

**Report from
Baltic-Nordic Macro Regional Conference
(ENECON End Conference)**

**“Challenges and opportunities
for territorial development and cohesion
in a North European macro-region”**

10th – 11th April 2014

**Venue:
Hotel Holiday Inn Vilnius, Lithuania**



Background and scope:

The ENECON project (cf. <http://www.rha.is/enecon>) invited policy-makers, researchers, planning professionals and practitioners at national, regional and local levels, representatives of Baltic and Nordic organizations, and the ESPON "family", to share and discuss results and insights of ESPON projects and the use of ESPON-tools in a Baltic-Nordic macro regional policy and planning context. The conference targeted a selection of ESPON project findings which were considered particularly relevant for policy-making in a North European context. In the sessions representatives of the selected ESPON transnational projects presented and discussed research findings in a North European perspective, facilitating a wider dialogue.

Organizers:

The appointed conference steering group (cf. below) supported by the whole ENECON Transnational Project Team. Hosted by Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (main responsible: Airida Bernotaitė).

Brief Dictionary

"ESPON Evidence in a North European Context" (ENECON): ENECON addresses challenges and opportunities facing territorial development and spatial planning policies and practices, particular to the large territory of the northern part of Europe. By actively facilitating the use and capitalization of ESPON-evidence the overall aim is to contribute to making clear the significance of the European perspective on territorial development and cohesion, and especially the crucial need for a transnational cooperation approach to territorial analysis, policies and planning in a macro-regional context and perspective. The project is implemented by the ECPs from Norway (Lead Partner), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden.

ECP = ESPON Contact Point

ESPON 2013 = The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion 2007-2014

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ENECON website: <http://rha.is/enecon>



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ENECON

ESPON Evidence in a North
European Context

Baltic-Nordic Macro Regional Conference
(ENECON project end conference)

Challenges and opportunities for territorial development and cohesion in a North European macro-region

10-11 April 2014

Venue: Hotel Holiday Inn Vilnius, Lithuania
(Address: Šeimyniškių str.1, LT-09312, Vilnius)

CONFERENCE DRAFT PROGRAMME:

THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2014:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:00-13:00 | Check-in, registration and buffet lunch |
| 13:00-13:30 | Welcome and opening session <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Olaf Foss, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (ENECON Lead Partner)- Aleksandras Gordevičius, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (ESPON MC Member) |
| 13:30-14:45 | Challenges and opportunities as evidenced by ESPON Applied Research Projects
(Chair: Heikki Eskelinen, University of Eastern Finland - Karelian Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Alexandre Dubois, Nordregio: Territorial scenarios and visions for Europe (ET2050)- Veiko Sepp, University of Tartu: Economic crisis and resilience of regions (ECR2) |
| 14:45-15:15 | Coffee break |
| 15:15-16:30 | Challenges and opportunities as evidenced by ESPON Applied Research projects, cont.
(Chair: Mats Johansson, Royal Institute of Technology) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Petri Kahila, Nordregio: Territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion (TIPSE) |

- **Julien Grunfelder, Nordregio:** *EU neighboring regions and territorial development (ITAN)*

16:30-17:00

Discussion

(Facilitator: Daniel Galland, Aalborg University)

17:00-17:30

ESPON towards 2020

(Chair: Olaf Foss, NIBR/ENECON)

- **Piera Petruzzi, ESPON CU:** *Capitalisation Activities in 2014 and progress on ESPON 2020*
- *Questions and answers*

19:30-

Conference Dinner (Narutis Hotel, Pilies St. 24)

FRIDAY 11 APRIL 2014:

09:00-10:30

Challenges and opportunities as evidenced by ESPON Targeted Analysis and Scientific Platform

(Chair: Airida Bernotaitė, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University)

- **Visvaldis Valtenbergs, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences:** *Key indicators for territorial cohesion and spatial planning in preparing territorial development strategies (KITCASP)*
- **Gunnar Lindberg, Nordregio:** *Territorial monitoring system for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR-TeMo)*

10:30-11:00

Discussion

(Facilitator: Antti Roose, University of Tartu)

11:00-11:15

Coffee break

11:15-12:15

Learning and training session: ESPON online public tools for analytical and practical use of ESPON results

- **Martin Gauk, University of Tartu:** *Introduction, overview and demonstration*
- **Panel (Antti Saartenoja, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia/Eugenijus Kęstutis Staniūnas, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University/Mykolas Dumbrava, student at Urban Engineering study programme):** *Stakeholder comments on the relevance of tools, data and/or ESPON results in general*

12:15-12:30

Closing session (conference and ENECON project)

- ***Marija Burinskienė**, Research Institute of Territorial Planning of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (ESPON Contact Point Lithuania/ENECON Project Partner)*
- ***Olaf Foss**, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (ENECON Lead Partner)*

12:30-13:30

Lunch and departure

Aim, scope and content

The ENECON End Conference, the last ENECON project event, took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, as a "lunch-to-lunch" event on the 10th – 11th April 2014. The project's appointed steering group for the conference was Airida Bernotaitė (Lithuania), Olaf Foss (Norway), Matti Fritsch (Finland) and Mats Johansson (Sweden). Links for downloading of the presentations at the conference is available at the ENECON project website (cf. above). There were 55 registered participants, of which 48 attended the conference.

The overall theme of the conference was "Challenges and opportunities for territorial development and cohesion in a North European macro-region". The target groups were policy-makers, researchers, planning professionals and practitioners at national, regional and local levels, representatives of Baltic and Nordic organizations, and the ESPON "family", which were invited to share and discuss findings and insights of ESPON projects, and learn about the use of ESPON-Tools, in a Baltic-Nordic macro regional policy and planning context. The conference targeted a selection of ESPON project findings which were considered particularly relevant for policy-making in a North European context, including a session focusing specifically contributions of Targeted Analyses involving Baltic and Nordic stakeholders, and Scientific Platform. One session was dedicated to the future development of ESPON, i.e. capitalization activities in 2014 and the progress towards ESPON 2020.

In the sessions representatives of the selected ESPON transnational projects presented and discussed research findings in a North European perspective. The main themes were:

- Territorial scenarios and visions for Europe
- Economic crisis and resilience of regions
- Territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion
- EU neighboring regions and territorial development
- Key indicators for territorial cohesion and spatial planning
- Territorial monitoring system for the Baltic Sea Region

Additionally a "teaching and learning session" aimed at better enabling participants to utilize the different ESPON Tools, made publically available online at the ESPON website, as practical means of accessing and making analytical and practical use of ESPON findings. The ENECON TPG partners contributed actively as speakers, session chairs and discussion facilitators, and a representative of the ESPON CU informed of and reflected upon future developments regarding capitalization efforts and the next programme phase (ESPON 2020).

Organization

The conference were organized in two main sections; "Challenges and opportunities as evidenced by ESPON Applied Research Projects" and "Challenges and opportunities as evidenced by ESPON Targeted Analysis and Scientific Platform". The first sections was divided into two sessions, chaired by ENECON partners Heikki Eskelinen and Mats Johansson, respectively. The two sessions were followed by a panel and plenary discussion, facilitated by ENECON partner Daniel Galland. The second session was chaired by ENECON partner Airida Bernotaitė, followed by a panel and plenary discussion facilitated by ENECON partner Antti Roose.

Additionally two separate sessions were dedicated, respectively, ii) to "ESPON towards 2020" (continuation of ESPON capitalization activities in 2014 and progress on planning and organizing for the next programme phase; ESPON 2020), chaired by ENECON Lead Partner Olaf Foss, and ii) ESPON Tools; overview, demonstration and discussion of publically accessible ESPON online tools for practical and analytical use of ESPON results. This last session was organized, chaired and carried through by Martin Gauk, University of Tartu and assistant to the Estonian ECP. The session was followed by a critical panel discussion among invited external stakeholders, also involving the audience. Cf. the programme (above) for details and a brief summery below.

All presentations from the conference are available for downloading at the ENECON website.

First conference day

In the "Welcome and opening session" Olaf Foss (ENECON Lead Partner) and Aleksandras Gordevičius (Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania and ESPON MC Member) welcomed the audience and i.a. stated the background, context and aim of the ENECON project and the conference, including an overview of ENECON events, brief information on ESPON, the purpose of the ESPON project "family" (Transnational Networking Activities") to which ENECON belongs, and the activities' potential importance to territorial policies and planning in the region and it's countries.

The first main section contained four presentations.

Alexandre Dubois from Nordregio gave an outlook on the Baltic Sea Region based on results from the ESPON project ET2050, with the title "A Vision for the European Territory in 2050". He stated that territorial patterns are very durable, normally market by

considerable inertia in their processes of change, and that effects of present political decisions may not come into full effect until a decade or to have passed. The effects (and effects of many other – more and less predictable - driving forces) are extremely difficult to foresee and the policy makers need some tools for making better future oriented decisions. Scenarios and vision-building processes involving many stakeholders, sound evidence and varied scientific methods, may provide a better basis for future oriented policy discussions. The more quantitative forecasting predicts growing territorial disparities in the aftermath of the economic crises and the mega question is if a more ideal Europe may be envisioned towards the middle of the century, and which (if any) are the possible pathways to such a goal, given identified constraints and limits of policy options. Three key points for the territorial vision 2050 are focused; polycentricity, openness and sustainability, each associated with sets of political priorities. Dubois finally reflected on the importance of understanding how the BSR will be positioned in the European territory of 2050, given the vast territorial diversity of the region.

Veiko Sepp, University of Tartu, presented the ESPON project ECR2, about “Economic crisis and resilience of regions”. The objective of this project is to support policy makers at all levels in making economic structures more resilient to economic crisis/sudden economic downturns. Sepp offered a general definition of “regional economic resilience” and it’s components, and presented the methodology of the project, including its eight case study areas. Based on a set of indicators a typology of regions has been developed according to their post-crisis development, displaying rather different patterns also among Baltic and Nordic regions. Focusing on one (Finnish) case a series of “components of resilience/nonresilience” are identified and he concludes with a series of policy (and research) questions related to the structural causes of crises and low resilience as well as to the role and importance of public policies in this context.

Petri Kahila from Nordregio presented and discussed results from the ESPON project TiPSE, “Territorial Dimensions of Poverty and Social Exclusion”. The project is based i.a. on the acknowledgment of co-existence within Europe of a variety of different social welfare policy traditions, neglect of regional patterns of poverty and social exclusion, and the need for more sound evidence at various territorial levels. Kahila presented different definitions of poverty and social exclusion and the EU 2020 operational indicators (number of individuals at risk of poverty, number of individuals suffering material deprivation, number of individuals living in households where adults work less than 20 percent of a full time

year), and discussed some problems related to their application at regional level, and the crucial need for more detailed territorial specification since poverty, social exclusion and provision of welfare services seem to be regional and local challenges.

Lastly, Julien Grunfelder, Nordregio, talked about EU neighbouring regions and territorial development (based on the ESPON project ITAN). The point of departure of the ITAN project is two basic questions; What are the territorial structures, and the economic, social and environmental stakes and dynamics, of the ESPON territory's regional neighbours? And what are the flows, interaction and cooperation between ESPON and neighbouring territories? "The four neighbourhoods" involve a large number of countries with a substantial number of inhabitants, and varied social, economic and political structures. Establishing comparable territorial units and harmonized sets of data/indicators are a vast challenge. Moreover, relations between the Europe of ESPON-countries and the neighbourhoods are changing, calling for a dynamic approach to identification of territorial policy issues as well as research questions.

Daniel Galland facilitated the following panel and plenary discussion by summing up and stating a number of critical questions related to the four presentations. Some clarifications were given by the speakers, and the discussion then focused on the scientific foundation and political fruitfulness of long term scenarios (i.a. the "wild card" problem, the mix of policy consideration and research and the transparency of the methodology behind the results). Also the political responses to economic crises (notably austerity measures vs. their alternatives) were touched upon.

In the last session of the first conference day Piera Petruzzi, Communication and Capitalization Expert at ESPON CU, informed about the planned dissemination and capitalization tasks and schedule for the remaining ESPON 2013 period up till the end of 2014, comprising a series of publications in the established series and others, several events (conferences, seminars, workshops), and also remaining project deliveries etc. In the second part of her speech she presented the progress of planning towards the next ESPON programme phase, ESPON 2020, including thematic objective, target groups, mission and objectives, actions and activities (including themes listed so far by policy makers).

Second conference day

The second main section contained two presentations, both concerned with the identification and definition of sets of indicators for policy consideration and monitoring purposes.

Visvaldis Valtenbergs, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, gave a presentation based on the ESPON project KITCASP, "Key indicators for territorial cohesion and spatial planning in preparing territorial development strategies". The project purpose was to identify the *most suitable* set of key indicators of *significant practical usefulness* to policy makers and practitioners. The point of departure was policy statements on goals and territorial priorities, and stakeholders' perceptions. On this basis a set of common indicator themes were identified and certain common indicator requirements ("filters") assessed (like relevance, applicability, regularity, spatiality, dynamics, quality, clarity). Selected indicators were cross-checked against indicators employed in other ESPON projects. The resulting set of KITCASP indicators for five common themes were presented and discussed in detail. The case project studies revealed i.a. a demand for indicators below NUTS3 level to account for local/micro trends and urban-rural differences in certain areas. The projects also produced guidelines for the use of indicators in special policy. The problem of territorial scale is a recurring theme in discussions of ESPON projects and Valtenbergs concluded with the question on how to improve coherency between ESPON data and local data, and for what themes ESPON should prioritize to produce results on a more detailed – sub-regional – scale.

In the second presentation Gunnar Lindberg, Nordregio, accounted for the Scientific Platform project "Territorial monitoring system for the Baltic Sea Region" (BSR-TeMo). The relationship with KITCASP (and other indicator-/policy monitoring activities) is apparent i.a. in the sense that they are both "comprehending a policy and a methodological dimension aimed at understanding territorial cohesion", in this case in the Baltic Sea Region. Also this project takes as its point of departure the policy context and the policy questions most relevant to the region and its stakeholders. The system is based on readily available data at NUT3 level and the study area includes Belarus and Russia. It takes into account the concept of territorial cohesion modified by a BSR "filter" and ends up with five "domains", 12 "sub-domains", initially 90 indicators subsequently reduced to 29. The structure of the resulting territorial monitoring system was presented with a detailed account of the selected indicators. The system is shown to reveal some "principle divides" within the BSR (East-West, North-South, Urban-Rural) and

interesting results compared to “peer regions” in a benchmarking exercise and in comparison with the EU territory. Lastly the only tool for accessing the system was presented.

The following panel and plenary discussion was facilitated by Antti Roose who summed up the main themes and posed several critical questions related to the two projects, including the recurrent topic of territorial scale and also the policy use of this type of information, i.e. simple quantitative mapping versus more qualitative, process oriented insights. A mild warning against “quantitative bias” potentially in the long run influencing policy goals, were issued. From the audience it was also remarked that the similarity between different monitoring concepts are striking (territorial cohesion, territorial sustainability, territorial competitiveness etc) and the resulting sets of indicators often similar/overlapping. It was also underlined that such efforts from a regional point of view are primarily justified by the potential added value of a European or macro-regional comparative perspective.

ESPON-Tools, learning and training session

The last ordinary session of the second day was dedicated to ESPON-Tools, organized, chaired and carried through by Martin Gauk under the title of “ESPON online public tools for analytical and practical use of ESPON results”.

The organization of the session:

1. Introduction, overview and demonstration by *Martin Gauk*, University of Tartu, Estonia
2. Stakeholder comments on the relevance of tools, data and/or ESPON results in general by panellists:
Antti Saartenoja, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia, Finland
Eugenijus Kęstutis Staniūnas, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania
Mykolas Dumbrava, student at Urban Engineering study programme, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania

The learning and training session covered a selection of ESPON online tools designed for researchers, students, policy makers and practitioners as practical means of accessing and making analytical and practical use of ESPON findings.

The session started with a brief introduction, explaining the overall aims of ESPON tools, their usability etc, followed by live

demonstrations for each tool, illustrated by examples from practical use.

The session focused on the following four ESPON tools:

- ESPON Database
- Online Map Finder
- ESPON HyperAtlas
- ESPON DataNavigator

At the end of the presentation, a panel consisting of representatives of students, researchers and practitioners from Finland and Lithuania gave some comments and feedback on how they see the relevance of ESPON tools, data and ESPON results in general. The panel was also asked to try and test out these tools in advance to get a better perspective and firsthand experience.

Access. The panellists were not able to access HyperAtlas due to Java update and security issues. Other than that, no technical issues were experienced.

Functionality. The tools were found relatively easy to use and well structured.

Context. There were a lot of different views regarding the contents of ESPON tools from the panellists as well from the audience. The discussion was about whether there is too much data and too many indicators available for decision makers already. The second argument was whether there is a need for more detailed Pan-European datasets that could extend to local levels, and should ESPON fill this gap. In the end, it was concluded that practitioners and decision makers have much more detailed and up-to-date data available to them from other sources and therefore find little use of ESPON tools. However, the student party considered that ESPON tools are good and interactive sources of information for course assignments and to get a better understanding of spatial developments in Europe.

Closing session

Some brief closing remarks on the impressions from and usefulness of the conference (and the ENECON project, for which this was the last event), and thanks to participants and contributors, were given by Marija Burinskienė, Research Institute of Territorial Planning of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (ESPON Contact Point Lithuania/ENECON Project Partner) and Olaf Foss, ENECON Lead Partner.

www.espon.eu

The ESPON 2013 Programme is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It shall support policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and a harmonious development of the European territory.

ISBN