

ESPON 2013 Programme/Article



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The ESPON Atlas - Territorial Dimensions of the EU 2020 Strategy- proved to be highly relevant for European regions wanting to benchmark themselves in relation to the growth targets set



With the publication of the Atlas on the EU 2020 Strategy in June 2013, ESPON has responded to the significant demand of policy makers for evidence on the territorial dimension of the Strategy.

It is broadly recognized that the implementation of the Strategy requires the contribution of regional and local authorities. The Atlas offers concrete support in this respect allowing policy makers comparing their territories with others

and towards the policy targets related to a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

To support the use of the ESPON 2020 Atlas, the Mission of Norway to the EU as well as the West and South Norway Regional Offices in Brussels, closely cooperated with ESPON to organise an event in Bruxelles involving key policy-makers at European and regional levels to discuss their perceptions, ambitions and expectations with regard to possible contributions to EU's growth strategy until 2020.



Ambassador Atle Leikvoll said: *“Europe 2020 Strategy is about growth and we need growth now.*

I welcome the Atlas that offers evidence in a direct way; its maps show the story of the territorial dimension of the EU 2020 Strategy in a different way and this is highly relevant for anything related to growth and innovation both at national and local level”.

Use of the Atlas as a tool for regional development strategies in support of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

Policy makers at various scales can benefit from the ESPON Atlas in their preparation of regional development strategies. The Atlas, with its pan-European maps and evidence illustrating trends, potentials and challenges, makes it possible to see strong and weak points in relation to other regions. With the Atlas users can identify: (1) which types of

regions have what opportunities with regard to exploiting their territorial potentials in support of smart, sustainable and inclusive territories in Europe, and (2) which types of regions can be perceived as key drivers for development and growth at various scales.

Participants found added value in the territorial evidence and analyses



The response of regions present at the event clearly demonstrated that territorial evidence can support the Europe 2020 Strategy. Better understanding the position of regions by using evidence-based analyses is today inevitable in policy-making to unlock growth potentials. This is why ESPON has taken up this challenge of delivering European comparable information and evidence, as stressed by Philippe Monfort, from the European Commission.

Philippe Monfort referred during his presentation that Cohesion Policy programmes should (1) select their investment priorities taking into account the starting position of a region or city in relation to the national 2020 targets; (2) identify the manner it can best respond to regional/local development needs while at the same time contributing to 2020 targets.

Involving regional/local levels can increase the efficiency of the European policies

Economic conditions remain challenging in many European regions despite that significant advances have been achieved in terms of crisis resolution and institutional strengthening.

Considering the impact of the crisis, Monfort showed that there is no clear geographical pattern as both poor and rich regions have been negatively affected (i.e. Finland / Severozapaden) and/or resilient (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur / Poland).



The Europe 2020 Strategy requires a different policy mix in countries (National Reform Programmes) as well as regions (Cohesion Policy Programmes). Regional and local authorities can make a key contribution to the strategic targets through actions that fall within their responsibility. Therefore, the involvement of regional/local levels can indeed increase the efficiency of the European policies.

Territorial evidence matters for a territorial dimension in policy

Sandra Di Biaggio, ESPON Coordination Unit, and Ruben Lois, University of Santiago de Compostela, presented key messages from the maps from the Atlas:

- some territorial concentration tendencies (the core and northern parts of Europe are particularly strong with the centre-north as decisive economic player);
- the existence of eastern growth poles (up until the economic and financial crisis, Eastern Europe was catching-up in many areas, this growth has been driven mainly by urban areas and capital cities; while this is a force for growth and cohesion at European level, it carries a risk of widening disparities within countries between the capital city region and the smaller towns and rural regions);
- the importance of cities and urban agglomerations (cities and urban regions currently draw people and economic activity; however, cities are also places where environmental and social challenges are more intense);

- macro-economic elements such as public deficits, availability of public resources, influence not only on national growth patterns but also regional ones, and consequently on the overall European convergence process in Europe;
- that territorial governance matters (governance capacity underpins the development and management of local and regional development; necessary to achieve better co-ordination of policy between scales and agreement is needed on territorial development objectives amongst stakeholders, from the public and private sectors and from civil society).



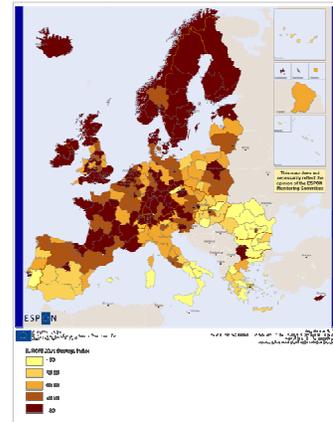
A round table discussion involving key policy-makers at European and regional levels informed on their perceptions, ambitions and expectations with regard to the implementation and contribution to European Union's growth strategy until 2020. It also gave the opportunity to discuss the relevance of place-based policy options for the elaboration of territorial development strategies.

Regions are already implementing concrete actions on the ground. Here it is important to translate the EU targets to

your region.

Important conclusions of the workshop included:

- ESPON evidence on the position of the regions in the European context and benchmarking against neighboring regions is considered very useful. It supports the selection of investment priorities in regions, as well as the identification of complementarities and synergies with other (neighboring) regions.
- Macro-economic elements play an important role in regional growth and the situation of the regions needs also to be considered in relation to global economic trends.
- Concrete actions are already being implemented on the ground in various European regions in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Particular emphasis was given to the "smart and innovation strategies" in place in Emilia Romagna and South of Norway. However, it was also stressed that smart specialization strategies need "smart" administrations to be successful.
- Additional efforts and actions in getting more up-to-date data for territorial analysis are needed in order to be able to quickly react and adjust policy interventions on real time.



More information

- ESPON ATLAS - Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy
http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Publications/
- ESPON Workshop "Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy"
http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Events/Menu_Workshops/workshop130930_after.html
- ESPON SIESTA - Spatial indicators for a Europe 2020 Strategy Territorial Analysis
http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/siesta.html

- Europe 2020 Strategy http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

Interested in ESPON?

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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