

ESPON



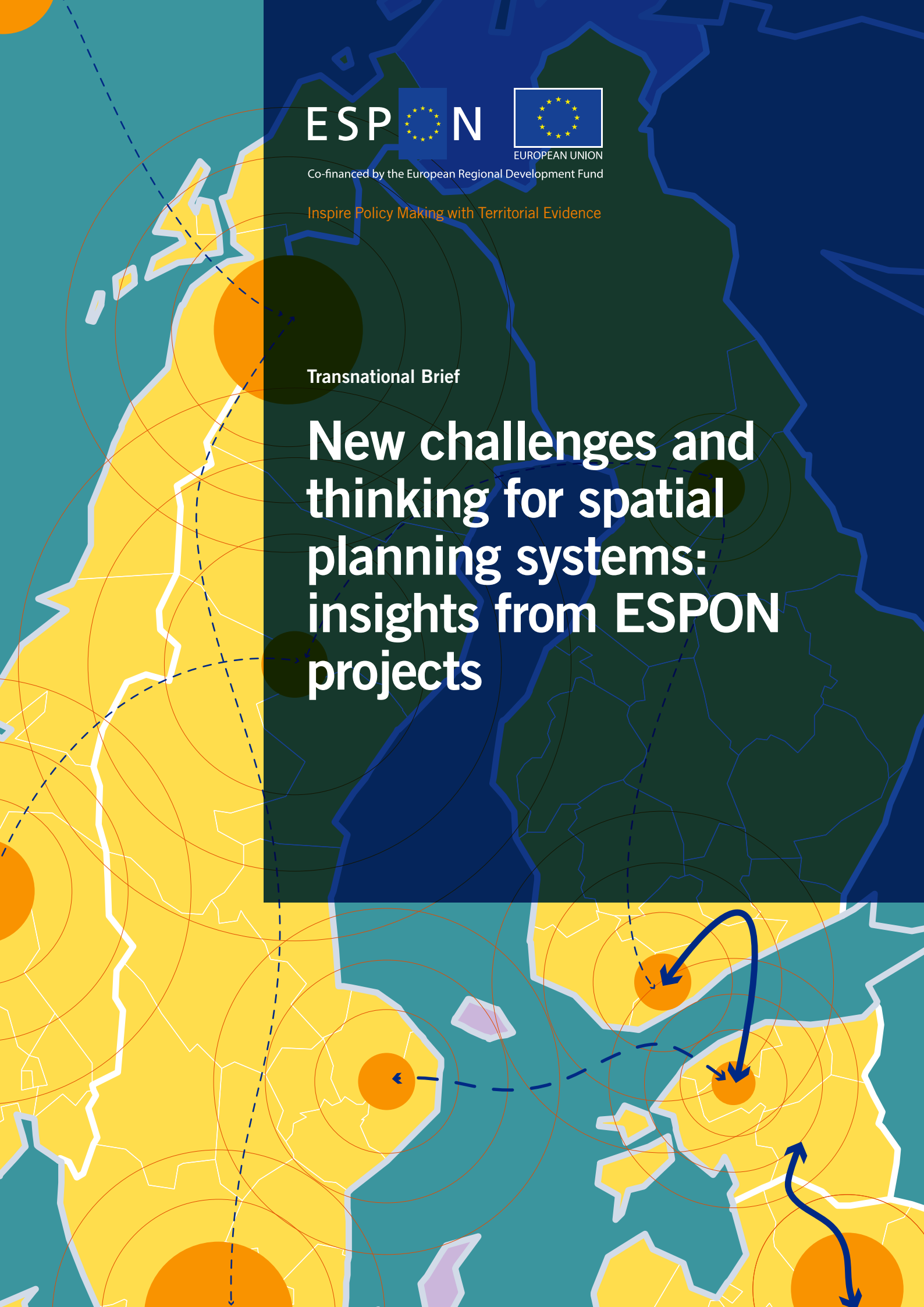
EUROPEAN UNION

Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

Transnational Brief

New challenges and thinking for spatial planning systems: insights from ESPON projects



New challenges and thinking for spatial planning systems: insights from ESPON projects

The Green Paper on spatial planning, currently under preparation, is a policy-making document which aims to analyse spatial challenges and propose possible solutions. The Green Paper may have implications for legislative amendments, guidance material or institutional reorganisation.

This transnational brief is designed to introduce relevant ESPON research that can support the development of the Green Paper, in particular with regard to: a) regional strategies for sustainable and inclusive territorial development; b) spatial planning systems in Europe; c) metropolitan spatial planning and d) indicators for measuring the impact of integrated territorial investments.

Regional strategies for sustainable and inclusive territorial development

In the context of changes to the planning systems, local and regional governance actors have increasingly fewer 'hard' means of delivering projects, such as legislation or funding, and are increasingly reliant on 'soft' means: focusing on communication, coordination and establishing coalitions with other actors, including businesses, NGOs, pressure groups and citizens. In this context, ESPON research sets out to explore the practices which can align the ever-evolving institutional configurations with new understandings and challenges in regional planning. It focuses on four stakeholder territories based in the UK, Denmark, Italy, and Portugal; each of these territories is characterised by a specific balance between 'soft' and 'hard' means.



The “Corona Verde” project in the Piedmont Region (Italy) was launched in the early 2000s as an inter-municipal initiative. It aimed to create a network of ecological corridors to connect the regional parks located in the Turin metropolitan area. Over the years, it resulted in both a general improvement in the institutional capacities of local actors and in the emergence of a new strategic consciousness amongst them.

The governance structure of Corona Verde has constantly evolved; the number of actors and cities involved has been increasing through a bottom-up approach. The first phase of the programme (2000-2006) was characterised by fragmented interventions on a local scale: 24 municipalities received EU funding for local projects, without the cooperation of the regional authority. As a result, most municipalities that were selected were those that had already experienced EU programming. It was in the second phase of the life of Corona Verde (2007-2013) that strong governance emerged with both vertical and horizontal cooperation. At this point, the project became a tool for integrating strategic, landscape and urban planning objectives in a multi-scalar framework. A ‘strategic masterplan’ was developed to establish medium- and long-term management methods and operational strategies common to all the participants and which guide the implementation of the programme. The regional authority itself started promoting awareness of environmental and landscape issues in addition to highlighting the value of inter-municipality cooperation. At the end of the second phase, 93 municipalities were involved in the project together with another 38 stakeholders, all of whom supported the concept and the strategy of Corona Verde.

Spatial planning has two main dimensions. Firstly, it involves a procedural dimension, which places emphasis on the decision-making process. The second dimension involves the substantive aspects of planning, i.e. as regards the achievement of policy goals and the transformation of territories. In this sense, there is no unified vision of spatial planning. For instance, the concept is interpreted in a procedural way in Estonia, though not elsewhere, where it refers mainly to the setting of goals and strategy at a local level; in contrast, in Lithuania, it is defined in a substantive manner, where it refers to the administrative apparatus that implements the planning policies.

The ESPON project COMPASS has studied 225 spatial planning instruments in 32 European countries and shows that strategic planning instruments are mostly found at regional and national levels, while local ones that exist have a greater focus on the regulatory dimension linked to the allocation of different forms of land-use. Overall, 40 % of the planning instruments surveyed have no strategic dimension. This raises questions given the understanding of spatial planning as a tool for transforming territories.

Despite the absence of a formal EU competence, European legislation (notably environmental and maritime legislation), discourse and funding each have an indirect impact on domestic spatial planning and territorial governance. However, the influence of EU policies remains moderate (although it is much greater in Eastern Europe) and the domestic sphere is still the main playground for spatial planning. Domestic practices also occasionally feed into EU discourse, thus influencing the European process: for instance, the concept of a functional region has been borrowed from Sweden.

Participative planning and citizen engagement have also become a natural part of spatial planning, though this is often limited to specific stages of the process. COMPASS has, for example, singled out instances of “good practice” as in the case of Ferbane (Ireland).



Ferbane is a small town of under 1,200 people located in the periphery of the Eastern Midland Region of Ireland; it is categorised by the Commission as a “declining rural area”. Like many other rural inner peripheries, it suffers from a continuing loss of population, low provision of services, an ageing demographic, and the exodus of young skilled workers. However, funding through the LEADER programme allowed for the creation of a Local Action Group (LAG) called the “West Offaly Partnership” and for a community development plan known as the “Ferbane Development Plan 2001”; this was developed with the support of an experienced planner. With the support of LEADER, the local authorities and civil society, usually heavily dependent on national government decisions,

were in a position to fund local services, establish community networks and offer training. The Ferbane Community Plan was administered on a purely local level and led by voluntary organisations. The scheme was negotiated and implemented successfully and can be considered an example of good public engagement: individual invitations to participate were sent to each household; focus groups were set up; questionnaire surveys were delivered to and then collected from homes; officials and economic actors were involved in the steering group... Enough time was dedicated to the process to allow for a community vision to emerge, and for concrete results to be achieved, which included an enterprise centre, a child-care facility, a new community school and a bus service to nearby sports facilities. Such an approach is, of course, only possible with a very small population. However, the example of Ferbane shows that participation can be a powerful instrument for spatial planning.

Spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas

ESPON research reveals that an approach based on coordinated metropolitan planning is either not yet firmly institutionalised and/or not yet fully embedded into routine planning practices in regional and local authorities. Metropolitan governance may indeed be either formal (based on top-down regulations), informal (based on purely collaborative arrangements) or semi-formal (based on formalised agreements between actors). The key concern for metropolitan planning might, therefore, be to find a “problem owner” who can tackle problems at an appropriate spatial scale.

Conclusions from ESPON research also highlight the fact that spatial planning systems strongly influence the development of metropolitan areas because they involve complex territorial governance processes on many levels. Ongoing decentralisation of planning competences in most countries requires both coordination across these government levels to be increased and administrative capacity and the planning practices of local authorities to be strengthened. However, governance processes must also remain flexible and dynamic, while being clearly linked administratively to different levels of statutory spatial planning. This implies the need for more shared competencies between political levels and across policy sectors/departments.

How do authorities define a metropolitan area? Recent ESPON research reveals that despite the harmonised definition of urban areas as ‘functional economic units’, developed by the OECD and the EU, spatial planners tend to use different approaches. In order to identify the most relevant configuration of a metropolitan area, the ESPON SPIMA project developed an alternative approach referred to as Metropolitan Development Area (MDA). MDA does not represent a new spatial concept. It is the delineation of the areas based on distinctive concepts/scenarios for an individual area. MDAs illustrate the views of the local or regional authorities on the spatial extent of the metropolitan areas, and consequently, they can have fixed borders or ‘fluid’ borders. Some MDAs are based on catchment areas of transport networks while others represent specific institutional arrangements between regions and municipalities. The MDA method is particularly beneficial for local spatial planners as it allows them to assess the relevance of the defined metropolitan area against key urban development factors including transport, urbanisation, environment and housing. Planners can visualise the overlap of an MDA with Functional Urban Area (FUA) and Morphological Urban Areas (MUA) and show the relation between the local administrative units, within the core urban area and beyond the FUA. This helps in making a more precise definition of the metropolitan area in order to support future spatial planning strategies. The method uses GIS tools based on local spatial data and data from European and OECD databases. It allows a breakdown of spatial data at the spatial scales of MDA, FUA and MUA, based on aggregation of LAU2 (local administrative units). As there is no one single definition of a metropolitan area that matches ongoing urbanisation trends, administrative borders or perceptions of actors, the delineation of its relevant spatial scale can be facilitated by an individual MDA tailor-made approach. An assessment of the ‘spatial fit’ of a proposed MDA with regard to key urban trends and its relation to FUA and MUA can be a useful decision-support tool in planning and management of the metropolitan areas.

Based on this new methodology for delineation and on its comparative analysis of the spatial planning systems of metropolitan areas, the ESPON SPIMA research team has developed a double typology and identified policy challenges and tools for each of the 12 categories (see Table).

Typology A for metropolitan areas based on size of the metropolitan area (MA) and population density

Population density (number of inhabitants per km ²)	Size of MA (km ²)		
Moderate to high population density (≥500)	Large-sized (>7000)	Medium-sized (2000-7000)	Small-sized (<2000)
	Type 1: Large-sized MA with moderate to high population density	Type 3: Medium-sized MA with moderate to high population density	Type 5: Small-sized MA with moderate to high population density
Low population density (<500)	Type 2: Large-sized MA with low population density	Type 4: Medium-sized MA with low population density	Type 6: Small-sized MA with low population density

Typology B for metropolitan areas based on the status of the metropolitan area (MA) and number of municipalities

Number of municipalities	Status of metropolitan area		
High number of municipalities (≥500)	Formal (based on law/regulation)	Semi-formal (based on agreements)	Informal (based on collaboration)
	Type 1: Formal MA with high number of municipalities	Type 3: Semi-formal MA with high number of municipalities	Type 5: Informal MA with high number of municipalities
Low number of municipalities (<500)	Type 2: Formal MA with low number of municipalities	Type 4: Semi-formal MA with low number of municipalities	Type 6: Informal MA with low number of municipalities

One of the case-studies from ESPON focused on the city of Oslo, whose metropolitan area has not been clearly defined yet. The analysis is based on a region-wide perspective of Oslo's urban agglomeration and the County of Akershus. The structure of the region is, to a large extent, based on the public transport infrastructure. The Oslo & Akershus region is an FUA characterised by commuting patterns. It covers five county councils with 78 municipalities, and 2.1 million inhabitants. This area has also been considered for the formation of Oslo's Regional Alliance initiative.

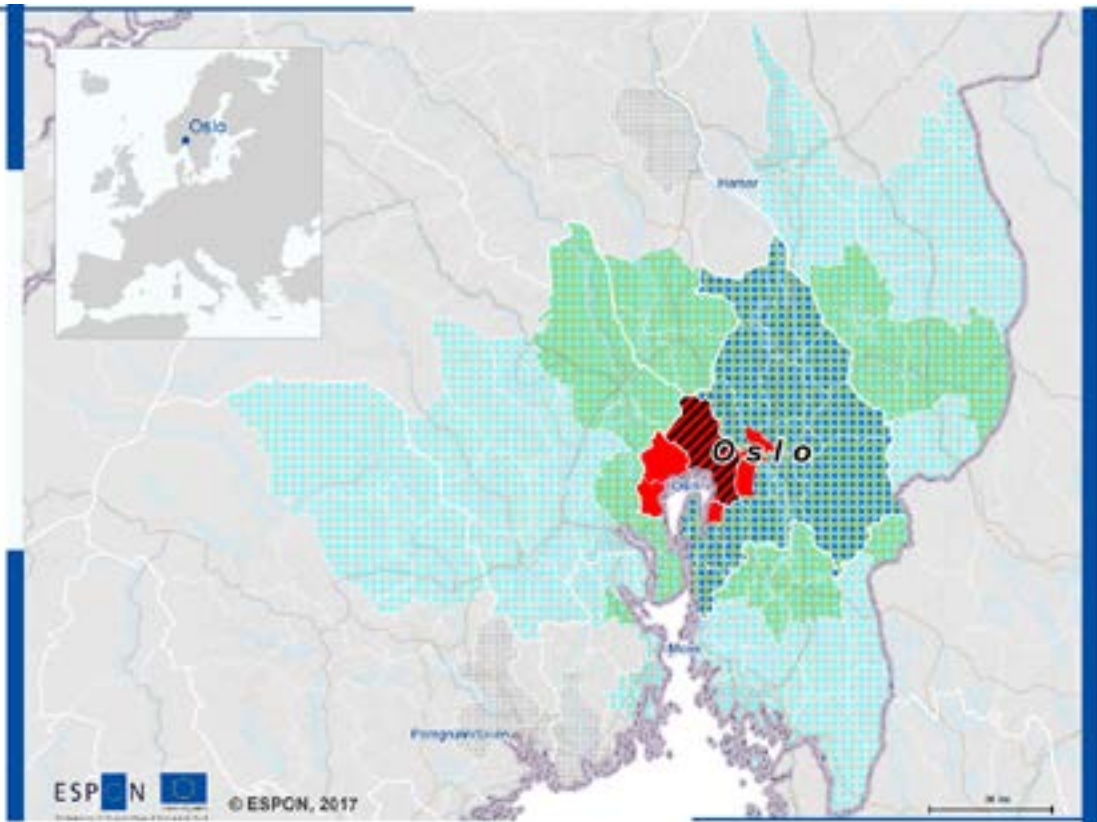
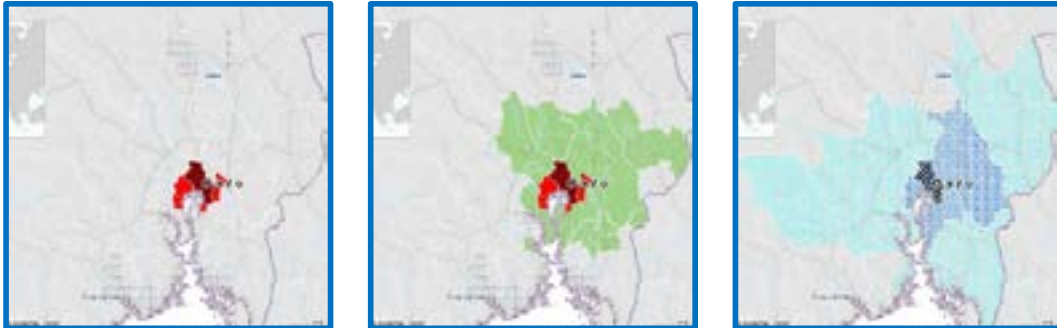
The MDA of Oslo (Map 1) is based on the most recent considerations with regard to delineating between Oslo and the County of Akershus. The 'maximum' scenario represents the area of Oslo's Regional Alliance consisting of 78 municipalities, which is significantly larger than the European FUA. The 'minimum' scenario represents the Oslo urban area together with the County of Akershus, consisting of only 23 municipalities.





Further reading:

The research team has identified the policy challenges for each of the 12 categories (see Tables) and defined a mix of relevant policy tools, which need to be considered when developing spatial strategies and interventions on the metropolitan scale: www.espon.eu/metropolitan-areas

Delineation of MUA, FUA & MDA



-  Core city municipality
-  MUA of the core city (ESPON 2013 Database)
-  Surrounding MUA's (ESPON 2013 Database)
-  Minimum extent of the MDA: City of Oslo and Akershus County Regional planning authority area
-  Maximum extent of the Metropolitan Development Area (MDA)
-  FUA of the core city (ESPON 2013 Database)
-  National border
-  Railroad
-  Motorway
-  Primary road
-  Other road
-  rivers

Territorial level: LALC (version 2011)
 Source: Geographical Information system of the Commission (GISCO), 2017
 Origin of data: EUROSTAT 2011
 © EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries

Indicators of territorial development

The Common Provisions Regulation (No 1303/2013) has introduced new tools (like integrated territorial investments) that can be used to implement territorial strategies in an integrated manner by combining several EU funds and thematic objectives and addressing the development of a territory across sectors.

In April 2018, ESPON published a policy brief, “Indicators for integrated territorial and urban development”, to offer advice on how to measure the impact of integrated investments, using insights from the ESPON 2013 projects. It presents a synthesis of the vast amount of information identified in the ESPON projects and offers a short and clear set of indicators for measuring the impact of integrated investments and territorial strategies.

As spatial planning addresses the development of a territory across sectors and incorporates various possible funding schemes, the proposed short list of indicators may also prove useful for spatial planners.

Selection of ESPON indicators relevant to measuring the impact of integrated investments

ESPON INTERCO	ESPON KITCASP	ESPON SIESTA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net migration rate • Population potential living within 50km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural population change • Newly completed private dwellings as a percentage of the total housing stock • Modal split of passenger transport • Access to public services (hospitals and schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed persons as a proportion of total unemployed people

The indicators presented in the policy brief represent an attempt to avoid the sectoral trap and provide a perspective whereby a small set of indicators can be used to measure the impact of integrated strategies on territorial and urban development. Composite indicators (indices) present yet another approach for measuring territorial development in a simple way through the use of a single quantitative figure which combines several indicators into one.

The ESPON programme has developed several composite indicators:

- ESPON’s 2006 project, “Potentials for polycentric development in Europe” (ESPON 1.1.1.), developed a polycentricity index consisting of three sub-indices, each weighted equally. It combined morphological and functional polycentricity using functional urban areas.
- Based on the ongoing discussion, in 2016, ESPON EGTC developed an alternative, easy-to-understand polycentricity index; it was presented in the ESPON policy brief “Polycentric Territorial Structures and Territorial Cooperation”.
- The ESPON SeGI project, “Indicators and perspectives for services of general interest in territorial cohesion and development” (2013), developed composite indicators to measure different aspects of service provision, and a grand all-encompassing composite indicator as well.

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ESPON 2020

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The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

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ISBN: 978-99959-55-45-8

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Published in October 2018