

ESPON 2013 Programme Launch Event, Brussels, 21 January 2008

Press Communication

“Forecasting the effects of territorial trends on regions and cities in Europe needs applied research”, stated Romain Diederich, Director-General of the Luxembourgian Ministry of the Interior and Spatial Development, on the occasion of the event to launch the ESPON 2013 Programme, which took place in Brussels on 21 January 2008. With a – compared to the ESPON 2006 Programme – three times higher financial budget of 45.4 million €, 75 % of which originate from the European Regional Development Fund, ESPON was set up to provide European-wide comparable facts and data, analyses and scenarios on the development of the European territory, its regions and cities.

Katarina Mathernova, Deputy Director-General of European Commission’s DG Regio underlined the prominence of ESPON as a strategic tool for the making of EU Regional Policies in referring to the upcoming Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and she stressed the demand for a continuous dialogue between the research and the policy arena. The ESPON 2013 Programme brings together policy makers, researchers and practitioners from different activity levels.

“Europe requires broad participation of different levels of action and authorities. Multilevel Governance should serve as an appropriate instrument to realize this” said Evgeni Kirilov, First Vice-Chair of European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Development. He underlined that this approach will gain significance, particularly against the background of the shared competence for territorial cohesion between the European Commission and the EU Member States being laid down in the 2007 Lisbon Treaty.

Gerhard Stahl, Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions, stressed the dichotomy between the economic growth of cities, regions and the entire European territory as well as the need for a Europe-wide solidarity. In that respect the territory and its characteristics matter, but also territorial cooperation between cities, regions and wider transnational areas.

“ESPON is a successful part of the network society and it should become a central broker and multiplier of territorial information”, stated Joost van Iersel, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee. He emphasised the role of metropolitan areas and cities as supporters of European competitiveness and decision-taking places.

The representative of the Slovenian EU Presidency, Blanka Bartol, accentuated in her contribution that the joint elaboration of policy strategies, like the Territorial Agenda, has shown that policy makers and applied researchers can successfully work together. ESPON as provider of data and facts is a central instrument in the Action Programme set up to implement the Territorial Agenda. She underlined the need for targeted networking, not only between EU Member States and the respective EU Presidencies but also with other bodies like the OECD Territorial Development Policy Committee.

The ESPON 2013 Programme is financed and managed jointly by the 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and the European Commission.