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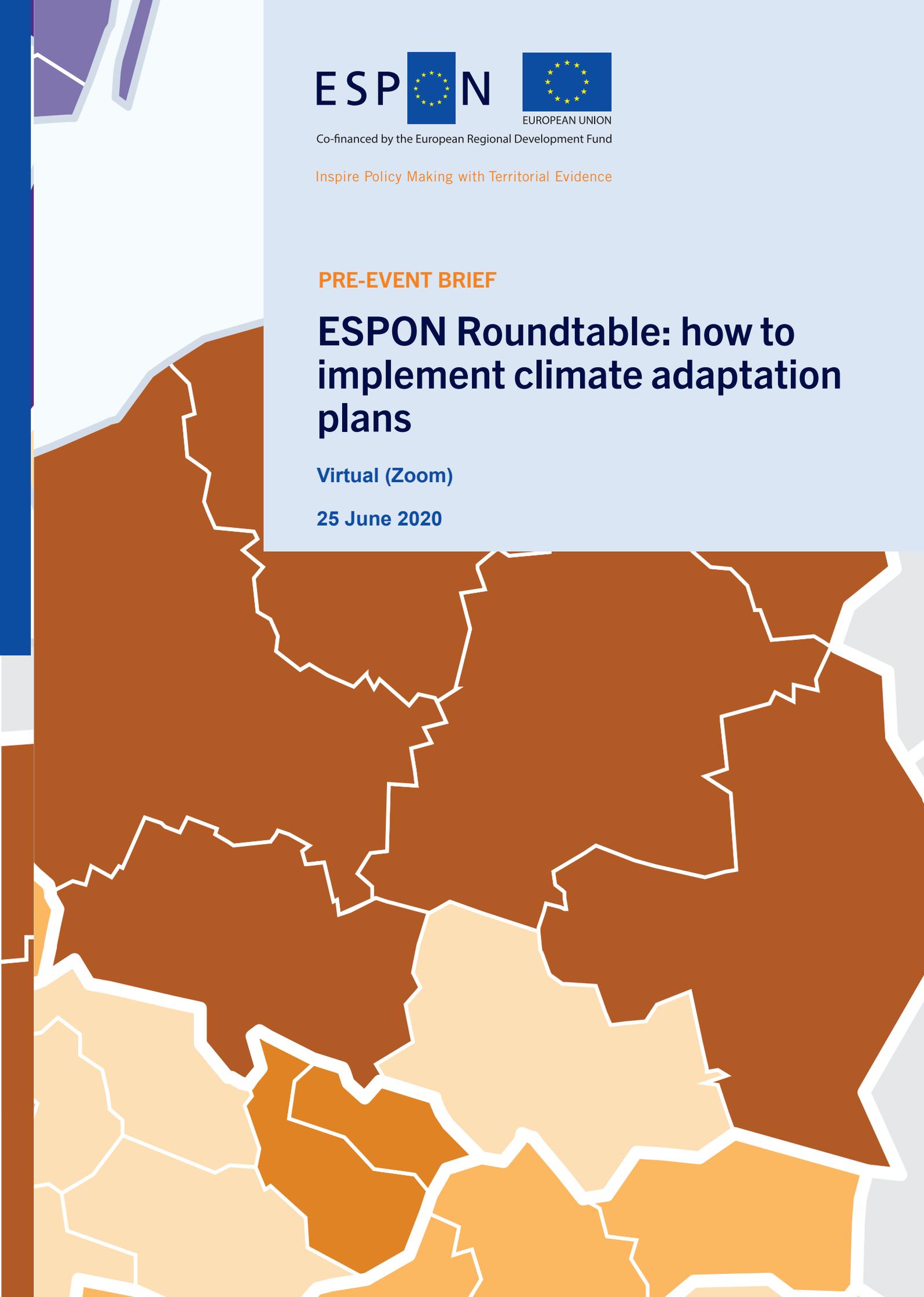
Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

## PRE-EVENT BRIEF

# ESPON Roundtable: how to implement climate adaptation plans

Virtual (Zoom)

25 June 2020





## Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a major item of the European Spatial Observatory Network (ESPON). Organised as part of the ESPON programme, this roundtable will deal with several subjects relating to the SDGs.



In this roundtable we mainly focus on SDG 13 (Climate Action), particularly the topic of climate adaptation. In section 2.2 of the topic paper *Sustainable Development and Climate Change Resilience: ESPON Evidence*, several ESPON resources are listed.

Two of them are still in progress (1-TITAN, with regard to the territorial and economic impact of hazards, and 2-the SDG localizing tool, which relates ESPON indicators and data to the SDG goals for local, regional and national authorities). Another two of them (BT2050 and Alps2050) relate to climate actions in specific regions (e.g., the Baltics and the Alps). And finally, the upgraded ESPON TIA Tool facilitates a quick check ensuring the ex-ante territorial impact assessment of new legislations, policies and/or directives.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and especially as climate adaptation requires tailor-made responses at different governance levels, the ESPON evidence can serve as a background or basis for further elaboration. Climate change and adaptation do not stop at territorial borders, and solutions on one side of the border can impact the other.

Therefore, we will roughly focus on the polynuclear, peri-urban Eurodelta of the Meuse, Scheldt and Rhine, expecting that in this region there will occur similar challenges with regard to fluvial and pluvial floods, urban heat islands and health in small urban/metropolitan areas, and droughts and/or erosions in low lands or low mountainous countryside.

## Objective

**In compliance with both the EU and national agendas**, each of the regions in the Eurodelta have already put up climate adaptation plans on national, regional, and provincial levels, and to some degree even at local levels. In the appendix you can find abstracts of each of these national/regional plans, serving as a guide for what we need to accomplish.

Nevertheless, implementing these plans efficiently and successfully remains a challenge. Some regions seem to be more expeditious in this than others. Moreover, big cities and (inter)provincial governments are setting their own agenda, such as the southern provinces in the Netherlands (Bod Zuid), or the province of East Flanders, setting up a roadmap for its smaller municipalities. As mentioned, all these activities could also affect possibilities or solutions in adjoining regions, for instance with regard to ground water, pollution, floods, etc.

In consultation with the Belgian Monitoring Committee Members of ESPON, this roundtable focuses on the third policy question mentioned in section 2.2 of the SDG topic paper, e.g.,

***'How should regions and cities cooperate to ensure the efficiency and coordination of climate adaptation measures at wider geographical scales?'***

This leads to a second question, which is:

***'Can we learn from each other how to implement (inter)national/regional climate adaptation plans efficiently and in close interaction to each other?'***

## Structure and Input

The peculiar distribution of responsibilities between the Belgian Federal State and its regions with regard to climate adaptation was the main starting point for this roundtable. After a presentation of ESPON research on natural hazards and SDG localization, we will start off with a short explanation of the three Belgian regions (Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia), and how they intend to implement their adaptation programs/actions. In order to become as specific as possible, we will focus on three issues: drought, urban heat islands, and erosion.

Following this, representatives of neighbouring regions (The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Hauts-de-France) will reflect on these inputs, and provide their ideas on implementation and how to interact on the issues mentioned above. An overarching reflection will also be given by the BENELUX authority on this matter.

## Agenda

**13:30 - 14:30**

### **Plenary Session**

Opening by Zintis Hermansons (ESPON EGTC)

ESPON research on natural hazards and SDG localization

3 presentations of 15 min each:

1. Urban Heat Island Effect: presented by Etienne Aulotte Brussels
2. Droughts: presented by Griet Verstraeten of Flanders
3. Water/erosion: presented by Julien Hoyaux of Wallonia

**14:30 - 15:15**

### **Reflections by (neighbouring) regions (10 minutes each)**

- Luxembourg (Bruno Alves)
- The Netherlands (Willem Jan Goossen)
- Région Hauts-de-France (Félix Vève)
- BENELUX (Peter Janssens)

**15:15 - 15:30**

### **Break**

**15:30 - 16:30**

### **Roundtable about mutual learning effects/new cross-border agenda**

Moderated by Prof. Garri Raagmaa (University of Tartu)

**16:30**

### **Conclusions**

by Prof. Luuk Boelens

## Goal and Expected Outcomes

Climate change is becoming a major challenge for the public authorities of the European member states. Numerous policy documents and programs address the issue of implementing adaptation measures. Measures that are widely mentioned include the enhancement of green-blue networks and the conservation of biodiversity, thus increasing the resilience of regions to climate change. While the advantages of such measures are known to the authorities, the question remains of how to implement them.

The Triple Helix Flemish Thinktank on Climate Adaptation (2015-2017) proposed a **three-tier roadmap & learning points** for an efficient and sustainable implementation of climate adaptation plans by (inter)national and (inter)regional authorities (for the document in Flemish, see: <http://planning.ugent.be/medialibrary/purl/nl/4455450/dka-ADAPTFORLIFE-eindrapport.pdf>):

1. *Condition planning to open up.....* with regard to a) sketching (worse case) scenarios, b) listing alternatives and good practices, c) return on investments, d) legislative motives, etc.;
2. *Networking for a better fit....* with regard to concrete challenges, not only within the multi-level governments, but also with businesses and civil society towards a broader climate reflex;
3. *The art of consistency....* both between the various policies and legislations, and between the various domains and departments dealing with the public and territorial realm.

### Key learning points

1. Adaptation touches many aspects of civil society but induces specific issues: sea-level rise, heat island effect, floods and droughts.
2. Heat island effect has the most influence on health and well-being. In addition, it also affects the productivity and crime.
3. Extreme rainfall events and subsequent floods will cause the most significant economic damage.
4. Droughts will become a main challenge. Water during rainy days needs to be retained and infiltrated to supply groundwater.
5. The erratic rainfall will also enhance desertification and land degradation stressing the food production and leading to migration.
6. The reliance on civil engineering is still dominant, but it becomes more and more clear that spatial and socio-economic resilience are key.
7. Climate is a complex system. Adaptation thus requires a close collaboration between the public, civic and private sectors.
8. This collaboration between public, civic and private requires neutral intermediaries to identify which measures can be implemented.
9. Policy makers should open-up the decision-making process by inviting examples of good practices and clear benefits.
10. Consistency is key. Not only within governments, between local public, civic and private actors but also through different territorial scales.

In the attached implementation programs on climate adaptation, we found several of these ideas present. The three-tier structure might therefore serve as a format for concluding remarks: what can we learn from each other, on which aspects can we coordinate action plans, and how can we move forward?

Concerning ESPON, an expected outcome might be to define new research themes that are needed to enhance climate adaptation and the implementation of approved programmes in the Eurodelta area.



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#### **Disclaimer**

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