

## 5 – Use and debate ESPON results

### Policy relevant key findings:

- Different regions have different possibilities to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the economic recovery that Europe is looking for. ESPON findings can inform and facilitate the understanding of economic development opportunities by showing territorial potentials and challenges seen from a European perspective.
- The territorial diversity of Europe is an important asset for competitiveness, cohesion and economic recovery. ESPON evidence and facts can support policy development at European scale targeting the diversity of territorial potentials, and it can support regions and local cities to define priorities and understand their larger territorial development context.
- Successful market economies are influenced by wide differences in the geographical patterns of investment. ESPON evidence on these differences can assist both public policies and private investors to increase the efficiency of their interventions.
- Urban areas are home to main drivers of innovation and economic growth, the place of the sharpest social divides, and critical for reducing the ecological footprint.
- Policy implementation and effective delivery depend hugely on capability at regional and local level. The facilitation of governance processes can be supported by factual benchmarking of European regions and cities, targeted territorial knowledge on these areas and promotion of good practices.
- The territorial implications of public policies need to be considered with the clear aim of ensuring synergies. ESPON's experience of territorial impact assessment is a first stepping stone for such efforts.
- Europe has the potential to offer something more and better than standard economic growth strategies. Territorial scenarios can support the development of new visions for the long-term development of the European territory and a polycentric Europe.

Europe in 2010 is in a challenging situation. The financial crisis that began in the USA in 2007-2008 has significantly undermined the growth trajectory in Europe. It is still difficult to tell just how severe the impacts are in terms of territorial cohesion. There are suggestions that some regions that had a less globalised economy, with less exposure to jobs in finance and business services, may have been less badly hit. However, the recovery from the crisis is still ongoing and seems likely to lead into a new era of intense stringency in public expenditure. In those circumstances, the challenges to territorial cohesion, and to social cohesion and environmental sustainability are not becoming less important.

How might the EU best deploy its resources to achieve the smart, inclusive and sustainable growth that is desired? It is clear that there are still some fundamental differences within Europe – between the core and the periphery, between north and south and east and west, and between different types of regions. Territorial development potentials can be identified at different geographical scales: to fully exploit these potentials the independencies between different types of potentials and different geographical scales need to be acknowledged, understood and used. One debate, at all scales, and for companies as well as governments, is about where to focus effort and where to attempt to steer investment in the face of competing demands and limited resources. In other words there is a necessary place dimension to economic recovery.

ESPON findings show that different regions have different development potentials, face different challenges and have different capacities to deliver the recovery that Europe is looking for. In short,

the territorial diversity of Europe is complex but needs to be understood and translated into tailor-made policy mixes for regions, cities and larger territories.

Furthermore, territorial potentials and cohesion need to be grasped and explored across the different geographical scales, from the European to the local level. There is also an important debate to take forward about how to implement EU Cohesion policy, as well as the aims of the Territorial Agenda. While European policy is carried forward by the Commission and national governments, in the end implementation and effectiveness depend hugely on capability at regional and local level. Such capability is not yet evenly distributed across the ESPON space.

Territorial cooperation is an important potential source for enhancing competitiveness and cohesion. It can help spread know-how and share good practice. However, more important is concrete territorial cooperation arrangements with the aim of exploring comparative advantages and create a stronger development together than apart. Such concrete actions at regional and local level making use of specific development potentials are important drivers for territorial development all across Europe, and can also support balance and polycentrism at different geographical scales.

While regions, cities and national governments all have their own distinct roles to play, their cooperation is vital in today's difficult economic times. By working for common goals they can achieve synergy and efficiency. ESPON 2013 assists territorial co-operation across Europe by broadening the knowledge base and transfer of know-how in the field of territorial analysis.

### 5.1 Diversity – a strength if used effectively

Just as city dwellers do not expect to wake up to views of the mist rising over a spectacular landscape, so those in sparsely populated areas do not expect the same type of access to the same type of public services or supermarkets as is the urban norm. The approach that diversity is a strength has underpinned thinking about territorial competitiveness and cohesion.

This can hardly be underestimated. Each place, each region is unique. It is useful to talk of east and west, core and periphery, mountainous regions, coastal regions etc. at EU level, but the reality is always more complex when viewed at a finer scale of detail. It is the diversity at this detailed level that is so important in practice. Why do some regions seem to perform better than others with similar characteristics? What are the very particular opportunities opened up by factors that are strongly place-based such as accessibility, or cultural and natural heritage?

The diversity of diversity will be the main obstacle to be overcome when attempting to transform into concrete action the aspiration of “transforming diversity into strength”. In other words, labelling regions as metropolitan, rural, islands or mountainous regions does not mean that all regions in each category can be addressed through similar measures because they from a European perspective share the same challenges and development opportunities. There is a wide range of specializations, and responses to the current crises vary widely amongst regions even those with similar geographical characteristics.

Key factors that influence progress towards balanced, harmonious and sustainable development can be identified. They appear to be the capacity to understand the wider territorial context, and to formulate and to implement locally adapted measures that target key obstacles to growth. Governance structures and administrative boundaries are important. They are often influenced by history and perceptions of areas with geographic specificities and, no less importantly, by the self-perception of their inhabitants.

At the European level, one task is to make it possible for the stakeholders of cities, rural, mountainous, insular, sparsely populated and peripheral regions etc. with very different economic and social starting points to get together, discuss policy approaches and development possibilities and challenge preconceived ideas on their possibilities. Such a facilitating role could be a main platform for territorial cohesion, and could be supported by evidence from ESPON and other sources. New European evidence about territorial diversity can be used to strengthen cooperation across borders and enhance the territorial dimension of EU and national policy and their regulatory frameworks.

### 5.2 ESPON results can support place-based governance

ESPON applied research provides an essential underpinning for translating into practice the calls that have been made for integrated and place-based approaches to economic development. Of course, ESPON is not the only source of valuable information on this topic. Europe 2020 demonstrates that place-based approaches could be implemented so as to take forward the strategy. The point about local uniqueness is made several times. Local know-how, sense of ownership and buy-in are fundamentally important to the implementation of policy made at higher levels. EU Cohesion Policy as well as the work with the Territorial Agenda put a strong emphasis on local development potentials and place based approaches.

A recurring theme in this Synthesis Report has been the need for evidence-based and effective policy-making. Regional development and cohesion has an economic dimension and a social dimension as well as an important environmental dimension. It involves a careful weighing and trade-off between what may at times be conflicting demands. While all territorial strategies and policies have boundaries in space, today it is necessary to look within wider boundaries and to appreciate the importance and strengths of other places and the connectedness to other nodes and networks.

Better integration of policy can bring added value in times of limited resources. Sector policies conceived in isolation risks to have unintended consequences, which can conflict with the aims of other policies. The territorial dimension is where such conflicts manifest themselves. Just as important is that sector policies can mutually support each other if working for a clear common objective or vision.

Integration also means vertical integration of policy. The skills are to look to scales above and below to consider what cohesion means across scales, and how action at one scale has impacts at another.

The availability of ESPON studies and the ESPON database can support this approach. They can be used to do regional analysis and comparison both extensively and in-depth. The resource created by applied research of ESPON can be used by policy makers and practitioners at all levels, as well as researchers.

In addition, ESPON works with territorial development concepts – such as polycentric development, macro-regions, development corridors, connectivity and accessibility, to name just a few. Such lenses can be used to look afresh at how a region is developing and give fresh ideas to how it should develop in the future. They also provide a link between the local / regional level and the work at EU level on EU Cohesion Policy and the Territorial Agenda.

Furthermore ESPON has led work on developing methods of territorial impact assessment. The TEQUILA model represents a significant achievement. It is a tool for providing transparency in weightings of factors in judging impacts in relation to a development decision, and it enables ex-ante predictions of impacts of policy on territorial efficiency, territorial quality and territorial identity. This and other approaches to TIA will be further developed in ESPON work during the remainder of the programme. While there is no suggestion that TIA should become another assessment requirement imposed on regional and local practitioners from a higher level of government, it can be an important supporting tool for sector policy development and in highlighting the territorial dimension in policy processes and debates.

In summary, the work of ESPON contribute with facts and evidence to territorial cohesion efforts, to place-based governance and policy making. This report has provided the latest evidence from the ESPON 2013 programme. It has touched upon important questions raised by policy makers at all levels. ESPON invites this wide range of stakeholders to carry them forward in the necessary debates of recovery and development of territories, particularly regions and cities. There are few easy answers, but there are some underlying insights about the state and trajectory of Europe, its member states, cities and regions that needs consideration. Europe has a specific potential to modernise its economic growth strategies in a “diverse” world. Evidence based scenarios such as those produced by ESPON can stimulate visionary policy development for the development of Europe.

### 5.3 Next steps in the ESPON 2013 Programme

This is the first synthesis report of the ESPON 2013 Programme. It presents initial findings from the first round of projects that were approaching completion in 2010. It is based on just six applied research projects and six targeted analysis projects. Eleven new projects have started, ten more projects are about to start in autumn 2010 and more projects are to follow until 2013. Thus the first synthesis report gives only a flavour of what will follow.

The themes studied from a territorial perspective already cover a wide range of important processes and policies with impact on territorial development. The need for better understanding of territorial structures and trends as well as the impacts of EU policies is at the core of this exercise. Based on these studies, ESPON will continue making substantial progress in respect of enriching the understanding of regions and larger territories, their imbalances and potentials. Through combining the findings of individual projects the complexity and diversity of different regions and larger territories becomes clear. Adding the territorial scenarios developed, the policy debate is further nourished.

The themes addressed in this report will be further developed and deepened over the coming years and presented in new ESPON Territorial Observations and ESPON Synthesis Reports. The ESPON website [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu) always provides updated information on the latest developments and findings. The ESPON Database and all the indicators used for this report can be accessed and used for free by territories, regions and cities that want to improve their European understanding and search for new developing opportunities in that context.

# List of ESPON Projects and Acronyms

## ESPON projects used for this report

### Applied research projects:

- DEMIFER - Demographic and Migratory Flows Affecting European Regions and Cities
- EDORA - European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas
- CLIMATE - Climate Change and Territorial Effects on Regions and Local Economies in Europe
- FOCI - Future Orientation for Cities
- ReRISK - Regions at Risk of Energy Poverty
- TIPTAP - Territorial Impact Package for Transport and Agricultural Policies

### Targeted analysis projects:

- CAEE - The Case for Agglomeration Economies in Europe
- TEDI - Territorial Diversity in Europe
- EUROISLANDS - The Development of the Islands – European Islands and Cohesion Policy
- METROBORDER - Cross-Border Polycentric Metropolitan Regions
- SS-LR - Spatial Scenarios: New Tools for Local-Regional Territories
- SURE - Success for Convergence Regions' Economies

## Forthcoming ESPON reports and studies

### Applied research projects (started summer 2010):

- ATTREG - Attractiveness of European regions and cities for residents and visitors
- EU-LUPA- European patterns of land use
- TERCO - Territorial cooperation in transnational areas and across internal/external borders
- TRACC - Transport accessibility at regional/local scale and patterns in Europe
- SGPTDE - Secondary growth poles in territorial development
- GEOSPECS - European perspective on specific types of territories
- KIT - Territorial dimension of innovation and knowledge economy
- TIGER - Continental territorial structures and flows (globalisation)
- ARTS - Territorial and Regional Sensitivity of EU Directives

### Applied research projects (start autumn 2010):

- European seas in territorial development
- Indicators and Perspectives for Services of General Interest in Territorial Development

The ESPON 2013 Programme shall early 2011 launch a call for four new applied research projects.

### Targeted analysis projects (started summer 2010):

- PURR – Potential of Rural Regions
- TransMEC – Transnational Support Method for European Cooperation

### Targeted analysis projects (start autumn 2010):

- EATIA – ESPON and TIA
- ULYSSES – Using Applied Results from ESPON as a Yardstick for Cross-Border Spatial Planning and Development
- RISE – Identifying and Exchanging Best Practice in Developing Regional Integrated Strategies in Europe
- POLYCE – Metropolisation and Polycentric Development in Central Europe: Evidence Based Strategic Options
- TPM – Territorial Performance Monitoring
- BEST – METROPOLIS – Best Development Conditions in European Metropolis: Paris, Berlin, Warsaw
- SEMIGRA – Selective Migration and Unbalanced Sex Ratio in Rural Regions
- SMART-IST – Smart Institutions for Territorial Developments

### Targeted analysis projects (start probably early 2011):

- ADES – Airports and Drivers of Economic Success in Peripheral Regions
- AMCER – Advanced Monitoring and Coordination of EU R&D Policies at Regional Level

## Acronyms

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
EU10	EU Member States that joined the EU in 2004
EU12	12 EU Member States that joined in the last two accession rounds
EU15	15 EU Member States prior to the last two rounds of accession
GAV	Gross Added Value
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NBIC	Nano-, bio-, information technology and cognitive sciences
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics)
R&D	Research and development
TEN	Trans European Networks
TIA	Territorial Impact Assessment



[www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)

The ESPON 2013 Programme supports policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and a harmonious development of the European territory. It provides comparable information, evidence, analysis, and scenarios on territorial dynamics, which reveal territorial capitals and development potentials of regions and larger territories contributing.

This Synthesis Report presents initial findings highlighting the importance of the territorial dimension for a powerful economic recovery from the present crisis and for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as outlined in the EU strategy Europe 2020.

The purpose of this report is to communicate important findings of the ESPON 2013 Programme, and to nourish policy development for different territories in Europe through a dialogue among policy makers, practitioners and researchers. As part of this dialogue you are welcome to engage with ESPON via [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu).

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