Inspire policy making by territorial evidence

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Maritime policy and transnational cooperation in the focus of workshop discussions

With its workshop “Stepping into the Sea – New evidence on territorial development and the opportunities and risks for European seas and maritime regions” ESPON offered a crossing through the six European seas, thereby revealing their crucial role for growth and jobs and for the achievement of territorial cohesion. The workshop aimed at highlighting the usability of the ESPON ESaTDOR project results and at discussing related topics that are relevant for the EU political agenda.

In addition to a series of presentations by representatives of DG Mare, national and transnational stakeholders as well as the Lead Partner of the ESaTDOR project, the workshop featured two rounds of open discussions that were kicked-off by short statements of different stakeholders. During the open discussions, policy-makers and stakeholders exchanged their views about the necessary synergies to be achieved between land and sea management, maritime spatial planning, and the need of conciliating the economic potential and the environmental protection of the European seas.

Timely evidence for ESIF programming

During the first round of discussion the participants agreed on the usability of ESaTDOR findings and the timely delivery of results for the programming activities related to future European Structural and Investment Funds. The synergies between land and sea are just commencing to be addressed by policy-makers at European level, as shown by the new integrated maritime strategy and the proposal for maritime spatial planning directive. In view of this ever more growing importance of an integrated maritime policy, it is crucial to dispose of sound territorial evidence and impact studies which will be key in building up in a truly effective way the maritime dimension of European but also national and transnational policies.

The ESPON ESaTDOR workshop and the upcoming publication of an ESPON Territorial Observations devoted to the project’s results, dovetail with the Blue Growth Strategy boosted by DG Mare, the Territorial Agenda 2020 of the EU, and the guidelines of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In fact, the European territory, now confronted with asymmetric economic shocks, needs more than ever investments through its cohesion policy and a
promotion of transnational co-operation programmes in order to stimulate the economic recovery and social wellbeing across Europe.

ESPON evidence has unveiled a multitude of interrelations between land and sea based activities, as well as the still limited political synergies between them. Thus, during the workshop, stakeholders acknowledged the economic potentialities of the seas and the need for more integrated policy measures, inspired by territorial evidence and by an ongoing dialogue with the regional and local stakeholders.

This multi-dimensional nature of maritime policy was reflected in the workshop by the presence of representatives of DG Mare, DG Environment and DG Regio. The participating representatives of the European Commission showed the will to address maritime policy in a more integrated manner, establishing as a common goal the contribution of the blue economy to the achievement of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by 2020.

Due to the diversity of the regions located on the banks of the six European seas, it is of fundamental importance to follow a place-based orientation in policy-making and to account for the existing endogenous development opportunities and challenges. For instance, northern coastal regions experience various impacts through climate change while southern regions are currently facing bigger economic constrains and becoming more dependent on the tourist industry.

These specific territorial features of the diverse coastal territories of Europe need to be addressed in a cross-sectoral approach to find synergies and avoid undesired impacts which different political and economic agendas can take on the sea and the coastal territories.

Against this backdrop, participants of the workshop agreed that ESaTDOR results provided by ESPON function as an eye-opener for stakeholders and are an inspiration for policy makers.

**Blue and green growth. The importance of sustainability.**

Traditionally, cohesion policy has focused almost exclusively on the land. However, as the strong ties existent between land and sea become more and more evident, European policy is increasingly addressing the marine environment as an integral part of the territorial agenda. This explains why the second round of discussion at the workshop focused on maritime governance. For that purpose, six speakers with dilated expertise in the management of resources of each of the six European seas sat together to share experiences on coastal and maritime governance.

Maritime management is gaining importance as a core element for the achievement of the Europe 2020 objective of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, together with the imperative generation of growth and jobs. Partially, this is explained by the new economic opportunities derived from a more intensive and extensive management of maritime environments, such as the promotion of aquaculture and wave energy productions.

The workshop speakers highlighted the challenging dynamic between economic developments in marine environment conservation. The key word for placing the two at a perfect balance is sustainability, and the sensible management of the maritime resources for the exploitation of economic potentials lying on and beneath the European waters.

In addition, the environmental strand of the Europe 2020 Strategy requires, among others, investment in R&D for boosting the development of a cleaner shipping industry and
offshore wind fields. In that sense, the sustainable management of coastal resources and the protection of the environment would also be in the interest of the tourist industry. As an example, the regions around the Mediterranean basin, which accumulate 30% of world tourism, would benefit from the protection of the natural attractiveness of their sea.

**Costal and maritime governance arrangements**

During the workshop, attendants emphasized the importance of governance arrangements that facilitate vertical as well as especially horizontal integration. This is of particular relevance in cross-border and transnational contexts, and also across the land-sea divide.

The speakers of the workshop agreed on the need of sectoral and political integration. Sectoral integration requires a certain degree of consensus between very different interest groups. Multi-level governance calls for the integration of overarching national policies and strategies with more concrete regional or even local perspectives. This will still remain a challenge for the future development of European maritime policy.

Finally, other interesting topics emerged from the discussion, such as the prospects of a western-Mediterranean macro regional strategy, still in its inception phase, and the enlargement of the Northern periphery programme to the Arctic in the period 2014-2020.

**More information**

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The ESPON 2013 Programme is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and 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.

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