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Blueprint planning is over

Luxembourg, 25 October 2018

The added value of **ESPON** as a tool to facilitate the exchange of knowledge among regions and countries at EU-level was highlighted during a seminar on spatial planning, that was held in Brussels.

Speakers noted that **ESPON** can fill the knowledge gaps about new governance systems that arise because of the complexity and interdependence among areas exceeding the current administrative borders. Nicolas Rossignol from the **ESPON** EGTC explained how **ESPON** supports decision making at all levels of governance, from EU to local level, to tackle these challenges through seminars and specific tools that are available for them, such as the Territorial Impact Assessment Tool, the more well-known Targeted Analyses or the new peer-learning workshops.

In his welcoming speech, **Christophe Soil**, Director General of Perspective Brussels, noted that Brussels was involved in a targeted analysis project on metropolitan areas, [SPIMA](#)¹ and that **ESPON** is a valuable tool for spatial planning. He also noted that the workshop comes in time as all three Belgian regions have either just approved or are in the process of approving their spatial strategies.

Indeed, the three regions of Belgium, Brussels Capital, Flanders, and Wallonia have been developing their spatial strategies over the past years and each region is now on the point of political approval of the strategies. In **Flanders**, it is a new spatial policy that aims to reduce the use of space and land uptake. In **Wallonia**, a dynamic territorial structure might lead to new competitive clusters and the need for new transport infrastructures. In **Brussels**, the new strategy aims to develop a tiny world-class metropolis and deal with challenges such as pollution, security and the provision of infrastructure.

Dr **Luuk Boelens**, University of Ghent, **ESPON** Contact Point Flanders, declared that “Blueprint planning is finally over” because the world and Europe become too complex and there are massive global challenges to confront such as migration, ageing, mobility, climate change, etc.

Paul Hogan, from the Department of Housing and Local Government, presented how Ireland tackled the unequal growth between Dublin region and the rest of the country not by restricting east, but increasing growth in other regions.

Dr. **David Evers**, from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and **ESPON** Contact Point (ECP) for the Netherlands, presented the 20 City deals in NL a new model of governance, focusing on networks and cross sectoral collaboration, where **ESPON** could play a role in solving issues of legitimacy and architecture that still exist.

Dany Mackowiak, Directeur général adjoint in Métropole Européenne de Lille (MEL), emphasised on the key challenges for strategic planning in a cross-border metropolitan area like Lille and described the attempt of building a new Shema de Cooperation Transfrontaliere between France (Hauts de France Region) and Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), and the cooperation agreement to be soon adopted between the Metropole Europeenne de Lille and the Brussels Capital Region.

Thomas de Bethune, from DG Regio, explained that regarding territorial cohesion, integrated strategic approaches that combine all different kind of sectors, levels of government and stakeholders will be put

¹ SPIMA = Spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas

forward in the next programming period as a way to reveal the potentials and address the challenges of different types of territories.

Dr. **Ing. Evelyn Gustedt**, from the Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung (ARL), Hannover, presented the results of a comparative analysis of different spatial planning systems in Europe, that was conducted in the framework of the **ESPON**'s project, [COMPASS](#)². Main recommendations extracted from this analysis are that cohesion policy can be used as a spatial planning tool on EU, national, sub-national levels, to develop an EU narrative as a framework for strategic planning.

Alfredo Corbalan, from Perspective Brussels, in his presentation of the [SPIMA](#)³ **ESPON** project said that Metropolitan Europe equals to 75% urban population and “administrative city” not always fit with the “real city” as cities are growing outside of their administrative borders. New actors and new levels of action lead to the development of new types of governance. For Brussels, this will mean creating pre-conditions for long-term collaboration by bottom-up initiatives, political commitment and enhancing the role of strategic planning.

The seminar was organised by **ESPON** and Perspective Brussels and gathered participants from Belgium and experts on spatial planning from Belgium, France, Ireland, and the Netherlands, providing them the opportunity to learn and exchange views and best practice from each other but also from the European Commission (DG Regio) and **ESPON** research.



Note to the Editors

ESPON is the European Territorial Observatory Network that provides scientific analyses and advice for territorial and sectoral policies in a number of contexts including economy and finance, unemployment, foreign direct investment, circular and low-carbon economy, healthcare, migration, etc. **ESPON** supports the discussions on the future of EU policies, notably the Cohesion Policy, as well as the upcoming preparation for the next generation of strategies and programmes at national, regional and local scales. **ESPON** is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. More at: www.ESPON.eu

The **ESPON** 2020 Programme is a pan-European programme managed by the Luxembourgish Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure on behalf of all EU Member States, Island Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund under Interreg.

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² COMPASS = Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe

³ SPIMA = Spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas