multiscale joint and coordinated effort?

I believe we have the will!

And nearly one-third of the way is done. We already have this new Territorial Agenda. This will guide our cooperation and governance efforts for the foreseeable future and, to start, for the next six months.

Soon the Portuguese Presidency will also play an ambitious role in this undertaking. We have to make sure that the Territorial Agenda 2030 moves forward: tomorrow and in the long run.

If we compare this new Territorial Agenda with its 2007 and 2011 forerunners, we can see significant differences in its ambition. Now, critically, the emphasis is on its better communication and implementation.

With these rather demanding ambitions in mind, we want to develop and carry out actions for communication at the European, national and local levels and inspire and engage the relevant stakeholders in the priorities and implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030.

It is not redundant to emphasize the following: we believe territory and people matter when it comes to the political instruments to implement territorial cohesion. We are fully committed to the objectives and priorities of this renewed



Territorial Agenda and, in particular, to the pilot actions that aim to put this agenda into practice.

Key facts and figures are often very telling. So, allow me to recall this: six pilot actions will gain momentum during our Portuguese Presidency. We expect to start seeing some progress and assess this implementation.

As we all know, putting priorities into action brings about both challenges and opportunities. Fortunately, these pilot actions will generate occasions to exchange views and best innovative practices to turn these challenges into opportunities and progress towards disseminating and implementing the Territorial Agenda.

To succeed, we need to work together.

We need to ensure the overall territorial coherence of all our different policies, to link all our shared objectives, and to guarantee proper ownership by all stakeholders at all different territorial levels. So together, we need to make a case for territorial cohesion, we need to explain why places and people matter, and we must achieve truly multi-level governance.

National, regional and local governments, stakeholders, and citizens cannot be beneficiaries only. They can and must play a key role in the implementation of the territorial agenda. We need to involve countries, regions, and cities, all partners and relevant stakeholders at large, linked together in their cause and their need because this is critical for the success of our agenda.

Territorial Cohesion means bringing the territories' diversity, and the stakeholders' views into the political decision-making process. By doing so, we are respecting the territories' specificities, and we are introducing flexibility in the implementation process. And today, with the pandemic, we can see the importance of this flexibility, because reality changes constantly. So we need place and people-based



approaches, so we will be able to have the tools and the means to ensure a more flexible and improved cohesion.

I will conclude by telling you that the next Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Territorial Cohesion is scheduled for late May, early June, during our Portuguese Presidency. I hope we can all end this pandemic until then. If not, we would we very much like to welcome you, through your computer screens, to continue this work.

Thank you for your attention.

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