



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

PRE-EVENT BRIEF

European rural policy at a crossroads? Rethinking needs, objectives, and measures

Virtual

21st April 2022, 12:00-15:45 (CET)

Introduction



Uneven development in rural areas in Europe poses a persistent problem for territorial authorities. Shortages of economic opportunity and labour in these regions often place structural constraints on the provision of public infrastructure and access to services for spatially dispersed and aging populations. Inequalities between places and between people have reached a critical level in Europe. Coordinated approaches and actions need to be increased at all geographical and governance levels in order to guarantee a positive future for all people and places (TA2030, 2020).

Building on previous ESPON initiatives, this online workshop seeks to explore ways that ESPON can contribute to a better understanding of the state of play in European rural areas and inspire territorial authorities to create more appropriate evidence-based policies and actions across rural communities. The event will, therefore, put Norway's localised approach to regional development into a conversation with wider initiatives linked to the EU 8th Cohesion Report and the EU 2040 Rural Action Plan. Drawing on recent ESPON evidence, the workshop will ask:

- What trends and changes can we observe in Nordic rural development in recent years, and how does the Norwegian experience compare to its neighbours?
- What approaches and tools have Norwegian authorities sought to better “localise” rural policymaking in practice?
- How do these efforts resonate with other ESPON-led projects dedicated to rural development, shrinking regions, and territorial cohesion?
- In what ways might these diverse insights be brought together to generate more impactful, cooperative responses to regional cohesion and change in Europe today?

Current Rural Policy Needs

To address the overlapping factors impacting rural livelihoods, EU and Norwegian policymakers have sought to develop a more comprehensive approach to rural development beyond economic growth itself, towards the inclusion of a wider range of responses. One important initiative that seeks to investigate new policy approaches to rural development in Europe is the “Small places matter” pilot action undertaken in line with the framework of the EU Territorial Agenda 2030, supported by the ESPON programme. Furthermore, ESPON projects, such as PROFECY and ESCAPE, offer a valuable opportunity to look across all of Europe for inspiration to make a more nuanced and impactful approach to rural change and territorial cohesion.

ESPON Evidence

The ESPON ESCAPE project studied regions undergoing or in danger of demographic decline and aims to identify processes influencing this decline. The ESCAPE project mapped different processes and generated potential policy responses. These policy recommendations present strategies based on the territorial assets and opportunities in the shrinking and “potentially shrinking” regions. The strategies accounted for the capacities and capabilities offered by EU policies available to local authorities (ESPON, 2020). In addition, ESPON has also published a more recent policy brief, Territorial evidence and policy advice for the prosperous future of rural areas. The policy brief advocates for the creation of novel policy approaches to ensure a managed transition for regional development in depopulating territories tailored to the place-based opportunities present in these areas (ESPON, 2021).

The lessons generated from the Norwegian context are relevant for reflecting further on issues and recommendations raised in previous ESPON policy briefs. These include, for example,

- i. how to best promote multi-level, cross-sectoral planning for rural contexts;
- ii. how to improve scenario building and cooperative policy-making drawn from existing territorial evidence across Europe's diverse territorial contexts; and
- iii. how to use experiences and best practices shared by ESPON community members to improve place-based development strategies and well-being across European territories.

Outline of the event

The workshop will be a half-day virtual event that will be divided into four short sessions, each about 1 hour in length. **Session 1** will focus on presenting territorial evidence on rural development and change in Nordic countries, and Norway's relative position within this context. **Session 2** will present the pilot action "Small places matter" under the EU Territorial Agenda 2030 and the involved parties' quest to find paths for a renewal of regional policies and toolboxes. Participants will also see an example from a cross-border region that over decades has reinvented itself, with the support of EU Interreg programme funding. **Session 3** will present a new approach for a more balanced and cohesive Europe – called Territorial Cohesion Cities - as well as insights into lessons learned in ESPON initiatives dedicated to shrinking regions (ESCAPE) and innovative rural service provisioning (PROFECY). In **session 4**, select participants will reconvene for a moderated roundtable discussion dedicated to merge ESPON and Norwegian insights with the experiences of other European territorial actors, possibly rethinking needs, objectives, and measures in rural policy.

Agenda

11:45-12:20	<p>Introduction Plenary: Online check-in opens</p> <p>Welcome address. State secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development Ms. Kjersti Bjørnstad</p> <p>The ESPON 2030 programme: Providing evidence for a future rural policy in Europe. Dr. Wiktor Szydarowski, director of the ESPON EGTC</p>
12:20- 12:55	<p>Territorial evidence of rural development and change in Nordic countries</p> <p>Territorial evidence of rural development and change in Nordic Countries. Ms. Anna Vasilevskaya, NORDREGIO</p> <p>Discussion and Q&A</p>
12:55-13:00	<p>Small Break</p>
13:00-13:45	<p>"Going small?" - Localising pathways towards new rural policy</p> <p>Small places matter. Lessons from a pilot action under the Territorial Agenda 2030. A new approach to regional policy in Europe with support of the ESPON. Dr. Irene McMaster, University of Strathclyde and Ms. Andreea China, ESPON EGTC</p> <p>European Territorial Cohesion policy – cross border cooperation as a tool to reinvent rural areas – the case of Trysil (NO) and Sälen (SE). Prof. Bjørnar Sæther, University of Oslo</p> <p>Discussion and Q&A</p>
13:45-13:50	<p>Small Break</p>

13:50-14:55 **Rural policy development I: Lessons from ESPON projects and European counterparts**

Development clusters for Small Places and Territorial Cohesion Cities for a more balanced and cohesive Europe? **Prof. Eduardo Medeiros**, ISCTE, Lisbon

ESPON PROFECY project –representative of Federal Institute for Less-Favoured and Mountainous Areas, **Ms. Mar Ortega-Reig**, Polytechnic University of Valencia and **Mr. Carsten Schürmann**, TCP International, Stuttgart

Lessons from the ESPON ESCAPE project: experiences and perspectives on rural shrinkage, **Dr. Gergely Tagai** (Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary)

Discussion and Q&A

14:55-15:00 **Small Break**

15:00- 15:40 **Rural policy development roundtable: The future of cohesion policy in Europe**

Chair: Mr. William Kutz, University of Paris

Participants

1. **Dr. Wiktor Szydarowski**, director of the ESPON EGTC
2. **Dr. Irene McMaster**, University of Strathclyde
3. **Prof. Eduardo Medeiros**, ISCTE
4. **Anna Karlsdóttir**, NORDREGIO

15:40-15:45 **Summary and closing remarks**

Select reports

Iammarino, S., Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. (2017). Why regional development matters for Europe's economic future. European Commission Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy Working Paper, 7.

Bull, H. H., Norman, V., & Aasbrenn, K. (2020). Det handler om Norge: Rapport fra utvalg om demografiutfordringer i distriktene. Plan, 52(4), 8-15.

Edøy, J. 2021. Small places matter: Understanding how small places can boost their role for the development of a wider territory. EU Territorial Agenda. Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, Norway. <https://territorialagenda.eu/pilot-actions/small-places-matter/>

ESPON (2021). Territorial evidence and policy advice for prosperous future of rural areas – Contribution to the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. ESPON Policy Brief. Published on June 14 2021. Available online: <https://www.espon.eu/rural>

ESPON ESCAPE (2020). European Shrinking Rural Areas Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance (ESCAPE). ESPON project conducted from March 2019 to October 2020. Available online: <https://www.espon.eu/escape>

EU Commission (2022) EU 8th Cohesion Report 2050 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/cohesion-report/

EU Commission (2021) EU long-term vision for the EU's rural areas – Building the future of rural areas together 2040 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/cohesion-report/

Medeiros, E. (2022) Development Clusters for Small Places and Rural Development for Territorial Cohesion? - <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/1/84>

Sæther, B., Andersen B.T. and Hagen, E. (2019) Cross-Border Functional Regions and Innovation: Cases from Inner Scandinavian Regions. In Medeiros, E. (editor) (2019) Territorial Cohesion. The Urban Dimension - <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030033859>

TA2030 (2020). Territorial Agenda 2030. A future for all places. Summary. Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion. 1 December 2020, Germany. Online: https://territorialagenda.eu/wp-content/uploads/TA2030_summary_jun2021_en.pdf



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ESPON 2022

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Disclaimer

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