



## ESPON 2013 Programme/Press Release No 08/2010

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### ESPON New Evidence on Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Territories

**How can place based actions contribute to Europe's recovery from the financial and economic crisis that struck in 2008? What concrete measures by regions and cities can support the Europe 2020 Strategy and a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth path? ESPON sets the scene for a discussion through its First Synthesis Report, released on 27 October, which analyses development across 31 countries.**

The decade up to the financial and economic crisis saw better balance and more polycentric development at European scale. The financial and economic crises however slowed the general progress and growth and impacted on the economy of nations, their regions and cities asymmetrically and with different force.

Place-based policy making to realise the territorial potentials of European regions and their diversity has a key part to play. A stronger focus on the territorial dimension can improve the coordination and efficiency of public policies and private investments. Territorially targeted measures make use of Europe's diversity to strengthen economic growth and reduce imbalances in territorial development and enhance social cohesion. Recovery and growth strategies need knowledge and understanding of the territorial structures and dynamics shaping development across Europe, benchmarking the position of regions and cities.

At the launch event of the Report on 27 October 2010 in Brussels, in the presence of representatives of the Permanent Representations and Missions of Member and Partner States to the EU, Dirk Ahner Director General European Commission - DG Regio, emphasized the importance of ESPON for the Commission. "This report is a milestone in the contribution of ESPON to the development of Cohesion Policy", he said and added: "The evidence presented clearly underlines the importance of a territorial and placed based approach to policy making".

Peter Mehlbye, Director of the ESPON Coordination Unit, said "The First ESPON 2013 Synthesis Report underlines the need for integrated action for territorial development at every scale from local to European. All regions, cities and larger territories have potential for contributing positively to economic recovery and the Europe 2020 strategy as well as to Territorial Cohesion and a balanced and polycentric Europe."

Some of the headline findings are:

- **Europe's position in the world is changing:** there is not only the economic challenge from Asia and the Americas; other challenges with a global dimension include an aging labour force and demographic change, energy supply and demand, and the possible impacts of climate change.
- **Europe's competitiveness depends greatly on its global cities and metropolitan regions,** where enterprises can benefit from agglomeration economies and networks linking global market places.
- **Connectivity is important.** Liveable and smart places have good connections and an attractive environment. Metropolitan regions need good accessibility to each other and to global markets. The number and quality of connections to hubs and urban centres are important preconditions for efficient functional integration of all parts of all parts of the EU.
- **Europe has many smart rural regions that are well connected to the global economy,** accessible to urban centers and have turned local assets into development opportunities.
- **Accessibility of regions and cities is increasing** through infrastructure investments which benefit the economic competitiveness of these places. Europe's high-speed rail network could play a greater role in the development of a polycentric Europe: still too often national networks do not look sufficiently ambitious beyond borders.
- **Vulnerability to climate change impacts is a concern** especially in regions where adaptation and mitigation strategies are not sufficiently in place or effectively enforced.
- **Good governance and territorial co-operation are vital** at every geographical scale, including partnerships at the level of city-regions and larger macro-regions, as well as across policy sectors.

The report is the first in a series of three ESPON Synthesis Reports which all aim to communicate major ESPON results on numerous ongoing research themes relevant for integrated, place-based policy considerations.

The First ESPON 2013 Synthesis Report and its collection of 26 new European Maps are available at the ESPON Website.

#### Interested in ESPON?

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. ESPON shall support Cohesion Policy development with European wide, comparable information, evidence, analyses and scenarios on framework conditions for the development of regions, cities and larger territories. In doing so, it shall facilitate the mobilisation of territorial capital and development opportunities, contributing to improving European competitiveness, to the widening and deepening of European territorial cooperation and to a sustainable and balanced development.

The Managing Authority responsible for the ESPON 2013 Programme is the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures, Department of Spatial Planning and Development of Luxembourg. More information: [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)

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