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Territorialised Spatial Planning needs in Europe: the ECPs network experience in supporting Integrated Territorial Development Strategies

What your organization did during the 2007-2013 programme period to raise awareness of the benefits of using ESPON evidence to inform policy-making

As Italy ECP, I questioned what decision-making level could get an high immediate benefit from ESPON knowledge and evidence. During these years I met several actors (more than 400 contacts receive our national NewsLetter) involving in policy-making at different levels responsible of public policy as well as practitioners and academics. By our work as ECP, we transmitted the ESPON vision to spatial planning bodies (central ministries), but mainly regional governments and agencies. This ESPON vision - although regionalized and differentiated of the European territorial questions and policy approaches and solutions as well as a scientific quality - encouraged these actors to reflect on present and future Integrated Strategic Investments.

From 2009 to this day, acting by a devoted staff Italian ECP activated key-mechanisms for engagement with policy and decision makers: a national ESPON IT web portal (<http://www.ecpitalia.uniroma2.it>), Italian ECP quarterly Newsletter, annual Info-days and participation to seminars and meetings of National Department of Infrastructure and National Committee of Regions, technical promotion and assistance for public bodies and researchers to engage in Priority 1, 2, 3 projects.

By means of participation in four Priority 4 projects, it has been possible to organise several more fine tuning activities as thematic events and workshop, publications, e-learning process.

In particular, building *Integrated Territorial Development Strategies* (ITDS) is one of the main topic issues that policy makers faced and it was the focus of the ESPON INTERSTRAT capitalisation project starting from 2010, aimed to encourage and facilitate the use of ESPON findings. A large Transnational Group of ECPs developed capacity to engage with policy makers creating a closer link between spatial planning, research and practice by interactive events, demonstration materials, web portal and ongoing dialogue. To understand the current use of "ESPON in practice" in the real planning documents and strategies allowed to better disseminate massive results of programme 2013 looking for 2020 perspective.

Peer feedback, sharing materials, comparative evaluation and reflection did to transmit a common ESPON vision for connecting territorial planners across Europe, informing practice, sharing experience in planning, refreshing the approach to plans and their practice at different levels connecting to Europe by ESPON.

What, for you, were the key challenges in raising awareness of how ESPON can support effective policy-making during the 2007-2013 programming period, and how did you overcome them?

Anyway policymakers and stakeholders suggested they had severe time limitations that prevented them from reading extensive research reports in detail. Then clearer messages for policy-makers are needed in the development of Integrated Territorial Development Strategies

Some short messages come from this experience:

1. The policy makers approach to the ESPON knowledge is uneven between the countries and sometime fragile in several EU countries. National/regional dissemination is vital to making the right connections between policy makers and Europe.

2. Focused and intensive interventions such as the INTERSTRAT events can have impact and generate innovation in the policy makers sensitivity. But resources, learning and know-how need.

3: ESPON needs to better address the needs of national and sub-national policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners to deliver its full benefits onto an European cohesive and competitive in sustainability vision. They don't want only an academic support, but also practical guides and helpers.

What are the most important lessons we can learn from the 2007-2013 programming period about the need to - and the challenges involved in raising interest in and fostering the use of ESPON results? What implications does this have for the new programming period to 2020?

There is value in preparing a common Engagement Strategy, but every ESPON country should have one in detail as well as easy tools for sustaining the potential of territorial dimensions to generate a competitive reaction to the crisis by translating general directives in endogenous place-based strategies and by applying common planning methodology.

What new opportunities could ESPON 2014-2020 open up to highlight the importance of ESPON in supporting evidence-based policy-making?

The increased knowledge demand of new structural funds in relation to a more territorial development strategies opens a broad field of applied research activities for ESPON and it claims a more direct involvement of policy makers at regional level to identify tailored questions useful at local level. A strong ECPs network would be necessary to face this challenge.

What would your advice be to others about how to go about connecting with local and regional stakeholders at transnational level? How important is this?

ESPON should explore the possibility to develop transnational pilot project, f. i. supporting macro-regional strategies as bottom-up initiative of regions. I could help territory to harmonise macroeconomic addresses from EU with the regional diversity and needs and the policy makers action. In Italy, for the recent Adriatic-Ionic macroregion there is a strong interest of the regional governments to find a way to share deep territorial knowledge with the other EU regions.