

TERRITORIALL.

the ESPON magazine

A regional geography of COVID-19

Just Transition and Recovery

Territorial Agenda 2030

Markus Kerber

Roland Theis

Pavel Branda

Manolis Kefalogiannis

Kathrin Schneider

“

*Recovery
won't be driven
by the paradigms
of the past.*

David Sassoli, President of the
European Parliament



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

Issue 2 • November 2020 • Cover Berlin, Germany



Editorial



Wiktor Szydarowski

As Europe experiences the second wave of the pandemic, this time spreading more evenly among the countries, the political debate focuses on the post-COVID era. The announcement for potential vaccine was followed by the agreement between the EU Council and the Parliament on the next MFF and the recovery mechanism. Is this a first light as we leave a catastrophic year behind?

The European Union, already before the pandemic, adopted a plan to revive the European economy while achieving its ambitious environmental goals. Given the extreme pressure that the pandemic puts on the economies and the health system, is it still possible for Europe to fight on two fronts?

Distinguished guests in TerritoriALL give their answer to these questions, stressing the need for more cohesion and coordinated action. State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Interior, **Markus Kerber** states in his message that “the corona pandemic has once again shown that a collective Europe must be strong and crisis-proof”. And President of the European Parliament, **David Sassoli** asks to “radically change our economic models, while ensuring a fair transition that is suitable for us and future generations”.

COVID-19 is currently at the centre of our lives -and subsequently of our magazine. **Our thematic dossier** explores the geography of the pandemic and offers new insights based on the findings of a new ESPON study that we present here for the first time. You can compare them with a relevant study of the **Committee of the Regions** that we are also hosting. **Roland Theis**, State Secretary of Saarland in Germany, as well as contributors from **Lombardy** and **Brussels** Capital Region offer their analyses and their experiences from the responses at the local and regional level.

And **Pavel Branda**, rapporteur of the CoR on cross-border public services, highlights the cross-border dimension of the pandemic. Further, the interregional cooperation programmes of **INTERREG Europe**, **URBACT** and **INTERACT**, share their best practices on working together and learning from each other.

If COVID-19 is the question, then the recovery should be the answer. But for the regions that phase transition from coal, this answer is more complicated. A new ESPON Policy Brief on “**Structural change in coal phase-out regions**” explores the different angles of the ‘just’ epithet and explores the challenges for the European regions. The rapporteur of the European Parliament, **Manolis Kefalogiannis**, presents his main arguments, while key stakeholders from the **Czech Republic**, **Germany** and **Greece** offer their views on policy responses.

Cooperation is the end line of any debate on the lessons learnt from the crisis. On 1st December the ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development will sign the new **Territorial Agenda 2030**. TA comes after a long process of discussions and negotiations. ESPON played a key role during this process, and we are proud to see also our work acknowledged in the final document. Our Monitoring Committee members from **Germany**, **Poland** and **Portugal** present their expectations from the pilot actions they are about to implement.

Finally, 21 EU countries have access to the sea. That makes Maritime Spatial Planning and Land-Sea Interactions a core issue in the debate about economy and development. In this TerritoriALL we present a new **policy brief on MSP-LSI** and analyses from **Cyprus**, **Malta** and **Germany** on the impact of MSP in their countries’ spatial planning.

You can find these and many other interesting stories about ESPON projects, the future of our programme and some of our partners, like **VASAB**. And you can read my interview if you are interested to know more about my background and my vision for ESPON.

Before closing I want to express **my gratitude to the German Presidency** and especially our colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Interior. Their devotion and support is one of reasons this magazine and, overall, the **ESPONweek** exceeded any expectation.

Enjoy your reading

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Just transition and recovery

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David Sassoli President of the European Parliament

“COVID-19 has revealed many realities: it has revealed our fragility, our being important to each other, the importance of acting together and working together for the common good”

In his message to TerritoriALL, the President of the European Parliament emphasizes that EU regional policy must remain flexible and effective in addressing the challenges of the crisis that COVID has caused. The economic stimulus provided by public institutions should be used to radically change our economic models. Against this backdrop, our thematic

dossier on the geography of COVID-19 and first policy responses (pages 10-33) is paving the way to better informed policies at European and regional levels.

David Sassoli stresses also the importance of the sustainable investment plan and the Just Transition Fund to help finance the transition to a green and fair economy in all regions of the Union. Significant resources, substantial public and private investment, will be mobilized to help the communities most affected by a transition to a carbon economy, while encouraging proactive projects and initiatives.



Markus Kerber State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community of Germany

In his message to TerritoriALL., Markus Kerber highlights that we must face challenges collectively: leading Europe out of the crisis, strengthening Europe and equipping Europe for future challenges is what the COVID-19 crisis is showing us.

It is against that background that the German Presidency of the Council of the EU pushed the following priorities:

working to improve EU crisis management

initiate a sustainable economic recovery

strengthen cohesion in the EU

One of the most important achievement of the Presidency will be the final adoption of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter which pave the way for long-term sustainable framework for social, territorial and economic development both within and between member states.

In his message to TerritoriALL., Markus Kerber highlights that we must face challenges collectively: leading Europe out of the crisis, strengthening Europe and equipping Europe for future challenges is what the COVID-19 crisis is showing us.



ESPON has a new director: Wiktor Szydarowski

Wiktor Szydarowski is since September 2020 the new director of the ESPON EGTC. What is his vision and priorities for the implementation of the ESPON Programme?

TerritoriALL: What is ESPON for you?

Wiktor: I would like to share four simple points on how ESPON should be understood.

ESPON connects governments, researchers and practitioners to help them cope with the ever-changing development challenges and potential in Europe and respond to them with adequate policies.

ESPON helps decision-makers to see how their cities, regions and countries perform in terms of economy, society and the environment. And it offers advice on how to perform even better.

ESPON truly inspires policy-making in the 27 EU

Member States and in the ESPON partner countries.

ESPON offers free data, knowledge and visuals to every interested stakeholder – including to you, the reader of this magazine!

TerritoriALL: What is your vision for ESPON?

Wiktor: To deepen the recognition of ESPON as a herald of place-sensitive policy decisions at all levels and to reinforce the message of worthiness to be part of the ESPON community.

And I will dedicate all my powers – my research background, policy development competence, programme and project management experience and networking skills – to making this vision real as head of a highly motivated team of professionals at the ESPON EGTC.

For me, the ESPON community is a meeting place for all interested in making policies as effective as

possible, irrespective of sectoral profile they represent, their decision mandate or their awareness of territorial aspects. It should be welcoming for those already involved in our territorial evidence production and knowledge-sharing activities, as well as for those who for various reasons have not found our offer interesting or relevant yet.

TerritoriALL: How can we encourage a more territorial approach to the design of post-2020 programmes?

Wiktor: All policy decisions, no matter what governmental level they are taken at, have a certain territorial context. Their assumptions and effects relate not only to the geographical area under the jurisdiction of the authority behind them but also to the adjacent areas and even areas located further away. If we do not factor these territorial interrelations into the decision-making

 ***My vision is to deepen the recognition of ESPON as a herald of place-sensitive policy decisions at all levels and to reinforce the message of worthiness to be part of the ESPON community.*** 

process, we will find it harder to address development challenges and make the most of development potential.

So the territorial approach we promote through ESPON actions brings in just such considerations. Do we want one-size-fits-all policies or place-based ones? A standardised palette of priorities across the European Union, or priorities that – in harmony with the Union's overall strategic objectives – are tailored to the economic, human and environmental capital of the territory in question?

The language we need to speak to advocate for the latter types of policies and priorities – ones that address territories' specific development opportunities and threats, and, in addition, take note of aspirations in the adjacent geographical areas – needs to be clear and easy to comprehend. With so much evidence on the territorial dimension of policy-making gathered already, we can be much more effective in reaching out to decision-makers working on post-2020 programmes at European, national, regional and local levels. This will require concise, sharp and alluring policy recommendations, which we must create and deliver through ESPON.

Profile: Who is Wiktor?

Geographer by education, regional planner and process manager by profession, **Wiktor Szydarowski** lives and breathes territorial development galvanised by multi-level governance. He is a lecturer, researcher, advisor, policy developer, and programme and project manager.

Since 1997, he has been working with intergovernmental networks and multi-stakeholder development initiatives across Europe, putting his footprint on all stages of collaboration, from planning to performance evaluation.

During that time, he has been active in various thematic fields of territorial cooperation – including transport corridors, urban networking, integrated coastal zone management, tourism and innovation – in a complex tissue of spatial development zones.

Wiktor is an enlisted EU expert in multimodal transport, European territorial cooperation, macroregional and sea basin strategies, the ESPON programme, and relations between levels of government in the design and implementation of development policies.

In addition, he is the author and chief editor of development strategies and policy reports for intergovernmental networks including VASAB (a forum for multilateral cooperation between 10 Baltic Sea Region countries on spatial planning and development), Policy Area Transport under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (a political network for regional authorities).

The new director is deeply engaged in the preparation and implementation of Interreg programmes in various strands and geographical areas.

He is also a keen conference and workshop moderator, who enjoys interacting with the audience.

Thematic dossier

CLOSED



Geography of the COVID-19 outbreak and first policy answers in European regions and cities

A new reading of the COVID-19 outbreak



Nicolas Rossignol

TerritoriALL presents today the findings of the new ESPON study '**Geography of the COVID-19 outbreak and first policy answers in European regions and cities**'

What is the added value of the study and what could be the next steps in research? Nicolas Rossignol, ESPON Head of Unit explains

TerritoriALL: As Europe is hit by a very strong and sudden second wave, how can the findings of this study help us anticipate what might happen to European regions and cities?

Nicolas Rossignol: The virus will most probably be circulating for (at least) months, and it seems that the geography and determinants of the current 'second wave' somehow differ from the features observed in early 2020. In this context, it will be necessary to keep collecting data and strengthening the analytical tools to adjust the findings of this first study. However, the study already provides a useful framework in which to understand the network-based and place-based processes of diffusion. The acquired knowledge of the disease and the factors facilitating the circulation of the virus certainly explain why the super-spreading events that played a major role during the first wave have not appeared since then. Meanwhile, countries and regions seem to be much more evenly affected, in particular in eastern and south-eastern Europe. Against this backdrop, it is clear that local territorial characteristics driving social interconnectedness have

 ***The study already provides a useful framework in which to understand the network-based and place-based processes of diffusion.*** 

become key factors in anticipating how the virus might circulate in the mid-term.

Both the added value and shortcomings of this first study appear more clearly: trying to explain regional variations by identifying links between the spread of the virus and variables that are likely to influence it is possible and will provide useful hypotheses that can inform policy-making. However, important data challenges still need to be addressed to improve the

robustness of the insights provided at different territorial levels. To provide reliable and comparable indicators, COVID-19-related data and territorial data must be combined at the same level of precision. This is of the utmost importance, as results will differ significantly depending on territorial scales. For instance, differences in fatality rates can be more significant within one functional urban area (FUA) than between different FUAs belonging to different regions or different countries. In addition, a better understanding of the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis is necessary to build targeted territorial recovery strategies and this will require work that involves real data/statistics rather than forecasts and risk/impact assessment analyses.

TerritoriALL: Which themes could be the most important to investigate further to better inform regional and local recovery strategies?

This first ESPON study attempts to provide a general overview of policy answers at regional/local levels. However, a more in-depth and qualitative analysis is necessary to better understand how public decisions were taken to counter and mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. The World Bank has released a report suggesting that by 2021 an additional 150 million people could fall into extreme poverty; however, little has been done so far to address the social consequences of the crisis across European territories. It would be useful to provide effective territorial evidence to characterise the social dimension of a crisis that mainly affects the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, territorial cooperation has been strongly and unexpectedly affected by the sudden lockdowns and border closures, and this could happen again. Roland Theis, State Secretary for Europe in Saarland, Germany, emphasises this very clearly in his article about the Greater Region acting as a European laboratory in the coronavirus crisis (see page 18. Further research could usefully try to assess the circumstances and conditions under which territorial and cross-border cooperation could keep functioning and how it could contribute to mitigating the impacts of the crisis. By highlighting the situation of cross-border cooperation in the midst of the COVID 19 crisis, the article by Pavel Branda from the Committee of the Regions (see page 20), clearly paves the way for such research.

A regional geography of the first wave in Europe



Sebastien Bourdin, Nicolas Rossignol

Between February and July 2020, the uneven circulation of COVID-19 across European regions raised immediate questions regarding the socioeconomic, environmental, financial and demographic dimensions of the pandemic. Why have some areas been hit harder than others? How can regional variations be explained? Is it possible to identify links between the spread of the disease and territorial characteristics that are likely to influence it?

The aim of the ESPON study '**Geography of the COVID-19 outbreak and first policy answers in European regions and cities**' was to provide the first regional analysis of the pandemic at the European level. In this study we used fatalities and hospitalisations as proxies to overcome the limitations of infection rates, which are too dependent on national testing policies.

In highlighting a possible link between mortality and territorial characteristics, it should be noted that the spread and intensity of infectious diseases (e.g. Ebola, SARS, MERS and COVID-19) are determined by the interaction between several sociospatial processes.

One of the strong hypotheses that emerged from the first set of empirical evidence and hypotheses is that the first wave of the pandemic occurred with the first places being hit by 'random events', which then triggered cumulative local processes. Eventually, from February to July 2020, the spread of the virus seemed to remain constant, no matter how strict the lockdown measures were.

The ESPON study confirms these first assumptions, describing a **three-step kinetic process** for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The unexpected kinetics of the pandemic

In the **early phase** of the pandemic all cases had a direct link to China. The virus clearly took advantage of global exchanges and spread across the networks of the largest global cities. By exploiting the mobility networks at the heart of economic development and tourism, COVID-19 has flourished in the densest, most productive and most sociable spaces.

The first cases identified in January 2020 were returnees from China to France, followed by returnees from China to Germany, Finland, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The fact that northern Italy was the first European region to be particularly

affected was not surprising, given the importance of the Chinese diaspora in the country and the movements of people that occur between Milan and China. Milan Malpensa Airport, the country's second largest airport, has become a FedEx hub in southern Europe and an important freight airport that is well connected to China, the world's leading exporter. Milan is also directly connected to China by rail freight, following the opening of the first direct link between Chengdu and Milan on 12 February 2019, which contributed to the structuring of the new Silk Road.

This could explain why Lombardy was hit earlier than other regions by COVID-19. Countries that were hit



The ESPON study confirms these first assumptions, describing a three-step kinetic process for the COVID-19 pandemic.



later by the virus managed to gain some control over the first clusters that emerged following the detection of these first cases linked to China.

A totally unexpected **second phase** – seen as a game changer – then arose and shaped the peculiar regional geography of the first wave. In addition to global networks, COVID-19 found favourable conditions for its circulation through super-spreading events, which accelerated the spread of the virus, for example a religious conference in eastern France, a football game in northern Italy, carnival festivities in western Germany and an event at a night-life venue in a ski resort in the Austrian Alps.

Some resulted in major regional outbreaks that explained most of the uneven distribution of fatalities between regions in some countries. For instance, a religious event bringing together 2,500 people over one week in February 2020 was the cause of the first massive outbreak of COVID-19 in France. By 1 April 2020, one third of deaths from COVID-19 in the country had originated in this region. Four months later, these deaths still amounted to 22 %.

All of these super-spreading events contributed to widespread diffusion of the virus through

Density of cumulative deaths in week 6 February 3, 2020 - February 9, 2020



interregional mobility. The pandemic spread to many different regions, with its intensity also being dependent on the numbers of returnees from tourist and business trips abroad.

Northern Italy was an important source of infections because, as well as experiencing a severe COVID-19 outbreak that began in mid-February, it is both one of the most connected regional economies in Europe and a very popular winter tourist destination. Diffusion of the virus over large distances through the mobility of societies caused a huge scaling of the outbreak process in many European regions, strongly affecting the largest metropolitan areas in particular.

It was at this point that several regions in Scandinavia, the Benelux countries and the United Kingdom began

to be severely affected (see the article 'Impact of COVID-19 in European cities and metropolitan areas' by Alfredo Corbalan, page 26). These examples of relocation diffusion demonstrate the importance of network logics for the regional development of the outbreak during this first phase.

As public authorities started to implement lockdowns and close borders all over Europe, network-based scaling processes suddenly stopped. The big picture of the regional geography of the outbreak was frozen, and a **third phase** characterised by proximity logic became the most prominent.

As COVID-19 spread around large cities and along regional transport routes, it did so with a lower intensity. Overall, rural remote regions were less

affected. With the exception of some Romanian and Polish regions, most of the Baltic countries and eastern and south-eastern Europe were spared.

However, the most densely populated regions in western and central Europe were severely hit; outbreaks in closed environments such as care homes were an important feature of the geography of the outbreak process almost everywhere in Europe.

Although they were introduced in a temporal sequence, these three phases should not be looked at separately but rather should be viewed as overlapping. The interaction between network logics and proximity logics and the fact that super-spreading events act as accelerators should be considered together to reveal the pattern of this first wave of COVID-19 between February and August 2020.

🗨️ ***A low population density is not necessarily a protective factor for rural areas.*** 🗨️

Against this backdrop, an objective of the ESPON study was also to conduct initial enquiries to understand the territorial features that could somehow explain how the virus was circulating once the above processes had been triggered.

Can regional differences be explained?

The study has established that regional fatality rates relate to a multifactorial causality system. The pandemic is currently revealing the spectacular vulnerability of large cities, with the virus paralysing global functioning within a few weeks and immobilising territories that are under confinement. The analysis shows that **urban areas have been the most severely affected**. These are areas where the level of sociability is high and therefore the risk of transmission of the virus is higher than average (see also the article 'COVID-19 challenge in Lombardia' by Luisa Pedrazzini, page 28).

However, **population density is not always able to explain the numbers of deaths**. For example, Germany, with an average population density of 234 inhabitants/km², has been much less affected than Spain, which has a relatively low average population

density of 93 inhabitants/km² (EU average: 109 inhabitants/km²). Looking at the regional level, a large part of Germany, in the west, has had a relatively low mortality rate despite the high population density.

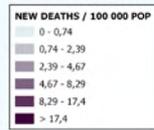
This is also the case inside Spain; all the regions around Greater Madrid that were heavily affected have low population densities (less than 50 inhabitants/km²), even though they are undoubtedly in close contact with the capital region. Moreover, a low population density is not necessarily a protective factor for rural areas. On the contrary, it seems to increase the mortality rate once the virus has managed to spread to these areas (because of the poor healthcare facilities in these areas).

The study also highlights that **regions with a higher proportion of older persons were not necessarily the most severely affected**. For example, at the national level, 23% of the Italian population is aged over 65 years, which is comparable to the rate in Germany, although the latter has been much less affected by the pandemic. On a finer scale, the composition of households is important and may have played a role: the cohabitation of different generations and common living structures have exposed older people to multiple sources of contagion.

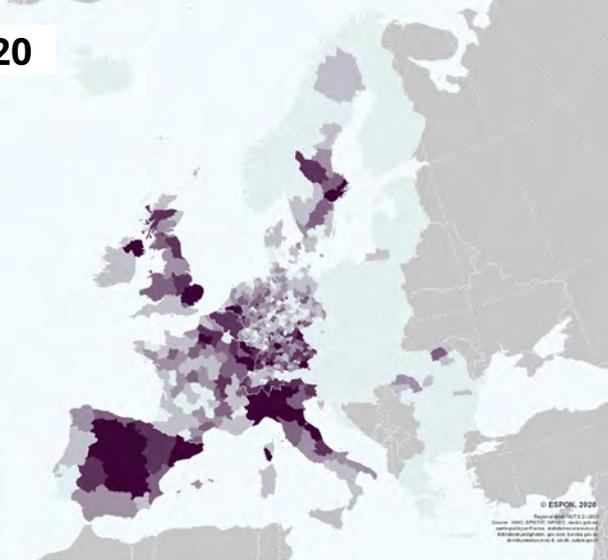
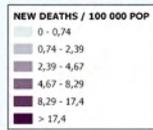
Another important takeaway from the ESPON study is the fact that **regional economic characteristics cannot explain the cumulative mortality rates**. In terms of both gross domestic product per capita and poverty rate, no significant relationship with mortality appears. A future analysis on a finer scale (looking within urban districts of metropolitan regions) is necessary to explain how socioeconomic inequalities result in different fatality rates.

As a first reflection on this first wave, it can be concluded that the geographical approach adopted in this ESPON study demonstrates that **globalisation does not abolish either history or memory of facts** (thinking about the reception of and reactions to the pandemic) on the one hand, or space and distances (thinking about the temporalities and modalities of diffusion) on the other hand. From this point of view, the COVID-19 pandemic is just another way of revealing the persistent territorial inequalities between European regions.

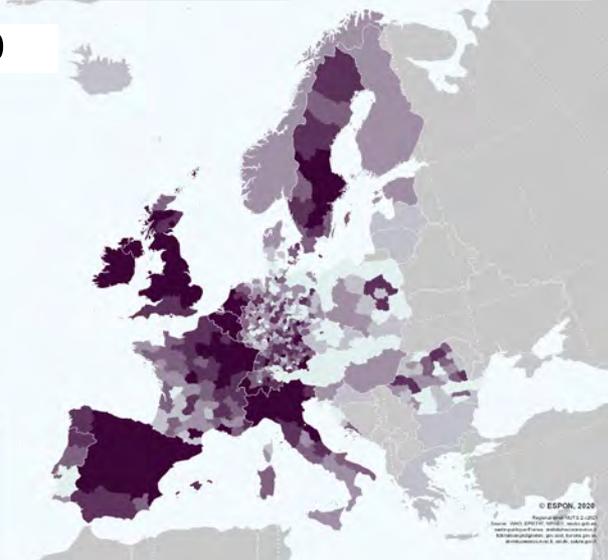
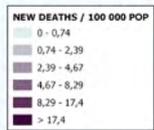
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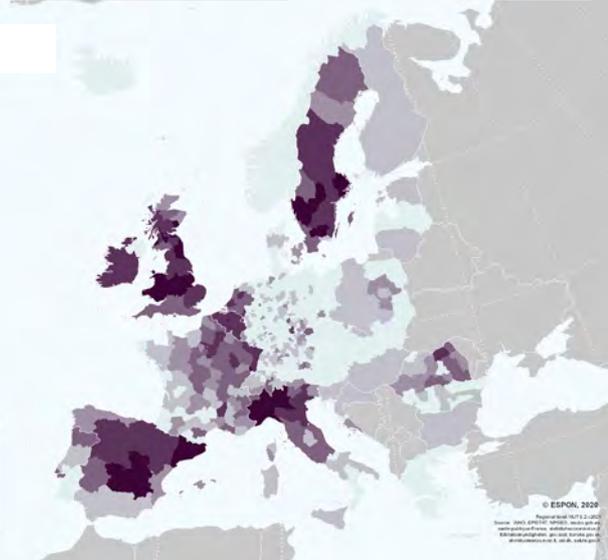
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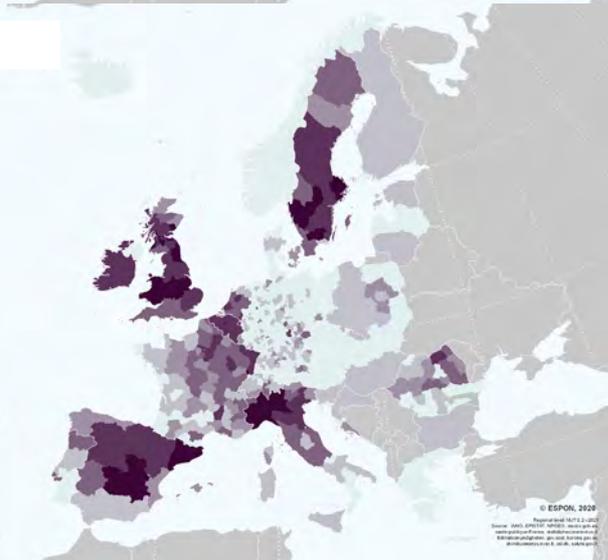
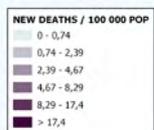
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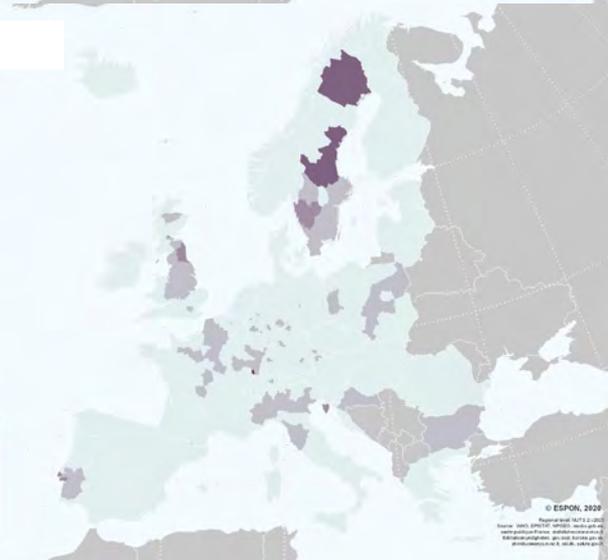
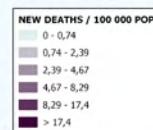
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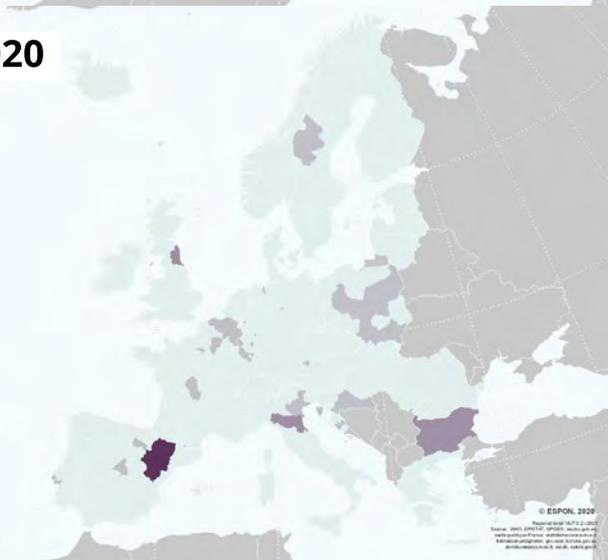
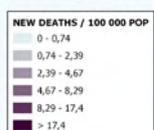
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August 2020



The rise and fall of the COVID-19 tide between February and August 2020



Regions and cities responding to the crisis



Sebastien Bourdin



Mihail Eva



The very strong differentiation of trajectories that emerged with the COVID-19 crisis can be explained by the systemic dimension of territories. The aim of geographical analysis is to be able to associate and combine, in the analysis of the pandemic, the spatial, social, cultural, political and economic dimensions making and producing the territory(ies) at all scales. From this point of view, the analysis of responses in terms of public policies is very enlightening.

💬 ***The coronavirus pandemic has led to the great return of the state, public power and regalian functions as during the financial crisis of 2008–2010, but in different ways.***



The coronavirus pandemic has led to the great return of the state, public power and regalian functions (armies, police, borders, diplomacy, currency, health, etc.), as during the financial crisis of 2008–2010, but in different ways. The management of the health crisis between March and May 2020 was based on the principle of lockdown and uniformity throughout each country (with the exception of Sweden, which did not opt for confinement). However, the public policy logics that aimed to accompany the socioeconomic effects of lockdown were very different depending on the territory.

The originality of the ESPON study “Geography of COVID-19 outbreak and first policy answers in

European regions and cities” lies in the analysis of the responses of the territories at an infra-regional level. The aim was to understand and analyse what measures had been implemented by local authorities in terms of health and safety, daily life, assistance to vulnerable people and support for economic actors and their recovery. From an analysis based on almost 40 case studies, we can draw several conclusions. These conclusions have been shared with Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions to enable best practices to be collected from across Europe.

Our analysis shows that **strategic responses marked by innovation are marginalised and under-mobilised**. However, they are the only types of responses that are likely to result in a ‘top-down exit’ from the current health crisis. They are also a way of avoiding the risk of thinking of a crisis as an isolated event and not as a salient moment in processes that have long histories and that will continue into the future. It is also possible to summarise these results by pointing out that a defensive approach dominates at the expense of an offensive approach.

Our analysis shows a **dominance of emergency measures, designed for the short term and relating to the first identified effects of the pandemic**. This particularly applies to measures to support local businesses, from which immediate effects are expected. Some measures are part of the medium-term solution (i.e. they anticipate or take into account the fact that the COVID-19 crisis will last for a certain amount of time) but risk not being sustainable. We identified only a few long-term measures with a post-pandemic temporal horizon, in which the actors take into account the fact that they



will be able to continue to benefit from the measures after the crisis.

We also highlight the fact that **urban/metropolitan local authorities tended to implement the largest number of measures**. This can be explained not only by their greater financial capacity, but also probably by the fact that these places have been the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Other factors worth exploring include the degree of decentralisation of a country and the level of competences attributed to the local level, the size of the population and the financial capacities of local authorities.

This, therefore, also underlines the importance of governance issues. Owing to the fact that local public authorities were faced with the difficulty of thinking strategically, undoubtedly a few ambiguities remain with regard to the effective prerogatives at the different levels of public decision-making. In states with a centralist tradition – in addition to the need for strategic and decision-making coordination between the different political-administrative levels – there is a need to change traditionally vertical relationships.

Finally, a major oversight in the management of this crisis concerns territorial cooperation. Although several bodies and associations of local authorities have attempted to identify the initiatives that have been implemented, in the end **there has been little cooperation, particularly between cross-border territories**. Once again, the weight and role of the states and vertical decision-making show their limits. A more horizontal and decentralised approach would make it possible to improve responses to deal with this crisis, which not only is health related but also has social and economic impacts.

Examples of local initiatives

Fast-track funding for arts projects reaching citizens digitally;

Changing temporarily the rules for municipal grants to encourage (cultural) projects to incorporate digital and other new forms of expression;

Transforming neighbourhoods into cultural venues that host small theatre performances, mobile storytellers, monologues, etc.

Transforming various city streets into pedestrianised streets at weekends to facilitate social distancing and limiting the maximum speed below 30 km/hour;

Launching an online feature that shows in real time how many free seats there are on buses and trains;

Using the Living Lab concept to co-create solutions for the gastronomy sector (different cities);

Giving financial support to companies for the purchase of external consultancy services so that they can reinvent their products / ensure long-term survival / find new markets;

Organising virtual B2B or B2C events for local businesses.



The Greater Region acts as a European Laboratory during the COVID-19 crisis



Roland Theis

In the Greater Region, we are accustomed to perceiving crises collectively as opportunities and, day by day, to creating together through concrete actions the Europe envisaged by Robert Schuman. During the coronavirus crisis, we have shown and continue to show that even stronger bilateral and unilateral cooperation is possible and meaningful – something that is true to the motto of the current Saarland Presidency of the Summit to **‘promote the Greater Region together’**. We imagined our Presidency of the Summit taking a different path. However, this crisis has, once again, made it absolutely clear what matters and has strengthened our cooperation even further.

🗨️ ***Never before has this been so obvious to us as in the last few months: cross-border cooperation saves lives!*** 🗨️

Cross-border cooperation in healthcare provides a great opportunity to this end. **Never before has this been so obvious to us as in the last few months: cross-border cooperation saves lives!** Cross-border cooperation is not art for art’s sake but an important contribution to the wellbeing of all Europeans.

For example, for the Saarland State Government, reacting quickly during the crisis and providing care for French COVID-19 patients occurred as a matter of course. These actions were and are possible thanks to

the commitment of many people. To achieve further improvements, the Executives of the Greater Region decided, at the interim summit held on 18 June 2020 by videoconference, to devise a joint pandemic plan to be prepared for future crises. The plan is currently being discussed by experts in the field.

A further aim is to **establish a sustainable plan for cross-border healthcare that also works beyond times of crisis** and has fewer administrative barriers for citizens to overcome. Cross-border cooperation of the emergency services will play a particularly important role in achieving this goal. For this reason, we are now also examining whether or not we can increase the number of cross-border air ambulance services, whose use has proved to be an efficient course of action during the pandemic.

Since the beginning of the crisis, we have realised that **we want and need to exchange even more information** to be able to assess and respond to the situation properly. That is why, in its Presidency of the Summit, Saarland instigated measures early on to ensure that information on COVID-19 cases from the subregions, for example on infection numbers and individual strategies for dealing with the virus, is collected and made available.

This serves to create transparency and helps to clarify questions concerning the possible location of hotspots. At an operational level, we formed a coronavirus task force that has allowed us to exchange information by telephone conference at least once a week since the beginning of the crisis on the developments in the individual regions, so that we



have an early warning system in place. The Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Foreign Office also take part in these conferences. Luxembourg's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Regional Health Agency are also on board.

Closing the borders not only was a painful watershed for us as committed Europeans but also demonstrated how important our cooperation is and how important it is for us to do all we can to ensure it continues.

Europe is not to be taken for granted; on the contrary, it needs new life breathed into it day by day. This also applies to open borders, a freedom that is to be valued and protected. As a result, we are working together now, as we will be in the future, to



Innovation does not relate only to the urban environment, but to the determination and willingness to think ahead and lead the way.



find solutions other than closing our borders to the coronavirus pandemic. Keeping longstanding borders in mind, we must find a way to gain control over potential hotspots other than by shutting down free movement within a region in a completely arbitrary manner.

For us to be able to work together even more closely

in the future, it is important to remove legal and administrative barriers. In their joint statement at the interim summit, the Executives of the Greater Region called upon national legislators and decision-makers to take the benefits and features that are specific to the Greater Region into consideration when implementing European directives and legislative and regulatory procedures.

On the occasion of this interim summit, we also exchanged information on other areas in which we would like to cooperate more closely. Moreover, this interim summit showed us clearly that, **in our capacity as the Greater Region, we want to be and can be an incubator for Europe.**

Innovation does not relate only to the urban environment, but to the determination and willingness to think ahead and lead the way. As we want to do this together, we have decided on additional crucial steps to further promote the Greater Region together. This applies in particular to digitalisation, which offers excellent opportunities. My vision is that the **Greater Region develops into a hub of innovation in Europe.** The foundations for this have already been laid by creating the University of the Greater Region, and the most recent Franco-German cooperation in the field of cybersecurity and artificial intelligence fills this vision with life.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus crisis is not over – on the contrary, we are right in the middle of it. This is why cross-border coordination is even more important now than before. It has steered us onto the right path, which we will continue to follow together.



Cross-border cooperation in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis



Pavel Branda

The current unprecedented crisis has put to the test all aspects of our lives, including cross-border cooperation, which is facing its most challenging time in decades.

Overnight, Member States closed their borders across the EU without consulting their neighbours or even local and regional authorities, thus affecting the everyday lives of people living in border regions. This also put some sectors of the economy in a very difficult position.

“ **I hope that, instead of countries closing their borders, cross-border cooperation becomes an integral part of addressing this complex crisis together** ”



This was, for example, the case with health and care for the elderly in some border regions where these sectors depend on workforce coming from the other side of the border.

On the other hand, **this crisis has also shown the incredible resourcefulness of and solidarity** between the peoples of Europe, proving once again that cross-border cooperation is not only wanted by

Europe's citizens but also essential for a good quality of life for many of them.

The crisis has shown us how fragile the results of long-term endeavours are and that we should not take them for granted. It is my strong belief that it also presents an opportunity for us to put an even stronger emphasis on the benefits of cross-border cooperation and to bring it to the centre of the European political agenda.

The **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)** stepped in right at the beginning of the crisis in an effort to revive and reinforce cooperation across borders. To look into what was happening on the ground, the CoR launched **the COVID-19 exchange platform** on its website in March.

Shortly after the launch, it became clear that we would need to look specifically at border regions, as they were disproportionately affected by the crisis; a dedicated section on cross-border cooperation was needed.

The CoR decided to partner with the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the leading associations in the field – the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) and the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI), – to pool resources and publish stories on cross-border and transnational experiences during the crisis in one



place. So far, over 100 stories have been published [there](#).

These valuable experiences will be used in the CoR's consultative work and to support an in-depth analysis of what the crisis means for cross-border cooperation and how cooperation across borders can help address this new situation in the future. In fact,

I hope that, instead of countries closing their borders, cross-border cooperation becomes an integral part of addressing this complex crisis together.

This experience helped us to realise that we have to look to the long-term future of cross-border

📍📍 ***It should be the CoR's role to put to the Conference on the Future of Europe comprehensive recommendations on cross-border cooperation.*** 🗨️

cooperation. While the EU and its cornerstone policies have created many new opportunities in border regions, many obstacles still remain. And these obstacles were aggravated during the COVID-19 crisis.

Citizens living in border regions continue to encounter difficulties in their daily lives, in relation to finding a job, accessing healthcare, everyday

commuting and overcoming administrative problems. Similarly, businesses face obstacles that hamper their growth, while local and regional authorities still face challenges in establishing deeper cross-border cooperation such as cross-border public services.

This cannot be considered acceptable in the EU, as the internal border regions cover 40% of the EU's territory, accounting for 30% of its population (150 million people) and hosting almost 2 million cross-border commuters. **Overcoming legal and administrative obstacles is crucial** to maximising the opportunities that open borders offer to citizens and businesses and to implementing the measures required to maintain those advantages even during a crisis.

It should be the CoR's role to put to the Conference on the Future of Europe comprehensive recommendations on cross-border cooperation.

In this respect, the CoR plans to focus on two issues: first, a long-term vision of the future of EU cross-border cooperation, with specific proposals on the border regions, to be implemented by 2050; and, second, legislation guaranteeing minimum standards for on cross-border cooperation in a crisis situation, to ensure the maintenance of a basic level of public services and a satisfactory livelihood for citizens living in cross-border regions.



Challenges, policy responses and prospects for the EU regions



Bert Kuby



Wolfgang Petzold

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt in the EU for years, and there is the risk that it will increase economic and social disparities between its regions. This is a likely prospect not only because of the different regional dimensions of the pandemic – with its devastating effects on the economy and the labour market – but also because public finances at national and subnational levels provide different possibilities for policy responses from one country to another.

On 12 October 2020, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) presented its first-ever EU Regional and Local Barometer report, which assesses the impact of COVID-19 and the way it is dealt with at different levels of government.

The report looks into:

the impact of the pandemic on health and the economic, social and environmental situation of EU regions and cities, and

the democracy and governance aspects of the crisis, and also provides a first assessment of policy responses at EU, national and subnational levels. A

number of conclusions and recommendations are made that highlight the need for a coordinated, coherent and place-based approach to counterbalance the effects of the pandemic.

Since February 2020, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to develop a certain geography in Europe and beyond. In doing so, it sheds

“ **women and young people seem to pay a higher price because of the time they spend caring for children and the elderly** ”

light on significant regional disparities in health infrastructure and governance.

For example, the number of intensive care beds per 100,000 inhabitants is six times higher in Germany than in Portugal. Although the effects of such disparities on, for example, infection numbers and excess mortality are still to be fully understood, it is



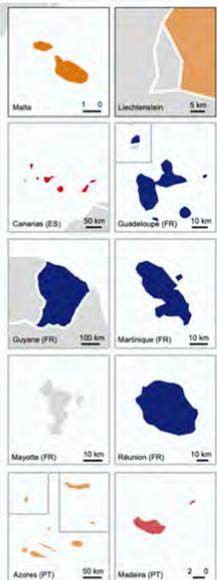
apparent that further coordination and cooperation across borders and different levels of government is necessary.

The effects of the lockdown measures during the second quarter of 2020 led to **a decrease in the EU's GDP by 11.7%** (12.1% in the euro area) and a decrease in employment in the EU by 2.6% (2.8% in the euro area).

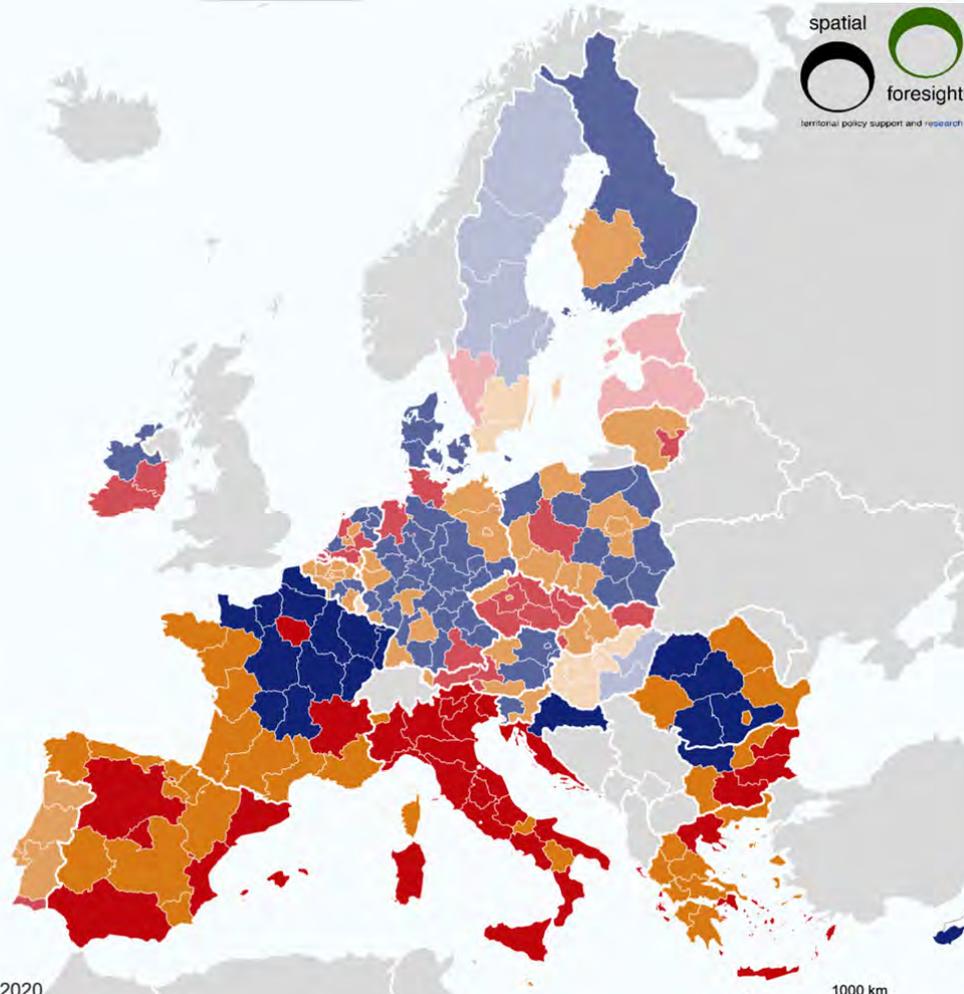
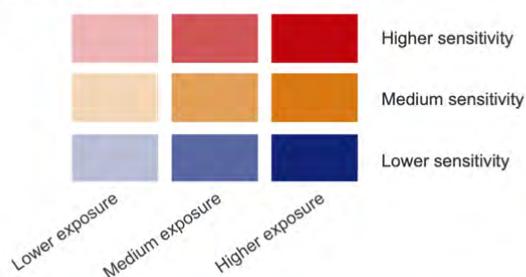
This is by far **the sharpest decrease ever measured**, with large differences in economic downturn seen between countries, such as Spain (-17.4%) and Finland (-4.6%). For EU regions, projections made by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre show what lockdowns could mean for regional economies, with some regions in Greece, Italy and Spain possibly losing up to one quarter of their GDP in 2020 compared with 2019 levels.

A study commissioned by the CoR on Spatial Foresight assessed the regional characteristics of exposure and sensitivity to lockdowns and concluded that the potential impact of COVID-19 is, overall, substantially negative and territorially asymmetric.





Impacts in terms of exposure and sensitivity



© Spatial Foresight, 2020

The report also makes clear that unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis could affect some groups of society more than others. For example, women and young people seem to pay a higher price because of the time they spend caring for children and the elderly and the resultant loss of income.

Moreover, an at-times widespread requirement for home online schooling and studying, as well as

For France, Germany and Italy, the loss of subnational tax revenues is estimated to reach up to 10% of the annual total.

teleworking, has **highlighted an uneven geography of digital infrastructure and services within and between countries.** Many regions, cities and municipalities have made an effort to respond to such challenges and offer additional services. Since April 2020, the CoR and its members have provided a platform with over 300 projects and reports on dealing with health, economic and social challenges.

Policy responses and the state of public finances confirm these varied geographies as well. A survey carried out among regional and local authorities by

the OECD and the CoR found that more than 80% of respondents expect increased stress on subnational public finances.

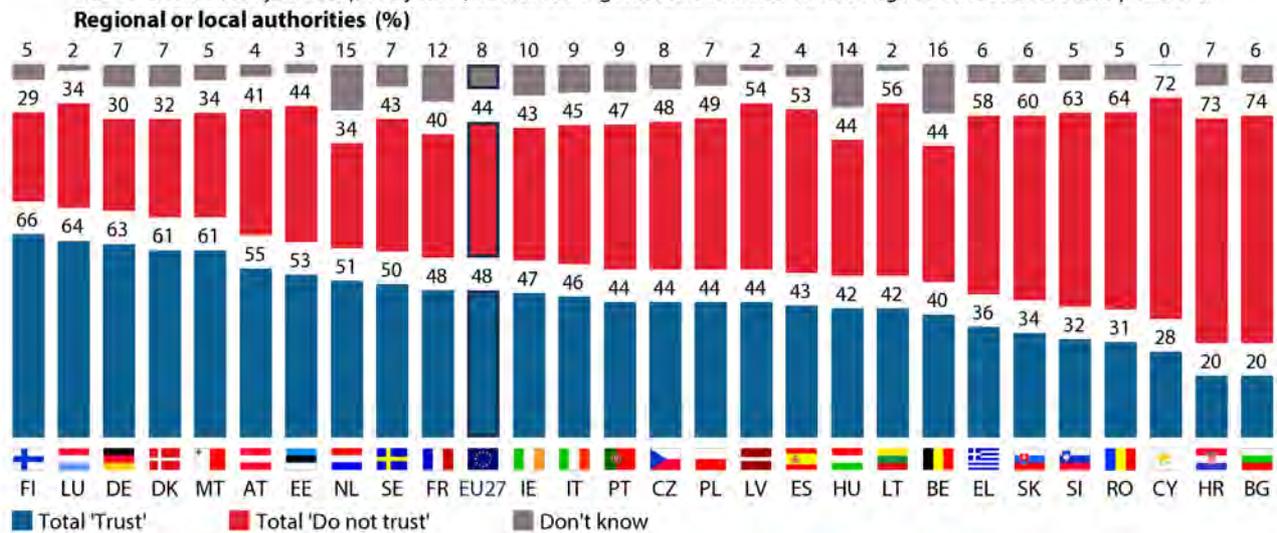
For France, Germany and Italy, the loss of subnational tax revenues is estimated to reach up to 10% of the annual total. In Germany, for example, the cost of federal and regional programmes addressing the COVID-19 crisis to help companies, the self-employed and employees through grants, loans, guarantees, etc. is estimated to be well over EUR 300 billion in 2020, which corresponds to just over 8% of Germany's 2019 GDP.

Overall, 25% of this funding is provided by regions and municipalities. According to the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal and France are currently only able to spend less than half of the amount that Germany is providing in state aid.

On 21 July 2020, the EU heads of state and government agreed on a budget and recovery package of more than EUR 1,800 billion, which is currently being negotiated with the European Parliament. In the years to come, the complexity of EU funding will increase while reaching more than twice the volume of its current levels – temporarily exceeding 5% of GDP in some Member States.

For the sake of well-coordinated and coherent planning, the report argues that local and regional

Q2.3 And please indicate how much you trust they are taking, and will take in the future, the right measures to overcome the economic and social impact of the coronavirus crisis. Using a scale from 1 to 6, where "1" means that you do not trust at all, and "6" means that you completely trust, the remaining numbers indicate something in between these two positions.



administrations should play a crucial role in programming and implementing future EU recovery funds.

EU citizens are crucial to the management of the crisis, and trust in politics is a prerequisite for this. In September, the CoR commissioned Kantar to carry out a public opinion survey on the views of 26,000 Europeans on the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of regional and local authorities.

They were asked online about trust in different levels of government, the authorities' capacity to tackle the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, and whether – and on which EU policies – regional and local authorities should have more influence.

The report and the survey are available at the [webpage of the CoR](#)

Main findings

More Europeans trust regional and local authorities (52%) than the EU (47%) and their national government (43%).

Regional or local authorities are more trusted (48%) than the EU (45%) and national governments (44%) to take the right measures to overcome the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trust in different levels of government varies significantly between countries; in 16 countries a majority of citizens trust regional and local governments, whereas the EU has higher levels of trust in 15 countries and national governments have higher levels of trust in nine.

Trust in regional and local authorities is highest among the elderly, whereas trust in

the EU is highest among the young generation.

A majority of Europeans would like their regional and local authorities to have more influence on the decisions made at EU level; the policies requiring more influence that were mentioned the most are those related to health (45%), employment and social affairs (43%), and education, training and culture (40%).

The report finally suggests that the Conference on the Future of Europe must provide a forum – including for citizens – so that the lessons learned from the pandemic can be addressed, with a view to enhancing EU governance across different levels of governance.



The impact on European cities and metropolitan areas - Brussels-Capital



Alfredo Corbalan

COVID-19, pandemics and urban areas

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out across the world, questions were quickly raised about the role of urban areas and density in the spread of the virus. Some argue that cities and metropolitan areas may have inadvertently contributed to the rapid spread of COVID-19 between well-connected places. However, others argue that it is precisely the strength of urban systems that enabled the spread of COVID-19 to be controlled.

Major epidemics in the past have contributed to the rethinking and reshaping of our urban fabrics. Many architects and urban planners, such as Le Corbusier, have been inspired by the need to fight against infectious diseases by to introduce innovations such as sewage systems, clean water supplies and better and healthier housing, enlarge streets and build garden cities.

The COVID-19 pandemic will also have long-lasting consequences for our cities, most probably in the areas of public and green spaces, mobility and public transport, and housing and office real estate.

Looking for territorial evidence

Europe's cities and metropolitan areas were definitely not prepared for this pandemic – neither were the European national governments. They had to act quickly to limit the spread of the virus and mitigate the economic, social and health impacts, without knowing exactly the facilitating or diminishing parameters for the territorial spread of the virus.

At the beginning of the first wave, several cities members of EUROCITIES Working Group on

Metropolitan Areas felt the urgent need to have a pan-European vision and carry out an analysis of the

current crisis to understand better its territorial effects, the efficiency of the first local policy response and the possible mid-term and long-term consequences for urban systems.

The EUROCITIES Working Group on Metropolitan Areas has developed, in recent years, a good cooperation with the ESPON EGTC through its participation in several Targeted analyses and the organisation of common outreach events. It therefore naturally decided to cooperate with ESPON in carrying out European research into the geography of COVID-19 by mobilising its members to provide the researchers with information and case studies.

Now that Europe is facing a second wave, this ESPON

“ **The pandemic will have long-lasting consequences for our cities, in the areas of public and green spaces, mobility and public transport, and housing** ”

research is even more important. It can provide all governments with territorial evidence related to the spread of COVID-19 and a comparative analysis of the efficiency of the first policy responses during the first wave. It is important for local authorities to build on lessons learned and for European and national authorities to involve cities and metropolitan areas in their recovery plans. It is only by working hand in hand with cities that Europe will achieve a territorially balanced recovery.



Focus: Brussels-Capital Region

Brussels, like many European metropolises, has been severely hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

With its 1.2 million inhabitants living in an area of 161 km², Brussels provides more than 700,000 jobs, half of which are occupied by persons living outside its administrative borders. Brussels also has an important international dimension, as it hosts major European and international institutions and their civil servants, such as the European Commission, the European Council and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Furthermore, Brussels is located at the heart of Belgium, one of the most urbanised countries in Europe with an important commuting culture, an open economy and significant flows of persons and goods between the interlinked urban areas of the megaregion of north-west Europe that are home to 40 million inhabitants.

The Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis has recently [published an analysis](#) of the impact of COVID-19 in terms of excess mortality and the reasons why it hit Brussels so hard. This publication analyses the excess mortality registered in Brussels and Belgium in spring 2020 compared with the same period in the past 5 years.

During this period, the excess mortality in Brussels was 82%, whereas it was 39% for Belgium, 25% for the city of Antwerp and 68% for the city of Liege. It appears that elderly persons, men and inhabitants of retirement homes have been the most affected. The authors identifies four possible reasons for the high excess mortality in Brussels: the degree of urbanisation and urban lifestyle; the high level of national and international connectivity; the high

number of elderly persons living in retirement homes; and the significant number of inhabitants with a difficult socioeconomic situation (work, housing, health).

Perspective.brussels, the Brussels-Capital Region planning agency, [coordinated a diagnosis](#) of the main impacts of COVID-19 in Brussels in three areas: social and health outcomes; economy and employment; and the environment and spatial development.

Based on this diagnosis, the government adopted a [recovery and redeployment plan](#) for the short term and mid-term. In the short term, in addition to the EUR 500 million allocated for measures during the first wave, the government has taken additional

“ **elderly persons, men and inhabitants of retirement homes have been the most affected.** ”

urgent economic and social measures to support the Brussels economy, jobs and health.

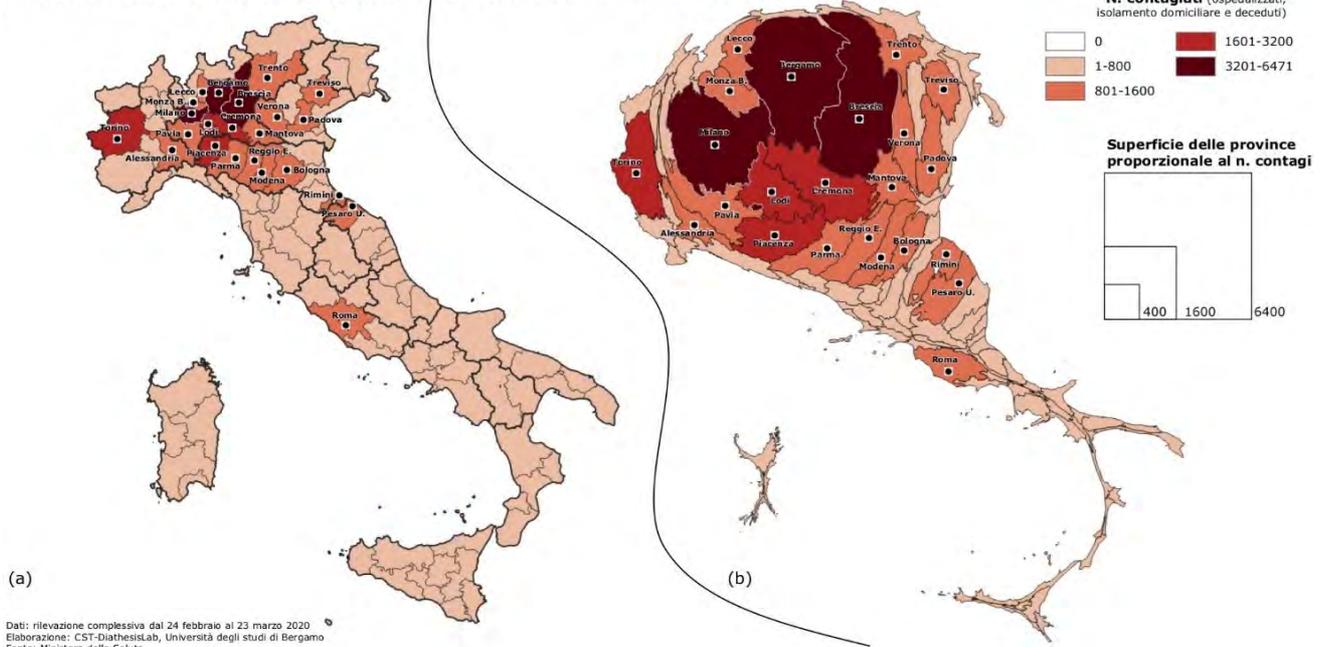
In the mid-term and long term, the government wants to reinforce urban resilience and anchor the recovery in the transition towards a decarbonised economy and a new more sustainable urban model.

For instance, the Scientific Committee on Housing has been set up to make recommendations on post-COVID housing (including the need for new types of spaces, possibly shared ones), and tactical urbanism actions have been implemented such as the temporary occupation of public space during the summer and 40 km of new bicycle lanes.

ITALIA: Distribuzione del contagio COVID-19 nelle province (dati reali)

Dati in relazione alla superficie provinciale

Deformazione della aree in base ai contagiati



Dati: rilevazione complessiva dal 24 febbraio al 23 marzo 2020
Elaborazione: CST-DiathesisLab, Università degli studi di Bergamo
Fonte: Ministero della Salute

ITALY – COVID-19 Contagion distribution by province (real data) (Source: Casti E. Adobati F. (Ed.), 2020 "Rapporto di ricerca n. 3")

Spatial features and contributions from EU projects in Lombardy



Luisa Pedrazzini

Spatiality is fundamental for understanding phenomena such as the pandemic, particularly when they affect a large European region such as Lombardy in a such a dramatic way.

The high population density (6,000 inhabitants/km² in Milan), the fact that Lombardy's economy has the highest GDP in Italy, its international relationships and trade partnerships and the state of the Po Valley region, which is affected by the climate emergency

“ **An effective response to the COVID-19 emergency has been digitalisation, which was exploited as a powerful tool of resilience and transition** ”

and environmental stress, are components of Lombardy's spatiality.

The complexity of movements and the intensity of relationships and exchanges suggest that **the territorial conditions aid the spread of coronavirus and the intensity of its diffusion.**

Analysis and studies show that the virus spreads particularly in areas with high numbers of connections to important transport and mobility hubs and touristic, trade or logistic structures (Casti and Adobati, 2020).

Large outbreaks along the main corridors of mobility axes (the Bergamo valleys) made containment measures difficult and they were implemented at a late stage, resulting in a very high diffusion rate by proximity.

It seems that what Casti and Adobati (2020) call the 'mobile and reticular living' of the Po Valley, with its different territorial features, caused a spread of the COVID-19 virus as a result of both reticularity and proximity.

As asserted in the study of the University of Bergamo (cit.) by Casti and Adobati (2020), **the first wave** of the virus hit the most internationalised areas, which have high levels of commuting, pollution and trading intensity (import-export).

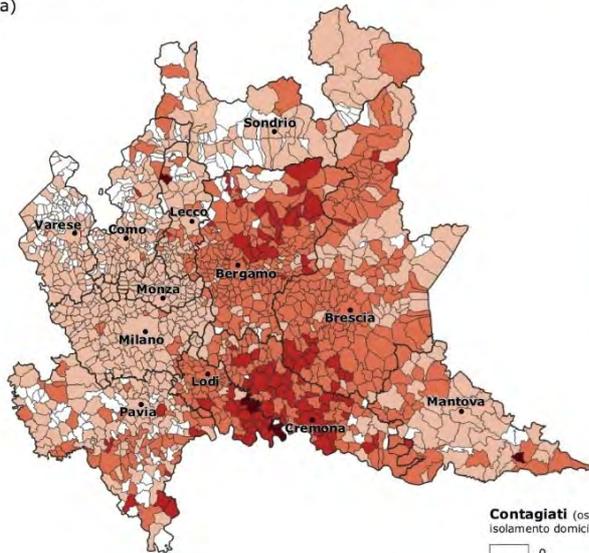
The **second wave** is affecting large cities and metro-regions, even where urban density or mobility are only relative factors; it seems that commuting and gatherings in these 'hyperplaces' have become more

LOMBARDIA:

Distribuzione del contagio COVID-19 in rapporto alla popolazione residente (dati percentuali)

Dati in relazione alla superficie comunale

(a)

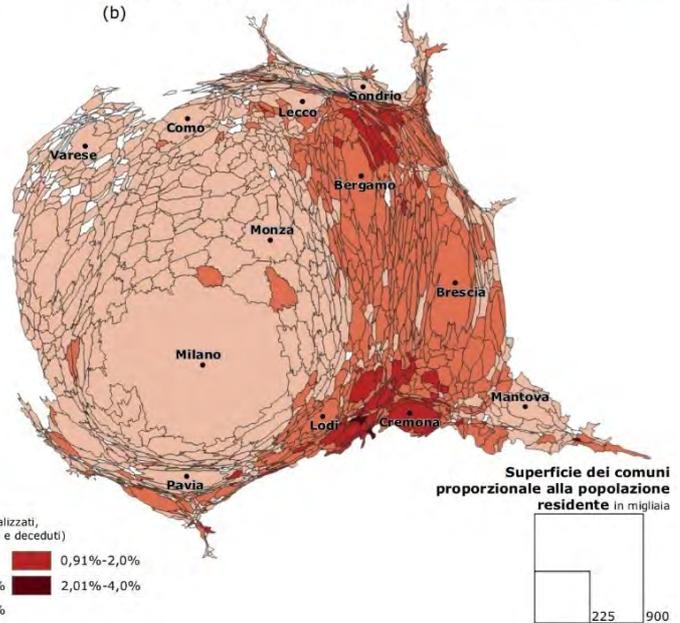


Dati: rilevazione complessiva dal 24 febbraio al 23 marzo 2020
Elaborazione: CST-DiathesisLab, Università degli studi di Bergamo
Fonte: Istituto Superiore della Sanità, Regione Lombardia

LOMBARDIA – COVID-19 Contagion distribution by resident population (percentage) (source: Casti E. Adobati F. (Ed.) 2020 "Rapporto di ricerca n. 3")

Dati in relazione al numero dei residenti per comune

(b)



intense and frequent, which has led to the rise in cases.

In this fuzzy context, two particular responses by territories should be considered, namely related to the exploitation of connectivity and the potential for digitalisation, and the environmental features of the Po Valley region.

With regard to the first of these aspects, an effective response to the COVID-19 emergency has been digitalisation, which was exploited as a powerful tool of resilience and transition, particularly in the metropolitan region of Milan and in the most urbanised areas.

The most visible evidence of this was the increase in the amount of mobile working, from 2% of the workforce in 2019 to 20% during the Italian lockdown. In this context, Lombardy, which has the highest (49.7%) digitalisation index (DESI) compared with the Italian average (39.2%), improved further during this year.

With regard to environmental features, the morphological structure and climate of North Italy (a greenhouse) does not create favourable environmental conditions in terms of air pollution and public health.

A number of projects endorsed by the EU and dedicated to the support of SMEs and public authorities are relevant to the issues considered here.

INTER VENTURES (Interreg Europe) and BE-READI ALPS (Interreg Alpine Space), with Unioncamere Lombardia as a project partner, set up a cross-border working group involving public authorities and stakeholders from Lombardy and Switzerland to support competitiveness and internationalisation in border regions and to promote the post-crisis relaunching of SMEs. They arranged innovative online services for distance learning and training and to tackle the crisis in a comprehensive way.

The **LIFE PrepAIR** project aims to monitor air quality in the Po Valley, where 23 million people live, and which was the region most affected by the first wave of COVID-19 in Italy. The project investigates the interdependencies between human health, the environment and climate, and explores the link between air pollution and the spread of COVID-19. The impact of the lockdown on air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions was studied to improve our understanding of the complex dynamics causing pollution, thereby supporting public authorities to adopt strategies to improve air quality. A special 'Adapting to COVID-19' award from the Directorate-General for the Environment went to PrepAIR.



Supporting Interreg in its coordinated response to the global crisis



Petra Masacova

COVID-19 has radically changed the world in a matter of months – it has changed the way we interact with the environment and people, our daily routines, and our social and private spheres. This virus has tragically claimed over one million lives and has affected almost everyone, everywhere.

Territorial cooperation programmes, known as Interreg, exist to create new partnerships across international borders. Many Interreg programmes have worked for decades to make borders intangible; however, in early 2020 the coronavirus hit hard, and those borders became real again – very real.

Despite this, the value of Interreg emerged: in the middle of this pandemic, the partners of cross-border health projects were on the front line, responding to the crisis. In several Interreg projects, with no direct relationship to healthcare, they found a way to adapt their activities to support this joint response. They helped reduce the risk to medical staff as well as install the right equipment where it was needed.

Interact has supported efforts to show how even small actions from many Interreg programmes have helped to improve the Europe-wide response to the crisis. For instance, the RESCUE project, financed by ENI Poland–Belarus–Ukraine, had already purchased ambulances with respirators. The project 'Your health matters!', by Interreg Romania–Bulgaria, had delivered modernisation and life-saving equipment to two hospitals that were used to treat coronavirus patients.

Both inside and outside the EU, Interreg has many examples of where cooperation works. Projects with 3D printers, such as FILA, funded by IPA Italy–Albania–Montenegro, produce crucial medical equipment such as masks, visors and essential parts of ventilators. The TEX-MED alliances project, funded by the ENI CBC Med Programme, mapped a Mediterranean supply chain from Tunisia to Jordan in the south, and from Spain to Greece in the north, that was capable of sourcing scarce medical fabrics.

The examples are numerous and diverse. Interact has summarised a few examples in the publication 'Interreg supports healthcare: How we responded to COVID-19'. There are many more examples in the keep.eu database, which highlights over 100 projects in the fields of health, social services, emergency services and care of the elderly, but also in employment, support to SMEs, entrepreneurship and more.

in the middle of this pandemic, the partners of cross-border health projects were on the front line, responding to the crisis.



In addition to current partners, projects from the previous cooperation period (2007–2013) have also had a positive impact on the crisis, because the partnerships created years ago have matured and new benefits have arisen from the experience of cooperating. The SHG-Kliniken Vöelklingen hospital, located just a few kilometres from Germany's border with France, is currently admitting COVID-19 patients from France who need critical support. The hospital is a beneficiary of the SANTRANSFOR and COSAN projects, which were both financed by the Interreg programme Grande Région during the period 2007-2013.

All these actions took place in a fast-changing environment with no notice. With more time to prepare for what is to come and new structures now in place to support the road to recovery, Interreg's contribution will be even more relevant in the months and years ahead.



How can the urban environment become a health generator?



Emmanuel Moulin

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably changed our priorities, health standards and lifestyles. As a public health crisis, not only has it affected our fellow citizens or cost them their lives, but also it has had an impact on every dimension of public life, from the economy to social inclusion. To adapt to this new reality and slow down the propagation of the virus, EU cities have been taking complementary measures to national government directives.

Among them, nine cities (Vic in Spain, Pärnu in Estonia, Falerna in Italy, Anyksciai in Lithuania, the south-east region of Malta, Alphen aan den Rijn in the Netherlands, Loulé in Portugal, Farkadona in Greece and Bradford in the UK) gathered under the 'Healthy Cities' network supported by URBACT. Created in 2019, this network aims to foster the wellbeing of citizens by improving the urban environment (green spaces, infrastructure, mobility structures and public spaces in general). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the network's plans and has caused it to take immediate integrated actions.

To support local commerce, the network has developed digital platforms for local businesses so that they can advertise and sell their products; to support the population in need, it has been distributing food for free; and to fight against a sedentary lifestyle, it has been creating/extending bike lanes and walking or jogging spaces (Alphen aan den Rijn, Anyksciai, Loulé, Vic), organising outdoor gyms (Farkadona) and upgrading green spaces (Anyksciai, Malta, Pärnu).

From the outbreak of the pandemic to September 2020, **Loulé**, a town of 70,000 inhabitants in the south of Portugal, spent more than EUR 4 million in its battle against COVID-19. Together with providing citizens with daily communications, supporting local commerce and people in need, and providing bikes to school students, Loulé also put in place different measures against a **sedentary lifestyle**. The city created routes so that citizens—depending on their

physical condition and which activity they prefer – could walk, run or pedal safely while respecting physical distancing. The city also created an 'Online Sports Training Plan' so that people could access online training credited by the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth. To complement this, in partnership with the Algarve Cancer Association (AOA), the city organised a 'Virtual Sports Event' in October 2020 that challenged the population to run, pedal, swim or climb the stairs, at home or outdoors, on an appropriate day and at an appropriate time. Loulé also made available 10 video lessons with a set of recommendations on how to stay active at home.

“ **Healthy Cities network aims to foster the wellbeing of citizens by improving the urban environment** ”

Vic, a town of 45,000 inhabitants in Catalonia, increased the number of pedestrian areas and set speed limits for cars in its effort to promote active mobility. Pavements and cycle lanes were extended and better connected. Free guided physical activities in open spaces are being organised regularly. Vic also put in place a free door-to-door delivery service with the help of a social enterprise – a service that has been so well received by citizens that it has continued since the end of the confinement. During the pandemic, the city has subsidised some commerce and has reduced municipal taxes.

It is with such creativity, persistence and citizen engagement that EU cities can make our lives easier and improve them during the pandemic. URBACT will continue helping these cities/regions by providing useful resources and good practices on its website (www.urbact.eu).



Sharing solutions for COVID-19 recovery



Erwin Siweris

Creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions and policy learning is at the heart of Interreg Europe. As an interregional cooperation programme, Interreg Europe helps regions work together, exchange experiences and find solutions to their challenges. The [COVID-19](#) crisis has brought about new challenges to address. Instead of starting from scratch, regions from all over Europe can speed up the process of finding solutions and getting back on the road to recovery by leveraging the experience and collective know-how of a pan-European community of policy-makers and regional development practitioners.

Making use of good practices

The Interreg Europe [good practice database](#) brings together hundreds of tested and proven solutions from different regions. Those with particular relevance in the current context have been tagged with the keyword 'COVID-19'. Get a taste of the available solutions with the following two examples.

COVID-19 package for start-ups

Start-ups in Austria can make use of the [COVID-19 package](#) to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Launched by the government and run by Austria Wirtschaftsservice (the Austrian promotional bank), the start-up fund offers loans of EUR 10,000–800,000, with a simple application process.

Thanks to the simple administration process, companies receive a response within 3 days of sending their application. The loans are interest free and they have to be repaid only when the beneficiary starts to generate profits. Overall, EUR 40 million of equity has already been granted to more than 200 start-ups through the scheme.

Volunteering and the circular economy during the COVID-19 pandemic

The municipality of Empoli in Italy made use of the [circular economy and volunteering](#) to mitigate isolation and growing social inequalities during the COVID-19 outbreak. Particularly during lockdown, new measures were needed to reach and support

vulnerable people, mainly the elderly, disabled, quarantined or clinically susceptible to the virus. The municipality launched a public call to volunteering and charity associations to set up a food chain together with local farmers, food industry, and groceries.

The local mobilisation enabled regular home delivery service of fresh goods and medicine, food package deliveries, and the establishment of food donor points in local groceries, as well as the implementation of a food cheque distribution system. The associations have also seen an increase in the number of volunteers involved, reinforcing the sense of mutual solidarity and cooperation in local communities.



Start-ups in Austria can make use of the COVID-19 package to overcome the effects of the pandemic



Browse the Interreg Europe [good practice database](#) for more solutions. In addition to being inspired by good practices from other regions, you can also submit and share your ideas.

Getting support from experts and peers

For local challenges that call for more tailored solutions, Interreg Europe can also deliver personalised advice and expert support through the Policy Learning Platform. If your challenge is related to research and innovation, SME competitiveness, the low-carbon economy, or environment and resource efficiency, the vast selection of good practices and solutions gathered by Interreg Europe can help you move forward.

Use the online [help-desk](#) to get a quick response to your question, or submit your challenge for a [peer review](#) and let the experts bring you together with peers from other regions who can help you find solutions.

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CONTACT



18-19 November

Just Transition and
Recovery for Cities
and Regions in
Europe





Just Transition Fund: A green blueprint for a resilient recovery in Europe



Manolis Kefalogiannis

Europe is now considering how best to structure its recovery from the deep health, social and economic crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we can take one positive from the pandemic, it should be that we learn from the way COVID-19 has exposed flaws in present systems.

Europe's recovery plan should address the social impacts of the present crisis by placing the European Green Deal at its heart, creating jobs and to this end supporting a just transition and mobilising green investment in line with the European net zero emissions goals.

This is our ambitious commitment: to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent while ensuring that the transition to this new green growth model is just and fair for all EU citizens and territories.

Since the climate policies enacted by the EU will have an uneven impact on European regions, communities, sectors and workers, they need to be accompanied by social and economic policies to ensure that no one is left behind.

Thus, the aim of just transition is to provide support to territories facing serious socioeconomic challenges as a result of the transition to climate neutrality. This initiative is composed of three pillars: a new Just Transition Fund (JTF), the use of a fraction of InvestEU financing for climate objectives and the creation of a public-sector loan facility at the European Investment Bank, partly guaranteed by the EU budget.

Following the adoption of the opinions of both the Council and European Parliament, the opportunity

remains to improve the JTF through our crucial trilogues. These improvements could be achieved by refocusing the JTF on ensuring sufficient economic and social support to the countries, regions, industrial sectors, technologies, workers and consumers that need it the most. We can still further amend it to



This is our ambitious commitment: to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent while ensuring that the transition to this new green growth model is just and fair for all EU citizens and territories



better respond to the urgent need for just transition policies in the challenging context of the post-COVID-19 recovery.

The JTF should prioritise the areas that need support the most, including highly carbon-intensive regions and those with a gross domestic product per capita below the EU average, such as the islands and outermost regions.

The allocation-performance linkage should ensure that the different starting points are taken into account and should avoid disadvantaging countries and projects; this is why the Green Rewarding

Mechanism should be preserved. The JTF should be purpose driven towards helping those areas that need assistance the most.

We can still actively promote a quick phasing out of coal, by bridging natural resources such as natural gas, where necessary, and by putting in place a just transition scheme that would guarantee the social welfare of coal miners who stand to lose their jobs and aid the socioeconomic transformation of Europe's coal regions.

In line with our political ambition, businesses are already preparing to deliver on the just transition target of a net zero emissions European economy by 2050, recognising that climate action is well aligned with building new industries, delivering better health and creating pleasant places to live.

On the other hand, European governments have already started to work with businesses to deliver a stronger, collaborative just transition that repairs the social and economic damage caused by coronavirus while simultaneously addressing deeper climate and environmental issues.

The JTF should be fit for the challenges ahead and the amount of support provided should be substantial.

The scale and intention of the JTF is revolutionary and the EU must not lose sight of how far it has already come.

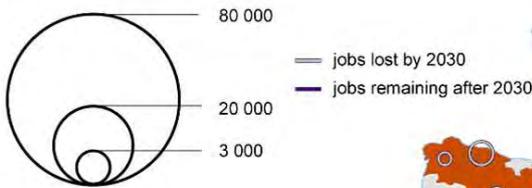
We should remember that making the right decisions now can help to create a fairer and secure environment for all our regions in the future.



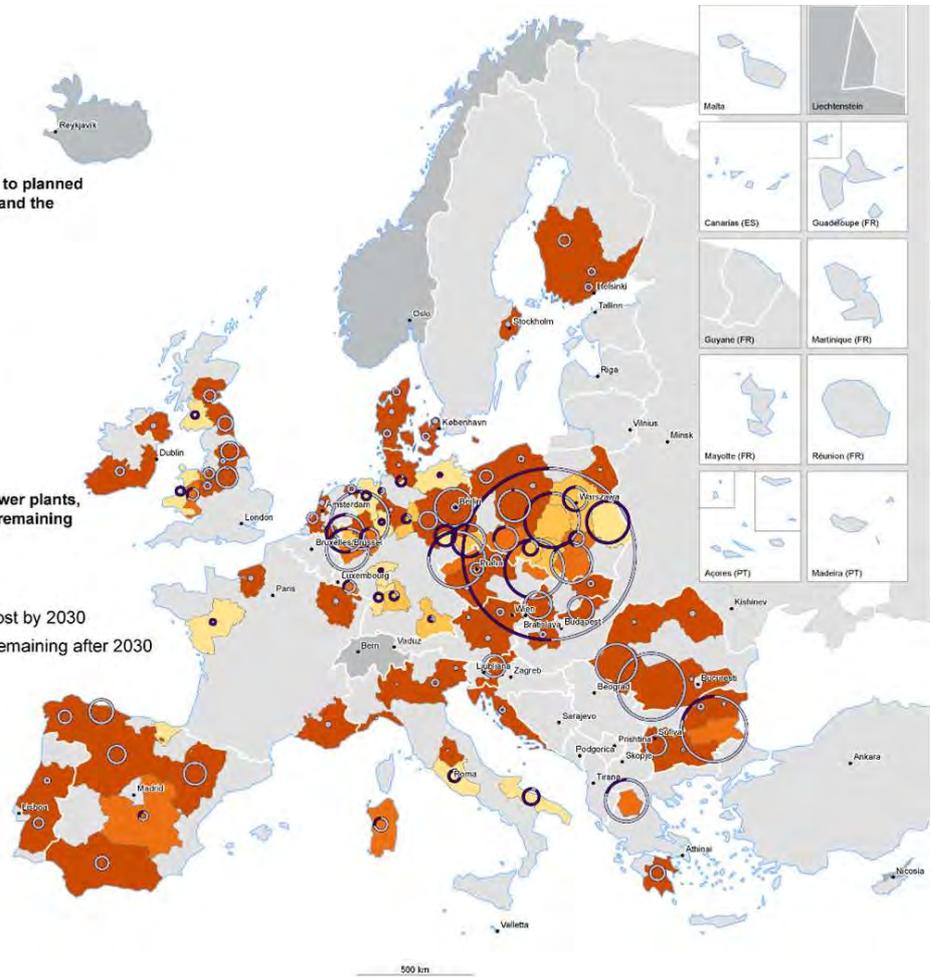
Degree of coal-phase out in EU coal regions due to planned closure of coal mines and power plants by 2030 and the respective changes in jobs

- no phase-out (0 - 15% jobs lost)
- moderate phase-out (15 - 50% jobs lost)
- substantial phase-out (50 - 85% jobs lost)
- complete phase-out (85-100% jobs lost)

Current direct employment in coal mines and power plants, job losses by 2025, job losses by 2030 and jobs remaining by 2030



Regional level: NUTS 2 (2013)
Origin of data: JRC, 2018; ESPON, 2020; ESTAT GISCO for administrative boundaries



Structural change in EU coal phase-out regions



Vassilen Iotzov

Recent debates on the just transition to a decarbonised economy have tasked policy-makers and academics alike with reconciling the different angles of the 'just' epithet. The phasing out of coal resonates differently in different territorial realities. Coal-dependent regions perceive that there has been a redistribution of social benefits, with marginal economic damage inflicted on a few regions. However, regions that have long embraced industrial decarbonisation, in particular, are concerned about the increasing marginal damage from coal-related activities, in which environmental costs are externalised from the incumbent industries. Financial allocations to remedy the market failure may be misperceived as a reward for regions that delay decarbonisation efforts. It is therefore important to prevent a positive feedback loop and turn attention to the place-invariant challenge that can be expected

across all regional economies, albeit to different extents. The decarbonised economy commitments will bring about a paradigm shift in coal-dependent and arguably coal-independent regions alike. However, regions have different levels of potential to embark on this paradigm. In other words, regions have different levels of potential to induce structural change because of the different levels of dependency on incumbent industries, which may exacerbate the socioeconomic implications of such a paradigm shift. This is why Article 1 of the proposal for a Just Transition Fund (JTF) Regulation defines the JTF as an instrument that 'provide[s] support to territories facing serious socio-economic challenges deriving from the transition process towards a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050'. Coal regions are among those regions that are particularly vulnerable, as their regional economic ecosystems are historically

linked with coal extraction and power generation. The proposal for a JTF Regulation identifies 108 European regions with coal infrastructure and nearly 237,000 related jobs. In 2018, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission estimated that the regions that will be most affected by 2030 are located in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. By 2025, the Polish voivodeships Śląskie and Małopolskie, the Czech regions of Karlovy Vary, Ústí nad Labem and Moravskoslezský, and the German Lausitz area and the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen are projected to register more than 2,000 job losses each. By 2030, Śląskie and the Bulgarian provinces of Stara Zagora and Sliven are estimated to lose 39,000 jobs in total.

The alarming estimates have triggered an intense research-policy discourse. We plug in ESPON territorial evidence that will be useful for informed decisions on JTF actions related to research and development (R&D) investments, productive investments as well as business incubation and consultancy for firm creation and development, i.e. the first three types of activities proposed by the JTF Regulation and amended by the European Parliament. We argue that the first three types of JTF actions are crucial, as they are likely to influence parameters that best explain the variance in the structural change potential of coal-dependent regions. All other actions are likely to be pursued all across Europe within or beyond the JTF, with a comparable positive moderating effect on economic diversification.

JTF actions related R&D, productive investments and business development influence parameters that best explain the variance in the structural change potential

We suggest that the increasingly practised Entrepreneurial Discovery Process should be established as a JTF governance and implementation mechanism in coal phase-out regions. The principles of this process, which is associated with regional smart specialisation, are equally applicable in a process of collaborative navigation towards the most favourable corridor out of an economic path dependency.

We assimilate the popular industrial policy concepts of Open Innovation, the Innovation Commons and the dichotomy between entrepreneurial risk and uncertainty as instruments for determining a

social-benefit-maximising intensity and mix of the three JTF actions in our assessment. Here, we plug in ESPON territorial evidence on small and medium-sized enterprises, the knowledge economy, foreign direct investment (FDI) and technological transformation of regional economies so as to derive a conceptual framework for the efficient use of JTF resources.

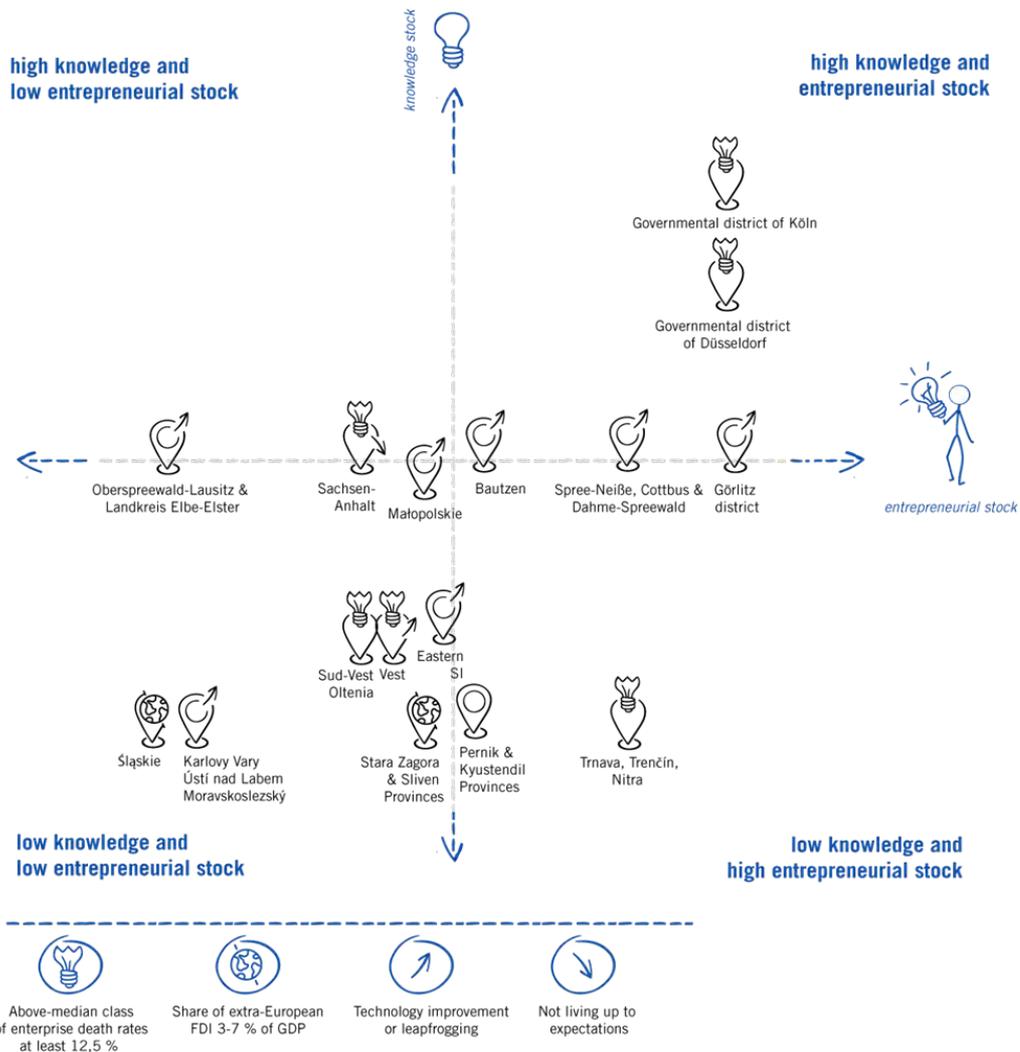
Based on these territorial parameters, we plot the estimated position of regions expected to be most

The decarbonised economy commitments will bring about a paradigm shift in coal-dependent and arguably coal-independent regions alike

severely affected along the knowledge and entrepreneurial stock trajectories, which not only demonstrates variance in regional potential for structural change but also more importantly helps to approximate the desirable balance of the three types of JTF actions in our assessment.

Conclusions for a JTF action mix can be drawn based on the relative position along both trajectories.

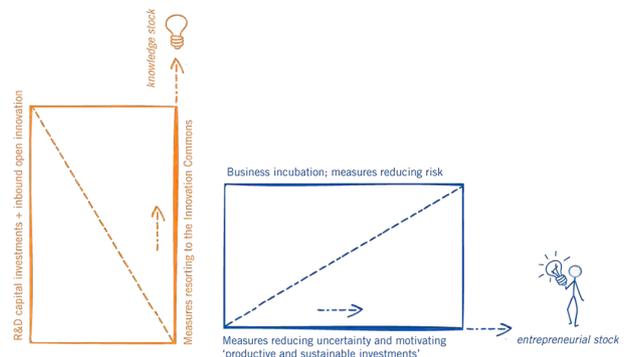




Regions such as Śląskie and the provinces of Stara Zagora and Sliven, with comparably low knowledge and entrepreneurial stock compounded by higher dependency on non-local knowledge sourced from FDI, would ascertain a necessity to build up a productive and durable regional Innovation Commons, resulting in the need to channel investments towards R&D capital and inbound open

innovation. The latter can be a systemised action within a Territorial Just Transition Plan that would seek to entice piloting and experimentation projects to prepare for the market roll-out of new technologies within the framework programme for research and innovation. Business incubation and consultancy must be expected to positively moderate such efforts. Regions with better knowledge and entrepreneurial

Entrepreneurial Discovery Process should be established as a JTF governance and implementation mechanism in coal phase-out regions



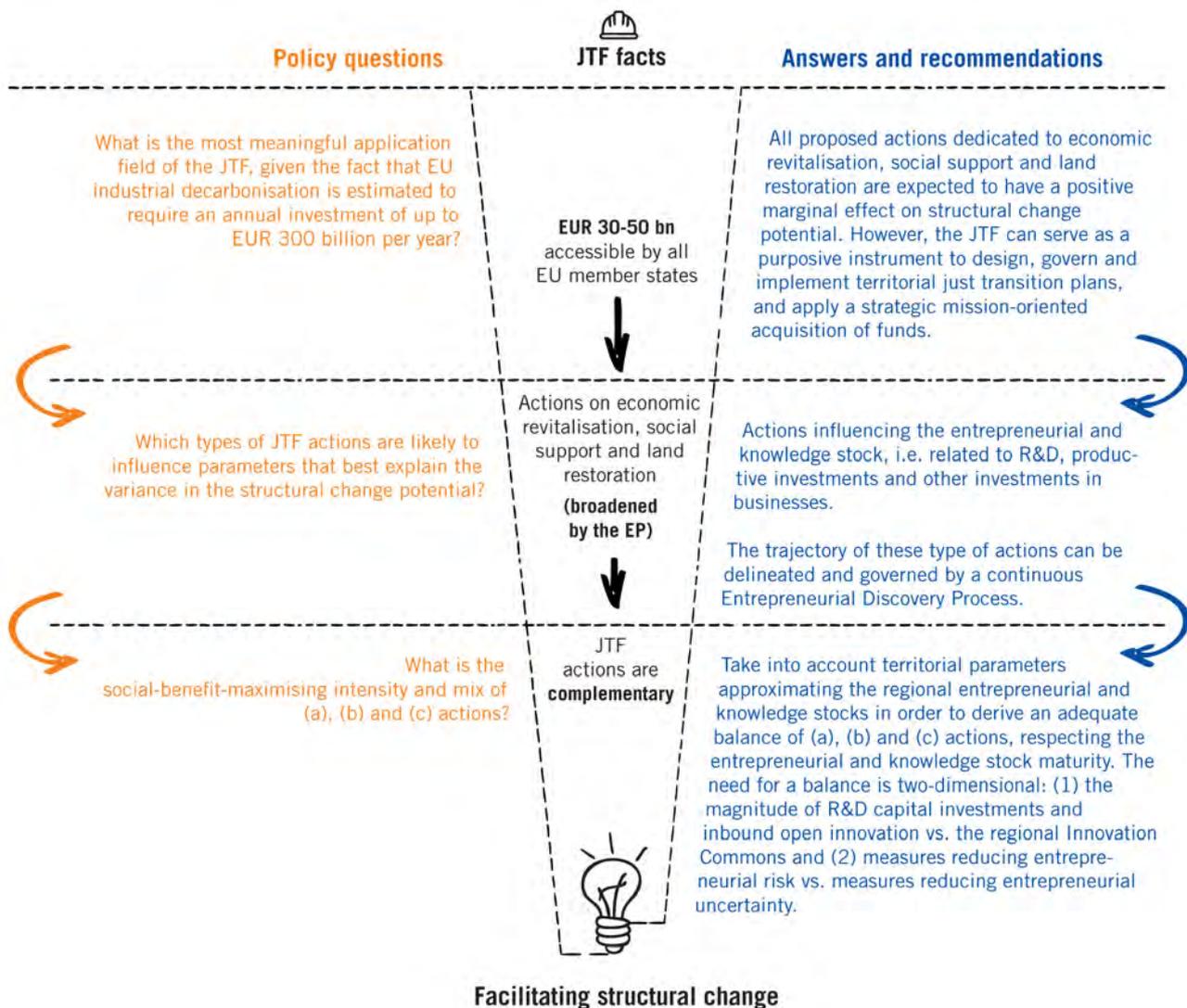
stocks will tend to resort to the Innovation Commons seeking to stimulate outbound open innovation (e.g. licensing or technology spin-offs) and consequently further diversification.

Looking at both trajectories can be particularly helpful to design adequate actions in cases of high enterprise death rates. Combined with a low level of regional knowledge stock, higher enterprise death rates may make regions such as the Trnava Region, Trenčín and Nitra more vigilant with regard to productive investments. Such investments can be positively moderated through R&D capital investments and inbound open innovation that reduce entrepreneurial uncertainty attributable to the regional knowledge stock.

On the other hand, regions such as the governmental districts of Köln and Düsseldorf, which also exhibit high enterprise death rates but perform better in terms of their knowledge stock, may find it more

reasonable to invest in measures that reduce entrepreneurial uncertainty through a desirability assessment, e.g. double-track regulatory and technology-oriented public-private partnerships (e.g. publicly funded simulations of the social and environmental effects of new market-ready technologies aimed at both regulation and market roll-out).

The bottom line is that balancing investments based on territorial parameters related to knowledge and entrepreneurial stock is expected to reduce deadweight losses and engender higher social returns. This assessment is not pretending to be able to compose an accurate action mix for the coal regions that are expected to be the most severely affected but is designed to offer a conceptual framework for JTF governance.





Restructuring of the Czech coal mining regions



Milada Hronkova
Miloš Soukup

Three regions in Czech Republic are structurally lagging behind. These regions are affected by the reduction in coal production and the phasing out of heavy industry, which inevitably has a large impact on their economic performance. In 2017, the Czech government adopted a strategic framework (RE:START strategy) aimed at the restoration of the Ústí, Moravian-Silesian and Karlovy Vary regions to ensure a systematic and long-term approach to solving the problems of these regions.

The strategy, which included a large number of regional and national stakeholders in its preparation, is led by the Ministry of Regional Development. The strategic framework defines seven pillars (business and innovation, direct investments, research and development, human resources, social stabilisation, environment, and infrastructure and public administration) to speed up economic growth and change the economic structure of these regions.

The Czech government has already approved three action plans that consist of 94 different measures across all strategic pillars. Currently, one-third of these measures have been finalised in the regions and Czech Republic has managed to support projects worth CZK 8 billion (data as of 31 July 2020). The preparation of the fourth action plan of the RE:START strategy is ongoing.

The greatest success of the strategy so far has been the establishment of cooperation among the three regions, mainly through support for infrastructure and the modernisation of university educational

programmes, low-emission public transport services, the revitalisation of real estate and the regeneration of brownfields, for example.

In response to the new legislative requirements of the European Green Deal, and the climate commitments of Czech Republic, a new horizontal priority titled 'Transformation of the energy sector and reduction of coal mining' has been added to the RE:START framework for 2020. The main goal is to mitigate the consequences of the energy and coal mining transformation and to modernise the economy through new incentives.

“ The greatest success of the RE:START strategy so far has been the establishment of cooperation among the three lagging behind regions ”

This new pillar consists of three strategic objectives that support the implementation of new productive investments in the following areas: assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises, research and innovation, investments in technologies and infrastructure for a low-carbon economy, digital technologies, decontamination, soil revitalisation, the circular economy and the development of skills to improve employees' qualifications and provide active assistance to job seekers.



Following these changes, it is thus possible to link the process of economic restructuring with the process of preparation of the Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) and the Just Transition Fund. In cooperation with the regions, the TJTP and standard measures are gradually being prepared to fulfill the main goal of this process, namely to direct coal regions towards energy transformation, modernisation and diversification of the economy of those regions.

An example of successful implementation is the project of Jan Evangelista Purkyne University in Ústí nad Labem (CZK 700 million). The project includes the

🗨️ In the Karlovy Vary region, an EU grant was used to reduce emissions of NO_x, SO₂ and solid pollutant emissions from the brown coal-fired Tisová power station 🗨️

construction of a new building for the Faculty of Medical Studies on the premises of Masaryk Hospital in Ústí nad Labem and the completion of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering on the university campus. New teaching spaces and special laboratories will enable the development of new studies at the university.

In the Karlovy Vary region, an EU grant (EUR 2.86 million) was used to reduce emissions of NO_x, SO₂

and solid pollutant emissions from the brown coal-fired Tisová power station. Another project that has received EU support (EUR 2.72 million, IROP) was focused on the acquisition of a low-floor, emission-free, high-capacity tram connection between the cities of Most and Litvínov (15 km, Ústí region).



The RE:START strategy includes, among other things, measures to support the revitalisation and particularly the resocialisation of reclaimed areas after the phasing out of mining. The aim is to use the Just Transition Fund to implement such focused activities. One of the goals of the strategy is to build on the already completed reclamation projects at Lake Milada or Lake Most, for example, which have led to the development of former coal-mining areas. The attractiveness of the regions to tourists can bring new stability and improve the economic and social situation of people in these three regions.

A just transition for Western Macedonia – an irreversible path to sustainable growth



Tasos Chatzellis

The Western Macedonia Region (WMR) is located in the north-west part of Greece, bordering Albania to the west and North Macedonia to the north. It covers an area of 9,451 km² and comprises mostly mountainous and semi-mountainous land (82%).

The WMR is well known for being the centre of national electricity production from fossil fuels (lignite mines). The first systematic research on the detection and evaluation of lignite in the country began in the wider area of Ptolemaida, in 1938.

In 1955, LIPTOL Company was founded for the purpose of exploiting lignite and using it for the production of briquettes and nitrogenous fertilisers, and for electricity generation. In 1975, LIPTOL merged with PPC (Public Power Corporation–DEI S.A.).

From the beginning of the operation of the lignite mines until the end of 2017, PPC mined 2,064 million tonnes of lignite in the areas of WMR and Megalopolis, whereas the corresponding total excavations amount to 9,558 million cubic metres.

However, the WMR is **NOT well known** for its natural environment of large mountains and rich water potential. The many mountains, wetlands and agricultural ecosystems provide environments where a particularly rich and significant biodiversity is able to thrive.

The WMR is also **NOT well known** for:

- ▶ its 24 Natura 2000 areas
- ▶ its Prespa and Northern Pindos national parks
- ▶ its 47 wildlife sanctuaries
- ▶ the River Aliakmon, the biggest national river, along which dams and large artificial lakes have been constructed.

During the hard times of the industrialisation of Greece (1962–1973), the population of the WMR served its purpose well, giving the appropriate impetus to the industrial revolution. However now, with the growth of green energy/economy, the WMR should follow a suitable and irreversible path of sustainable development.

Under these prospects for sustainable development, the Greek government has set a goal of withdrawing all lignite plants by 2028, the majority of which – representing more than 80% of the current installed capacity – will be withdrawn by 2023. This goal marks

the official transition of Greece to a diversified electricity generation mix that is not based on lignite.

Given that the main economic activity in the region linked to energy production from fossil fuels will stop, a significant change to activate the social and economic transformation of local communities will be needed.

“ **Now, with the growth of green energy and economy, the WMR should follow a suitable and irreversible path of sustainable development** ”

The need for a transition will be based on the following five growth pillars:

clean energy

industry, small industry and trade

smart agricultural production

sustainable tourism

technology and education.

These five pillars underline the need to move towards an economic model that emphasises modern and clean energy while enabling prosperity and including more sectors of the local economy.

The action plan that is currently being drafted is not just another plan; its implementation must be seen as a difficult national operation to restart the WMR economy in the context of the current financial crisis and the COVID-19 crisis, in line with the concept of the European Green Deal.

The country's aim to keep pace with the new development and environmental standard will ensure that the new fair transition model of production is not a sole matter of sectoral or horizontal policy but a concern for almost all public policies. Synergies and complementarities should be developed, whereas all relevant funding resources should be deployed in a harmonised manner, enabling the transition to a green economy.







Structural change in Lausitz



Kathrin Schneider

Effective climate action is a task that can be addressed only in a global and supranational context; however, it should not be forgotten that the impact of policy decisions taken is particularly evident at regional and municipal levels.

For example, Germany's phasing out of brown coal-fired power generation by 2038 means that the three German mining regions affected will no longer have a structurally determining industry with existing regional value chains and very high productivity, as well as a historical cultural identity as a mining and energy region.

For the two mining regions in eastern Germany in particular, this is – after German reunification – the second drastic event to significantly alter the regional structure. It is, therefore, all the more important that political measures that decisively contribute to a

“ ***we are focusing on a transformation process that can serve as a model for change in other parts of Brandenburg and beyond*** ”

change in the regional economy have a strong focus on ecological and social criteria.

In Lausitz, we are focusing on a transformation process that can serve as a model for change in other parts of Brandenburg and beyond. This process will be determined by the region and have a strong participatory character. To this end, we are counting on the further development of functioning regional structures in municipalities. The Länder regulations are primarily intended to ensure connectivity with Länder-policy strategies and thus facilitate the smart

interaction of various funding instruments.

The central national funding instrument is the Structural Consolidation Act, which provides financial assistance to the Länder concerned, as well as targeted measures at the federal level to create new economic structures in the coal-mining regions.

We are creating new development paths for Lausitz, for example in the context of energy and mobility

“ ***by 2038 the three German mining regions affected will no longer have a structurally determining industry*** ”

transition and healthcare. To this end, we are committed to coordinated policy action by improving links with metropolitan regions through transport policy measures and by creating the appropriate conditions for companies to establish themselves through investments in business-related infrastructure.

Further development of the Lausitz scientific landscape increases regional innovation potential, promotes the use of modern technologies and allows training of the necessary specialised personnel.

Concrete location projects such as the expansion of the Deutsche Bahn repair plant and forward-looking projects such as the further development of the largest Brandenburg clinic into a digital lead hospital and development of a reference power plant for the use of key energy transition technologies form the core of new regional value-added potential.



Territorial Agenda in practice: 6 Pilot actions



Kai Bohme

In Europe, increasing inequalities between people and between places, as well as unsustainable development, have reached a critical level. During the COVID-19 pandemic, spatial inequalities between places and societal groups increased even further. These growing spatial inequalities risk undermining the basis on which the EU and countries, cities and regions across Europe build their success.

Therefore, concrete action is needed at all geographical and governance levels to adequately address the territorial impacts of sectoral policies and ensure positive future perspectives for all people, communities and places in Europe.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 seeks to contribute to sustainable development and to keeping Europe together. The overall aim of the Territorial Agenda 2030 is to ensure that the need for a sustainable future for all places and people is addressed appropriately. To achieve this, it has identified two overarching objectives – a Just Europe and a Green Europe – and, within these, six priorities for developing the European territory as a whole and all its places.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 will be agreed upon at an informal meeting of the ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion on 01 December 2020. In the run-up to this meeting, everybody can follow the development of the document at the website of the Territorial Agenda.

TerritoriALL asked **Kai Bohme**, founder and director of Spatial Foresight, that supported the preparation of the first pilot actions to explain their importance and the steps ahead for their implementation.

TerritoriALL: Why is it important to have pilot actions for the Territorial Agenda?

Agreeing on nice words is the easy part. The hard work follows when the agenda needs to be put into practice. The priorities spelled out in the Territorial Agenda 2030 need to be supported by the actions of committed players. Actions putting the Territorial Agenda into practice can be taken at any governance level and can vary in character and focus.



The idea for these pilot actions actually draws on an ESPON study on the European Territorial Reference



Indeed, all key players are asked to take action to implement the Territorial Agenda 2030 in the context of their regular mandate. Only then can spatial inequalities and societal transformation towards a carbon- and climate-neutral economy be addressed appropriately.

At present, six pilot actions are in preparation and will be launched at the informal ministerial meeting in December. The idea for these pilot actions actually draws on an ESPON study on the European Territorial Reference Framework. Following a large workshop during an ESPON seminar in Vienna in December 2018, the project team developed initial ideas for possible pilot actions. This was an important stepping stone for the current work and helped to kick-start the discussion on pilot actions.

The six pilot actions demonstrate, test and develop practices that can contribute to achieving the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities. They mirror the increasing recognition of the importance of



place-based policies by showing how the territorial dimension of regional, national and European policies can be actively addressed. They focus on learning, sharing best practices, joint working groups developing ways forward, and implementation. Everybody is encouraged to closely follow them, take inspiration and come forward with proposals for new actions.

TerritoriALL: What are these pilot actions?

As you can see at the website of the TA2030 the six pilot actions have broad spatial and thematic coverage and illustrate the diversity of possible applications of the Territorial Agenda. They address different types of territories, including cities and small towns ('Alpine towns for citizens', 'Small places matter'), rural and remote areas ('Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition', 'A future for lagging regions'), and

“ ***The six pilot actions demonstrate, test and develop practices that can contribute to achieving the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities*** ”

functional cross-border regions ('Territorial vision for a cross-border functional region'). The pilot action 'Understanding how sector policies shape spatial (im-)balances' will be implemented in different types of territories.

The six pilot actions address a wide range of spatial development topics, from decarbonisation, resilience and climate change adaptation to territorial impact assessments, participatory governance approaches and vision building. Most of the pilot actions cover

more than one priority of the Territorial Agenda 2030.

TerritoriALL: What are the next steps?

Every pilot action involves partners from different European countries. At present, the national or regional authorities leading the work are reaching out to possible partners to join the pilot actions – if you are interested get in contact via the website.

Together with their partners, they will refine the scope of the pilot action and agree on the aims and how to ensure that the pilot action delivers useful results. Most of the pilot actions have no or only very limited dedicated funding.

Therefore, it is important that the partners participating can envisage direct benefits from the work on the pilot action and have an idea of how they want to use the outcomes later on.

At the informal ministerial meeting in December, the pilot actions will be presented and launched. Depending on their respective action plans, they will run for around 1–2 years. Thereafter, the teams will share lessons learned with the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points to allow all countries and players to benefit from their work and apply some of the lessons where appropriate.

Of course, we hope that the six pilot actions currently in preparation will not be the only ones. There are expectations that this work will inspire more pilot actions. It would be great if we could see a few new pilot actions every year. The aim is a continuous flow of pilot actions that contribute to achieving the Territorial Agenda priorities.

If ESPON wants, it can play an important role in implementing the Territorial Agenda and supporting new pilot actions.



'A future for lagging regions'



Daniel Meltzian

The Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA2030) is an action-oriented policy framework for the spatial development of the European territory. It will be adopted by the responsible ministers on 1 December 2020 during the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

There is a focus on pilot actions as a means by which to achieve the objectives and priorities of the TA2030. The pilot actions should support the political anchoring and visibility of the TA2030 and initiate implementation processes in European regions and countries. Topics mentioned in the TA2030 should be better incorporated in spatial planning strategies and sectoral policies at all levels. Examples of implementation should demonstrate the practical relevance of the TA2030 priorities.

To support the objective of a 'Just Europe' and the priority of a 'Balanced Europe' in the TA2030, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community announced that Germany would lead a pilot action in lagging regions. The pilot action, 'A future for lagging regions', will start in December 2020 and last until 2023. In this way, one focus of the Federal Ministry's Directorate-General 'Community', to create equivalent living conditions in Germany, is linked with the objective of European territorial cohesion and the renewal of the Territorial Agenda.

The pilot action builds on the important role of municipalities and regions in supporting economic development and social wellbeing at a regional level through integrated intermunicipal or supralocal

development concepts and regional strategies. The focus of the pilot action, therefore, is on sparsely populated areas with limited access to public services and economic and social opportunities.

The pilot action includes three components.

Implementation

Three German pilot regions, all of which have an integrated supralocal development concept or a regional strategy, will receive funds to implement measures of strategic relevance that aim to ensure the provision of services of general interest and improve quality of life. The measures should have an

“ The pilot action builds on the important role of municipalities and regions in supporting economic development and social wellbeing at a regional level ”

integrated and future-oriented approach. Results should be transferable to other European regions. In addition to the German regions, three European pilot regions in Austria, France and Portugal will participate at the level of sub-regions.



Transfer/qualification

The pilot regions will share their experiences and provide support and advice to other participating regions and beyond. This active European cooperation will be a central aspect from the beginning. Cooperation will take place through workshops, mutual visits, joint documents, etc.

🗨️ **Disseminating the regional pilot actions and examples will create more attention for the needs of lagging areas in national and EU programmes and policies**



Policy level/upscaling

Disseminating the regional pilot actions and examples will create more attention for the needs of lagging areas in national and EU programmes and policies. The important function of hubs as economic, social and cultural centres in lagging rural areas will be highlighted and, through the regional examples, be better incorporated in regional sectoral planning activities and concepts. The participating regions will represent the interests of European regions with regard to wide-ranging regional services of general interest and a high quality of life.

Expected results

examples of implementation in participating regions (e.g. smaller investments, campaigns, strategy updates);

better involvement of the key topics of the regional strategies in concrete regional and sectoral planning activities and their implementation concepts;

transfer of results and provision of advice by pilot regions to other interested regions;

joint practice paper and publication 'A future for lagging regions', with practice-oriented examples of pilot regions and recommendations for action, which should show how spatial strategy measures may be effectively put into practice to shape perspectives for lagging regions on site and how regional strategy measures may be better incorporated in regional and sectoral planning activities and concepts to perpetuate the implementation of spatial strategies.



Region-focused Territorial Impact Assessment



Patrycja Artymowska

The partners in the pilot action are Poland (lead), Germany, Slovenia, Czechia and the Netherlands. These countries will cooperate closely with the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions and ESPON in establishing the action. Other Member States and organisations are also welcome to join the partnership.

Why Poland decided to propose a pilot action

In recent years, inequalities between places and people have been eminent in the discourse in Poland and in the EU, with notions of 'places that don't matter', 'places left behind' and 'the geography of discontent' emerging and monopolising discussions and policies.

Strategic documents, such as the Polish National Regional Development Strategy 2030 prepared by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (lead partner of the pilot action) and the Territorial Agenda 2030, aim to address this challenge and advocate a future for all places.

The Cohesion Policy was designed to counteract inequalities and provide equal opportunities to less developed regions.

However, sector policies are also responsible for contributing to territorial development and addressing regional polarisation and fragmentation.

Against this background, the pilot action 'Understanding how sector policies shape spatial imbalances through Region-focused Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA)' aims to better understand how different sector policies shape spatial imbalances, focusing in particular on areas left behind and

bringing local levels to the forefront.

By developing a better understanding of the policies' effects on territories, better policies can be designed in future that are place sensitive and people centred and that therefore more precisely address the needs of places and citizens.

Implementation of the pilot action

The pilot action is divided into three phases.

Phase 1 involves collecting showcases and presenting them to the stakeholders involved. This means looking at existing TIA methodologies and the impact of policies that already exist on the selected areas and types of territories.

References to existing TIA approaches and methods, including the ESPON TIA tool, the ESPON EATIA project

💡 The pilot action aims to better understand how different sector policies shape spatial imbalances, focusing on areas left behind 💡

findings and the European Commission tools, as well as other approaches described in the Committee of the

Regions file note on TIAs and provided through the experiences of the partners in this pilot action, will be made. These references will give additional insights and information and be adjusted for the purposes of the pilot action.



During **phase 2**, a flexible, tailor-made and practical TIA methodology approach will be adopted, based on the methodology blend and the results from phase 1.

his new methodology approach will serve as means for creating territorial strategies, policies and programmes at different levels of government by assessing its impact at different stages of realisation (*ex ante*, ongoing *orex post*).

Phase 3 is about testing the methodology in selected territories, with stakeholders on the ground showing

“ **The overall objective of the pilot action is to observe the impacts of or any conflicts between European, national and regional policies** ”

how the different policies affect different spatial structures and specific territories.

The pilot action combines joint and individual activities of the partners involved in the pilot areas, ranging from input on experiences to workshops, the verification of methods used and the involvement of joint coordination experts.

expected results

The results will allow us to learn about the territorial impacts of different sector policies on specific territories, the specific needs of different territories and the variety and usefulness of different methodologies.

Connections will be developed through capacity building and the setting up of networks between the local and regional stakeholders involved. With regard to the territorial impacts of sector policies, connections will be developed between policies.

The pilot action will demonstrate how to usefully apply and work with the Territorial Agenda 2030 and its priorities. As good practice, ministries representing the different sector policies can increase their capacity building through participation in implementation of the methodology and in workshops.

Communication will contribute to dissemination, which will be achieved through cooperation with multiple institutions.

The benefits of carrying out TIAs for local and regional authorities will include bringing about the capacity building that they need to create development strategies at their respective levels.



Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition



Ana Seixas

The Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA2030) pilot action 'Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition', led by Portugal, aims to develop experimental integrated approaches for rural shrinking areas in more vulnerable territories.

It focuses on thematic priorities both at European and national levels: climate change adaptation and territorial resilience; ecosystem services and the green economy; endogenous resources and natural capital; and governance and stakeholder engagement.

This pilot action is closely related to two priorities in the TA2030, namely 'Functional regions', under the objective of a just Europe, and 'Healthy environment', under the objective of a green Europe, and also meets the EU initiative 'Long-term vision for rural areas', which aims to change the perception of rural areas as depressed, ageing areas with no endogenous resources.

At the national level, it aims to implement the National Spatial Planning Policy Programme and the recently published National Landscape Transformation Programme for vulnerable territories, which supports the Landscape Planning and Management Programme for the national pilot case in the Algarve's Serras de Monchique and Silves, in southern Portugal.

It is, therefore, an experimental project with a new approach, as well as an opportunity to share experiences and exchange ideas with other European countries on how to tackle the difficulties in the implementation of these types of programmes. Implementation that can succeed only if supported by a long-term commitment at all levels of governance, based on better regulations and implementation designs and better and articulated EU and national funding mechanisms.

🗨️ ***This pilot action is closely related to two priorities in the TA2030: 'Functional regions', under the objective of a just Europe, and 'Healthy environment'*** 🗨️

From a landscape transition approach, the four thematic priorities of the pilot action can be envisaged as follows:

Integrating climate change adaptation and territorial resilience: Territories need to be better prepared for extreme events, in which risks may become greater and costly (forest fires, loss of biodiversity, reduction in agricultural productivity). It



is thus essential to anticipate the changes and their impacts and to envisage and mitigate their foreseeable effects, considering the fact that each territory has distinct capacities to absorb these changes, as well as limits, while maintaining their identity at the level of essential structures and functions.

“ **The overall objective of the pilot action is to observe the impacts of or any conflicts between European, national and regional policies** ”

Fostering ecosystem services and the green economy: Biodiversity must be considered a heritage component and an asset in danger of irreversible losses that must be defended and protected.

By aiming for greater recognition of the social and economic value of ecosystems and the services they provide, it is important to improve communication with citizens, by underpinning a greater collective awareness of the importance of these services in promoting economic activities and job creation, and thus promote the integration of ecosystem services

into economic value chains.

Mobilising endogenous resources and improving natural capital valorisation: Natural capital must be assumed to be and pursued as a differentiating and enhancing factor of territories. Rural areas should manage natural resources as assets by combining natural capital, landscape and ecosystem services, and considering them tradable assets that will satisfy and attract external populations (tourists and new residents).

Building innovative processes of governance and stakeholder engagement: Landscape transition takes years to be accomplished. It implies major long-term commitments for all actors involved (planners, local and regional politicians, stakeholders) and new collaborative processes (national, inter-municipal and local cooperation; public and private stakeholder collaboration), and, mostly, it requires stakeholder involvement. Developing a sense of ownership with stakeholders is paramount in the process, as they are the real 'landscape transformation agents'.

To attain its objectives, this pilot action also integrates work that is in progress within the framework of ESPON's project 'Territorial Impacts of Natural Disasters' TITAN – SOPORT, as a project spin-off.

Demographic components of the population change 2010–2019 (Webb classification)

Population growth

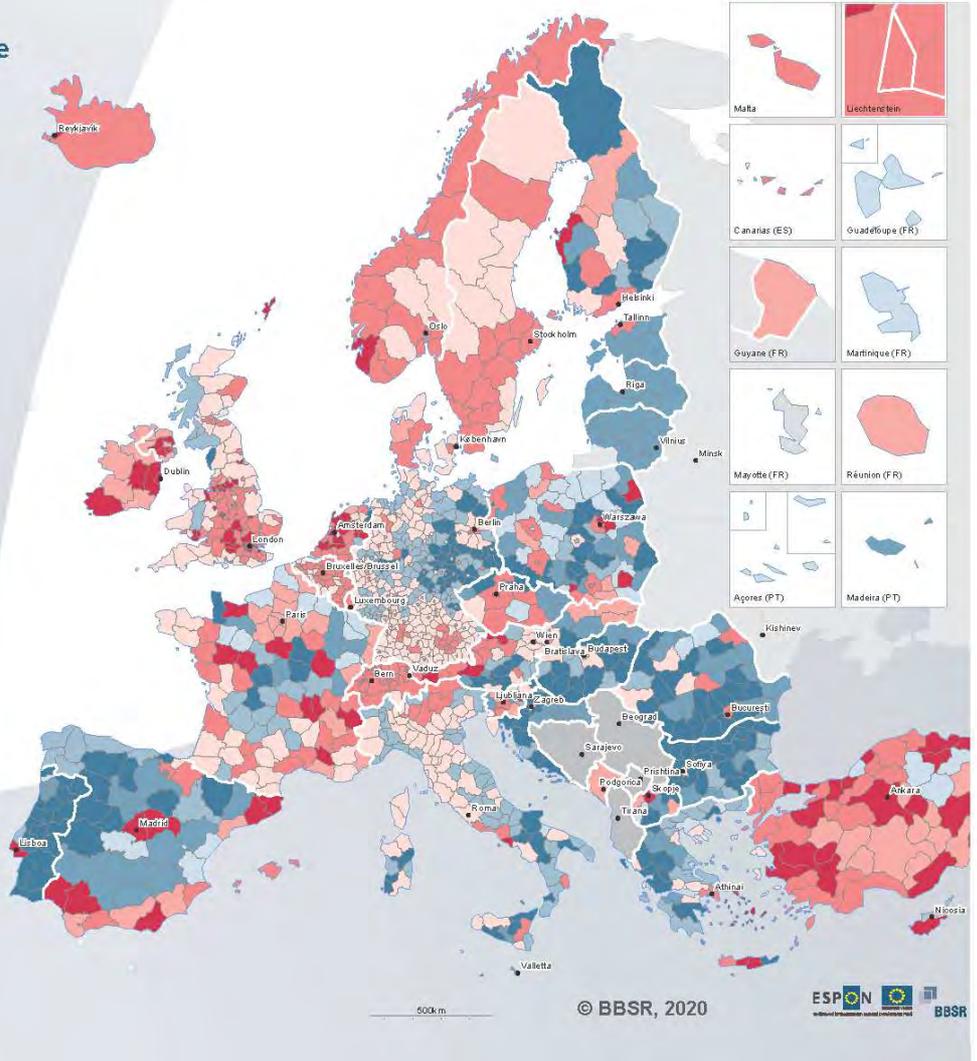
- excess birth rate > migration gain
- migration gain > excess birth rate
- excess birth rate > migration loss
- migration gain > excess death rate

Population decline

- migration loss > excess birth rate
- excess death rate > migration gain
- migration loss > excess death rate
- excess death rate > migration loss

■ no data

Regional level: NUTS 3 (2016)
 Source: Spatial Monitoring System for Europe
 Data origin: Eurostat, OECD, national statistical offices
 EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries



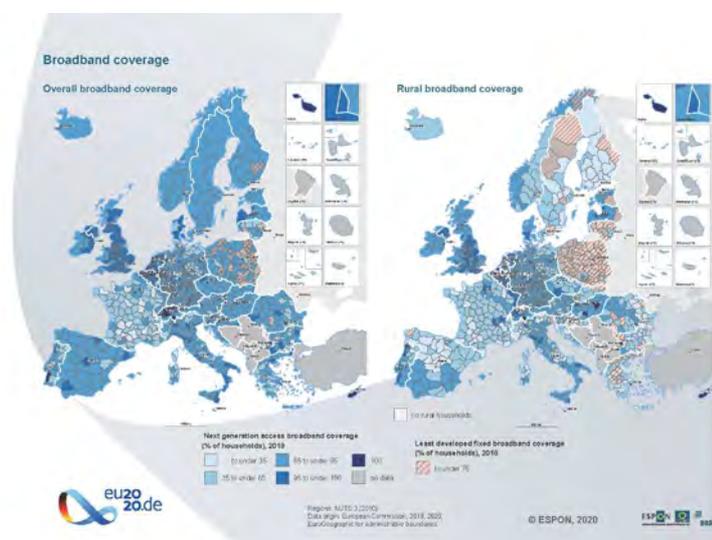
Coming soon: The Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030



The Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA2030) sets out the territorial priorities for Europe to ensure a sustainable future for all places and people in Europe. It also states that actions must be based on a common understanding, that development needs and the impacts of future developments differ between places, and that cooperation and coordination is needed between places, levels of governments, policy sectors and groups of society.

On the one hand, the actions needed result in economic, social and environmental challenges, but, on the other hand, they safeguard and capitalise on the existing potential to improve living conditions in all places and for all people.

The policy responses, which are highlighted in the TA2030, need a strong territorial dimension and coordinated approaches that acknowledge and use



the diversity and specificities of places. The knowledge of specific economic and societal structures and trends forms the basis of the formulation of the territorial challenges and the policy priorities targeted in the TA2030. In-depth territorial and spatial knowledge is even more important for the regional interpretation of challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the TA2030.

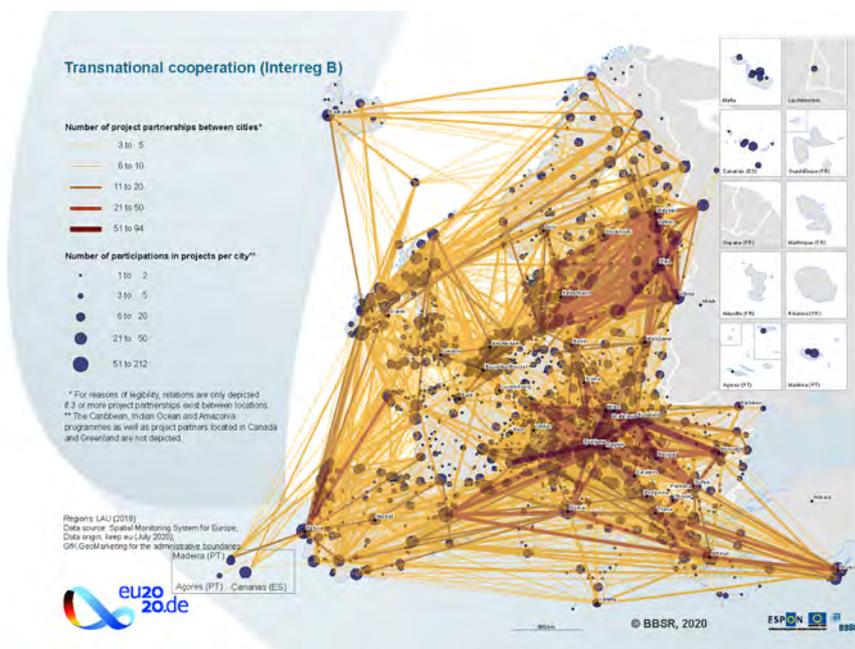
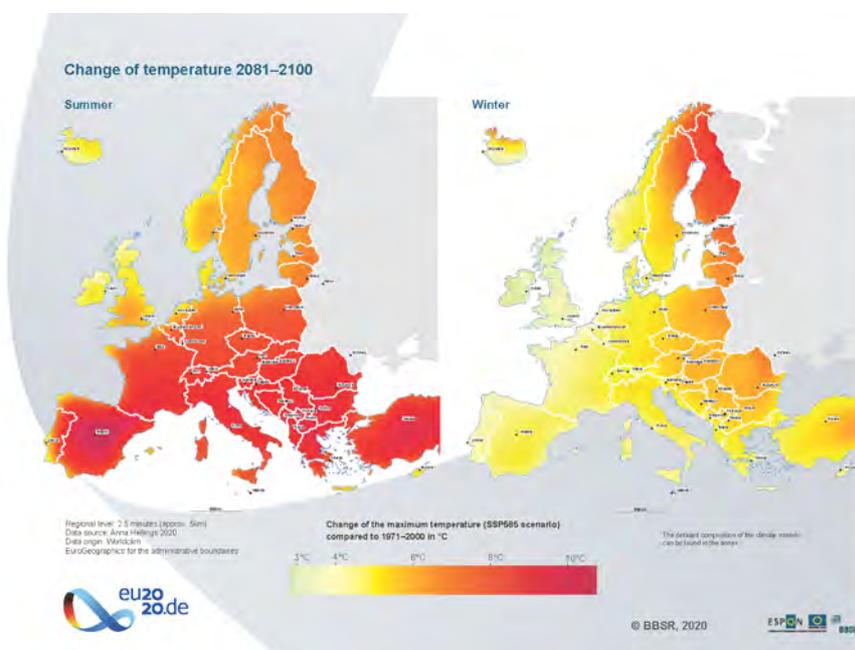
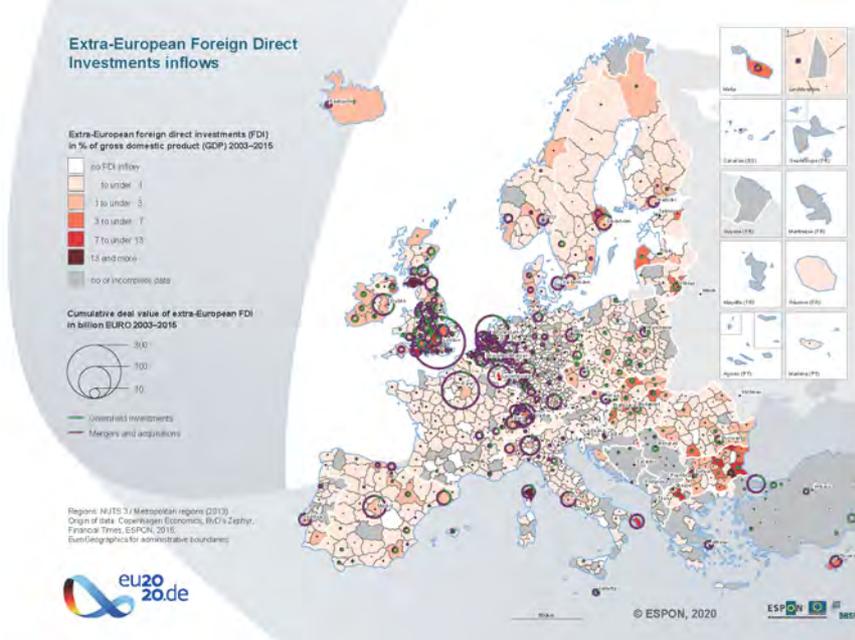
Thinking spatially, nothing is better suited to obtaining information than maps.

The Atlas covers a broad range of areas of action in the Territorial Agenda 2030. It forms an analytical synopsis of the territorial priorities and respective territorial challenges resulting from demographic change and migration, the strength and competitiveness of cities and regions, regional cooperation and trends relating to the environment and natural resources.

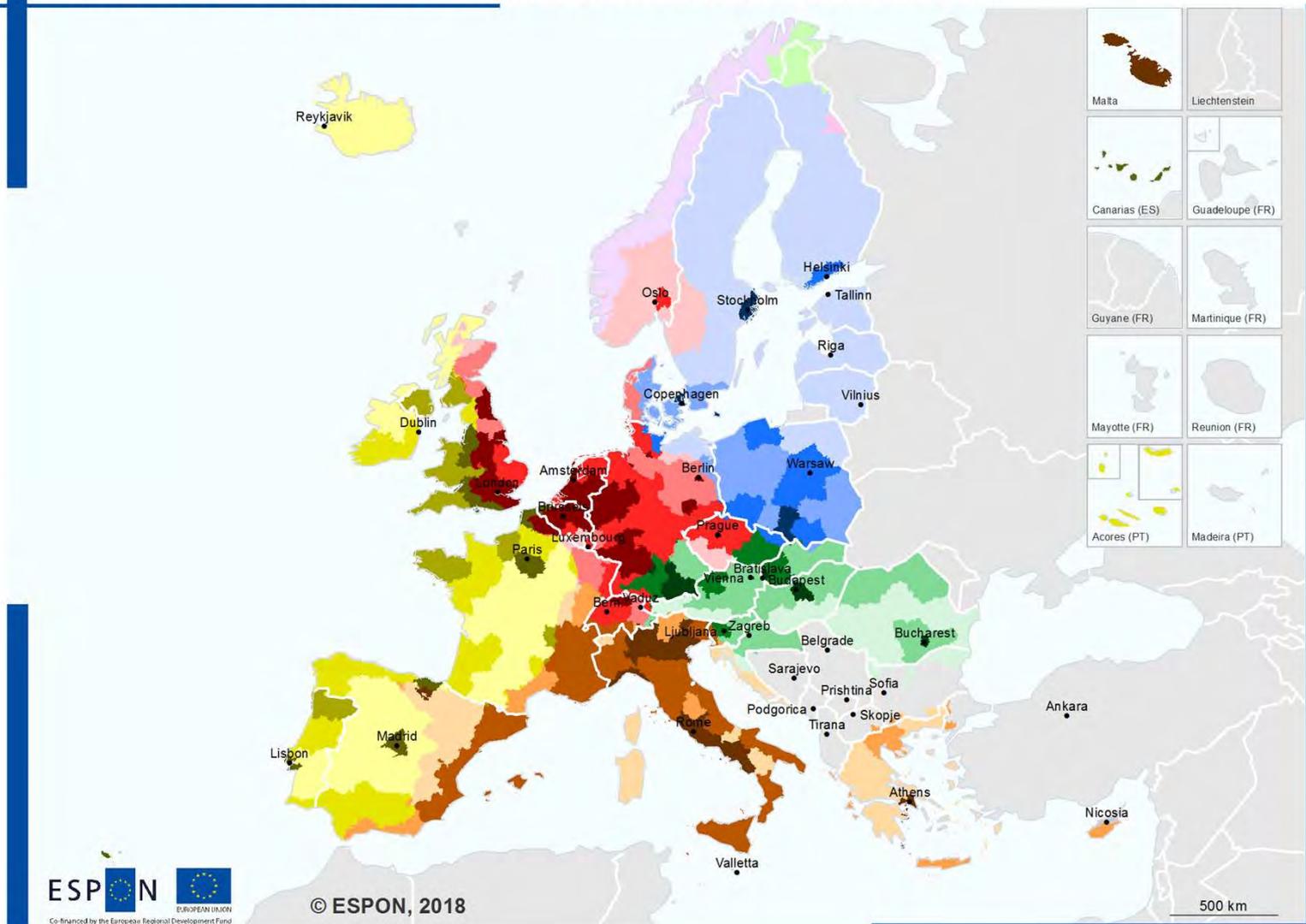
With the Atlas, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community updates the evidence-based information from the Territorial Agenda 2007.

The Atlas is the result of collaboration between the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) and ESPON. Using maps and infographics, it outlines in 36 chapters the trends in and existing potential for European territorial development and shows where the regional differences, similarities and potential synergies are. The maps were produced using a large number of different national, European and international sources, including the processed data sets of the partners involved.

The Atlas will be published early December by the German presidency of the EU Council



Population density per NUTS2 within catchment 2017 (persons/km2)



Maritime spatial planning and land–sea interactions



Michaela Gensheimer

Recent years have seen growing competition over the use of maritime space for, among other things, renewable energy generation, aquaculture and coastal tourism.

This growing demand for sea space has put maritime ecosystems under pressure, resulting in poor conditions of Europe's seas owing to overexploitation, pollution and climate change. Against this backdrop, maritime spatial planning (MSP) should ensure the more coherent management of human activities in and along the seas (including across national borders).

The European Commission's Directive 2014/89/EU on establishing a framework for MSP requires all EU

coastal Member States to develop national maritime spatial plans by 31 March 2021. As most development and use that takes place in the marine environment also has an onshore component or impact, the MSP Directive requires that land–sea interactions (LSIs) are taken into account in planning processes.

Numerous factors and sector policies shape development on land and at sea, all of which should ideally be considered in an integrated planning process such as MSP. Complex governance settings present another challenge in devising maritime spatial plans.

Furthermore, LSIs differ for each region and their consideration is also relevant in land-locked countries.

While much of the interaction between land and sea takes place in the coastal strips, Map 1 highlights how LSIs extend much further across the whole of the European territory.

In addition, different methods can be used to analyse LSIs. Therefore, stakeholders engaged in MSP experience significant challenges in making sense of LSIs.

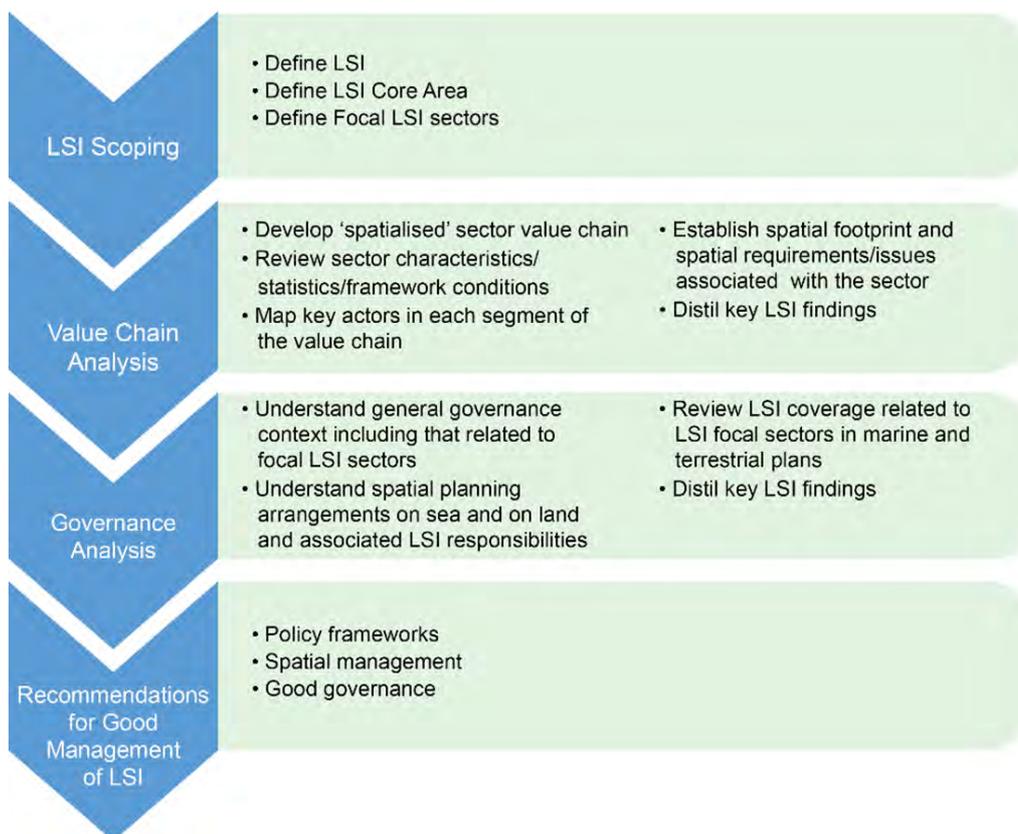
we advocate a ‘One Space’ approach to planning as one possible way of dealing with the complexity of land-sea interrelations within MSP

In our new policy brief on **‘Maritime spatial planning and land-sea interactions (MSP-LSI)’**, we advocate a ‘One Space’ approach to planning as one possible way of dealing with the complexity of land-sea interrelations within MSP. This approach considers land and sea as an integrated whole and is,

indeed, already applied by many EU Member States. Wider recognition and application of a ‘One Space’ territorial planning approach is seen as a key element in helping to better address LSIs.

To help investigate LSIs in MSP in which maritime sectors and governance considerations are of particular concern, we propose the following incremental approach that has been developed by the ESPON MSP-LSI project (Figure 1). This approach can be applied at various scales of governance and can be helpful for planners working on maritime spatial planning as well as territorial planning.

This approach was piloted in five case studies at local, regional, national and transnational scales, and was refined throughout the ESPON MSP-LSI study. The proposed method provides a way of tackling the LSI complexity in a structured, focused and purposeful way, ultimately enabling recommendations for the good management of LSIs to be developed. It enables a tailoring of LSI considerations to different contexts, by providing a structure that can guide in-depth research or lighter touch investigations, in the form of, for example, stakeholder workshops.





Land Sea Interactions: an integral part of the maritime and coastal planning



Joanna Constantinidou

Understanding and addressing the interaction between land and sea, in both directions, is crucial to the sustainable development and management of both marine and coastal areas, as well as the activities carried out in them. A Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) analysis is not an autonomous action but is considered an integral part of the maritime and coastal planning process, as required by both the EU Marine Spatial Planning Directive and the Mediterranean Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

LSIs are studied and addressed at three levels:

at the level of the interactivity of physical elements and their dynamics;

at the level of interactions between uses/activities and marine or coastal space;

at the design level for land and sea space.

The results of such interactions are erosion, sea level rise, environmental pressures on land (sometimes in local communities) from marine activities and vice versa, the necessary coherence and design compatibility for land and sea areas in the same coastal area, etc. It is clear that the LSI assessment counts not only coastal activities and uses, but also those that exist in inland terrestrial areas but that

have consequences for marine areas (sometimes through discharge / pollution through hydrological basins). Flow and pressure mapping are of particular importance for locating and estimating LSI in each region.

The case of Cyprus

In Cyprus, the management of LSI is implemented through maritime spatial plans, in the framework of the Maritime Spatial Planning Law No 144(I)/2017, which transposed the EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. The first maritime spatial plan will geographically cover the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus; this plan is currently under development and is expected to be finalised in March 2021 and then submitted to the European Commission. The marine projects (e.g. offshore renewable energy projects, submarine cables and breakwaters) that fall under the maritime spatial plan will follow the appropriate licensing procedure that incorporates the relevant environmental impact assessment opinion. This plan will take into account the local coastal plans that are developed by the Department of Town Planning and Housing. To this end, the responsible authority for the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Law is the Deputy Ministry for Shipping and the responsible authority for the ICZM Protocol is the Department of Environment.



Sustainable management of coastal and marine zones



Michelle Borg

The evolution of coastal and marine spatial planning has been a crucial step in managing the use of these areas. In Malta, the discipline is still relatively young, particularly in relation to the island's marine territory. Malta's Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) advocates for the sustainable management of Malta's coastal and marine zones. As the national strategic plan, it is also Malta's first Maritime Spatial Plan (MSP).

The coast is Malta's most sought-after area, with the greatest diversity of uses, including residential, recreational, industrial, infrastructural, touristic and aquacultural. Above all, it is home to the country's richest biodiversity. In 2015, although different plans and regulations covered environmental protection and specific economic sectors, Malta's coastal zone and marine area were not covered by an adequate planning policy.

This led to conflicts because coastal space was being consumed by existing and new types of uses that at times threatened to cause the displacement of people and lead to environmental impacts. In the absence of any strategic direction for the future use of Malta's coastal zone and marine area, uncertainties remained for investors, decision-makers and all existing users of such spaces.

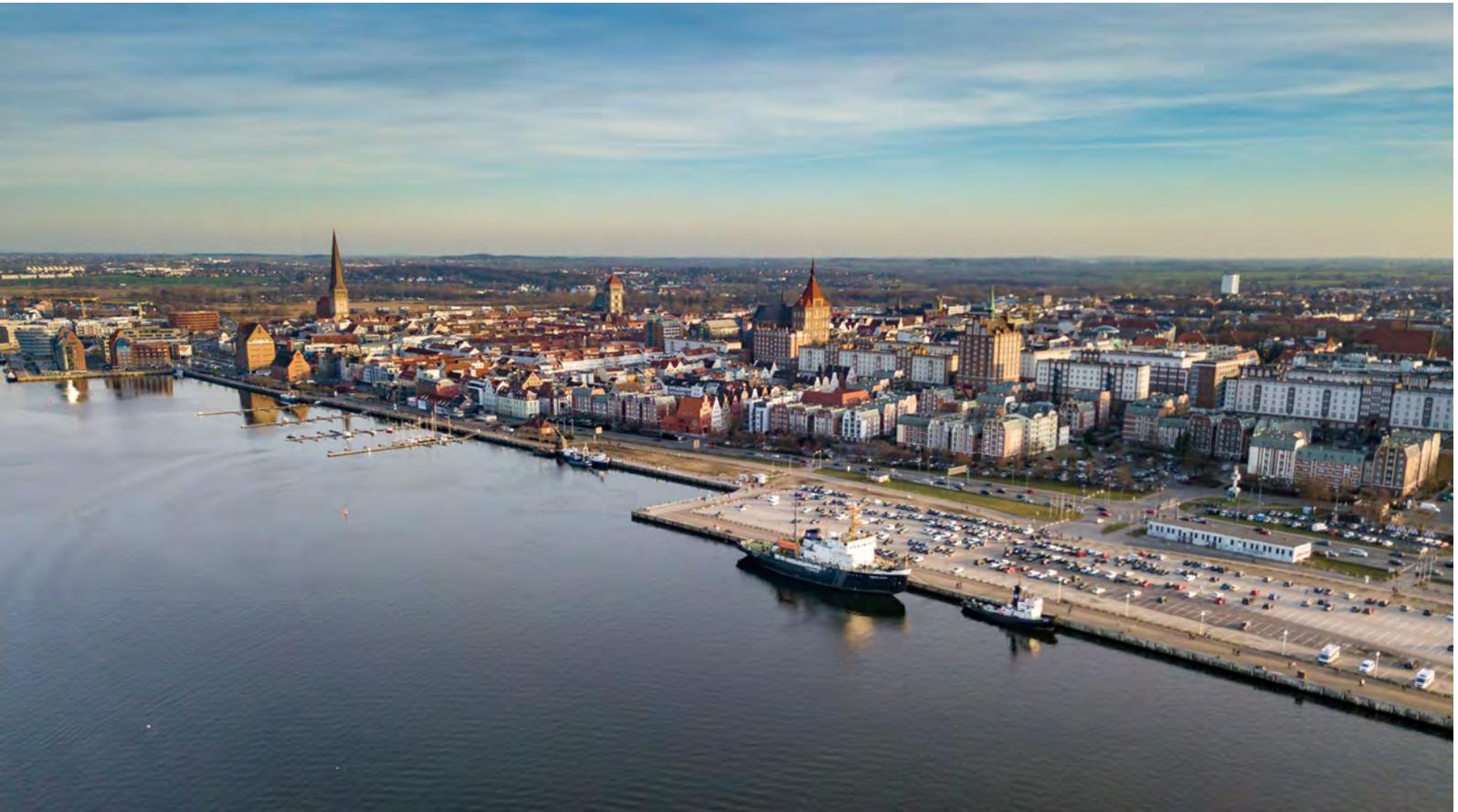
The SPED provides direction to ensure that coastal and marine development is in line with the relevant

environmental objectives and protects the public's use of the coast and sea. It also stipulates that swimming zones, diving sites and other coastal recreational areas cannot be displaced by other uses.

Since the SPED covers a marine area of up to 25 nautical miles, the Planning Authority (PA) works with other authorities to coordinate actions for maritime spatial planning. The Marine Spatial Planning Technical Committee is chaired by the PA and includes representatives from the Continental Shelf Department, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Environment and Resources Authority and Transport Malta.

Through the current SPED, Malta has consolidated its approach to spatial planning, acknowledging that future visions for its marine space are interdependent with its ambitions on land.

As the SPED review begins, Malta will analyse land-sea interactions with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan's Priority Actions Program Regional Activity Centre. This step is expected to highlight issues on governance and data for the MSP, which are being tackled through participation in the EU-funded project MSP-MED.



No shipping without land, no beach fun without the sea



Holger Janßen

With regard to my self-image as a planner, spatial planning is the comprehensive, supralocal and superordinate planning for the structure and development of space.

In this context, supralocal means that regional planning goes not only beyond the boundaries of a single place, town or village, but also beyond the boundaries of the mainland and the seas.

It is no longer a secret that humans have consciously influenced the sea and have created permanent structures there. For this reason, the European Commission not only encourages the EU Member States to draw up maritime spatial plans but has also formulated binding regulations for doing so.

All this, however, does not happen in isolation from human activity on land; on the contrary, shipping and ports, energy production and consumption, and fishing and fish consumption are mutually dependent, i.e. sea and land are interrelated.

Without the Baltic Sea, and also without large cities such as Berlin in the hinterland of my planning region, there would not have been any coastal tourism activity, with more than 7.7 million overnight stays taking place in 2019.

Again, without the Baltic Sea, and also without our neighbouring states on the other side of the sea(s), there would be no port industry, in which there are about 16,000 jobs in my planning region.

Land-sea interactions can be tied to several things, one of which is value chains. These value chains are obviously important for the development of a region and thus for the work of a spatial planner. The results of the ESPON maritime spatial planning and land-sea interactions (MSP-LSI) project are therefore of great interest to me as a planner.

This also applies to the recommendation of the ESPON MSP-LSI project to follow a 'one space' approach. Although Germany is one of the (few) countries in which spatial planning both on land and at sea is at least partially carried out by the same authority, the recommendation to follow a 'one space' territorial planning view is a valuable reminder to me not to forget the supralocal aspects in the small details of my daily planning life.

Preparing the Romanian territorial country fiche



Radu Necşuliu, Amalia Vîrdol

When the first territorial fiches were sent for feedback to the ESPON Monitoring Committee, back in December 2018, we were really excited. This had always been one of our objectives: to select information and data from the vast array of ESPON results that would be useful and relevant for individual countries and present them in a single document that could inspire researchers, consultants and decision-makers. Here they were: four sets of interesting excerpts from ESPON reports, case studies, charts and zoomed-in maps showing regional patterns at a better scale. We believed it was a very good idea, so we strongly supported it. In fact, our first reaction to the territorial fiches was: 'What is the timetable for the other country fiches, and when will the Romanian territorial fiche be ready?'

Looking back, we recalled how we had developed – in house or with the help of the ESPON Contact Point for the period 2007–2013 – tailor-made reports and publications that included the information from ESPON projects most relevant to Romania, also with the advantage of being translated into Romanian. When preparing our strategic documents in the field of territorial and urban planning, we could thus rely on ESPON as a source of information, not only general but also very specific. It had been a positive experience, and it made it easier to work on the territorial fiche.

Owing to the Romanian specificities, it was more difficult to use some results from more recent ESPON reports. We had to focus in particular on demographic and social issues, taking into account the latest trends at national and regional levels. It was a team effort that started with setting out a preliminary structure, with a focus on the relevant themes. Then we selected the maps, we interpreted them and we wrote the related text on trends and

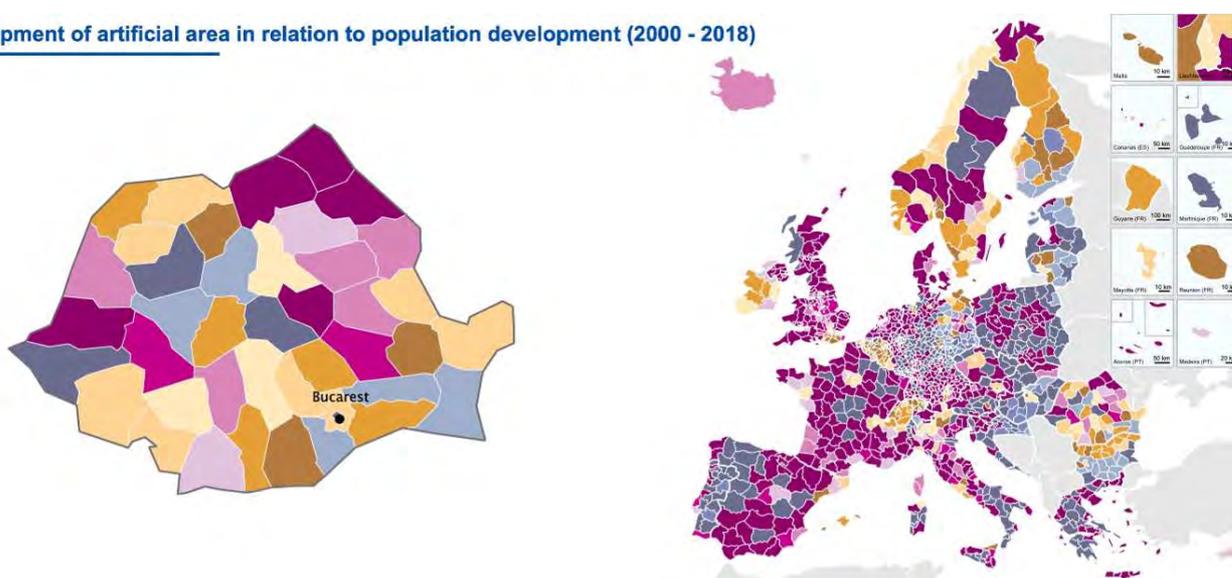
patterns at European and national levels. Afterwards, we had to edit the text down to comply with the constraints of the template. During this time, we were cooperating closely with the ESPON EGTC on various aspects such as the availability of maps and of updated statistical indicators and the correct wording in English. The EGTC also helped with the zoomed-in maps, which are in our view the main attraction of the country fiches.

And now, after a few months of hard but rewarding work, the territorial fiche for Romania is finally ready, and we are preparing for the next steps. First, we will do our best to disseminate it to all relevant stakeholders, by several means: publishing it in the 'ESPON in your country' section of ESPON's website, sending out a special newsletter and publishing it on our ministry's website.

We also intend to initiate discussions with institutions at national and regional levels, using the territorial country fiche as a starting point. The big advantage of the fiches is that one can look simultaneously at the European map and the zoomed-in map, gaining a wider perspective and thus more easily drawing conclusions on the territorial patterns that are relevant for a country or area. The country fiches can also help to demonstrate the importance of territory when discussing sectoral policies. A good example is the content on inner peripheries, which should influence the development of social and economic policies at regional and local levels.

In summary, from our perspective the country fiches are an excellent tool that can be used to better assess territorial potential and to spark fruitful debates with sectoral authorities and regional bodies on territorial challenges and trends.

Development of artificial area in relation to population development (2000 - 2018)





Possible and desired territorial futures for the Baltic Sea Region



Liene Gaujeniete

How do we plan for a better future? How can we be better prepared for unexpected developments? The applicability of and lessons learned from the spatial scenarios method, as well as integration of terrestrial and maritime spatial planning, were discussed in an inspiring online webinar this autumn, as part of the 11th Annual EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Forum. Although developed before pandemics, all scenarios clearly showed some of the characteristics that we have been experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three territorial scenarios were developed as part of the ESPON project 'Territorial scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region' (BT2050), which ran during 2018–2019. In addition, analyses of future trends were carried out and presented. The ESPON BT2050 spatial scenarios are described below.

A quantitative baseline scenario showed the most likely scenario for the development of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) based on current and past trends. Under this scenario, the gap between the east and the west of the region narrows; however, disparities between fast-growing urban areas and rural areas remain in

place. Still, BSR has moved closer to the EU average and to cohesion by 2050.

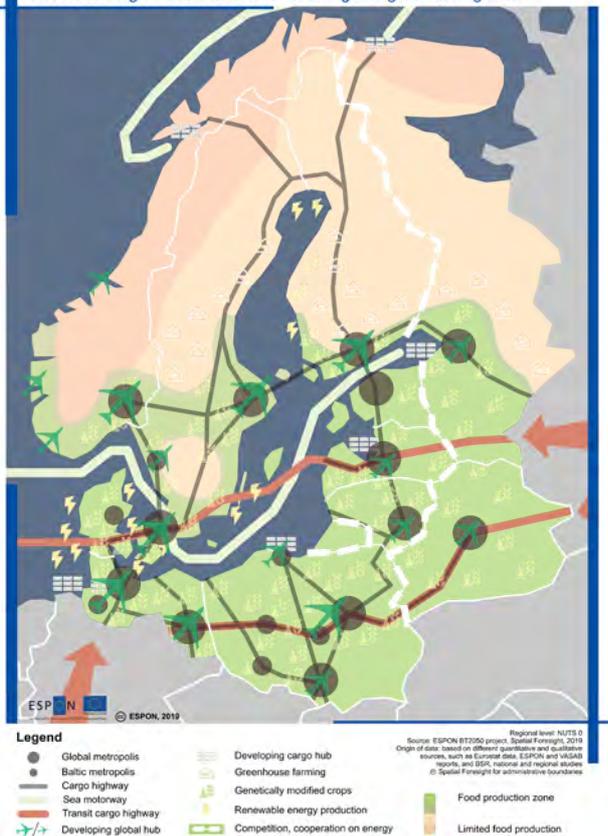
'Well-being in a circular economy' imagines a 'slow life' in the BSR: slow and local food, slow and lasting fashion, slow and responsible production. The people of the BSR are less stressed, commute less and consume less, so quality of life increases. The importance of regional centres in the polycentric manufacturing network has increased, and new employment opportunities arise, mainly outside the big cities.

'Growing into green-tech giants' imagines rapid eco-development in the BSR, where 'green is the new black'. Major metropolitan areas thrive and technological growth is combined with fewer emissions, leading to guilt-free consumption.

Three further scenarios for the Baltic Sea and the Finnish marine areas in 2050 were developed as part of the Finnish maritime spatial planning process (supported by the European Marine and Fisheries Fund). These marine area scenarios are described below.

'Dancing with big business' describes a Baltic sea at a

Urban centres, transport and connectivity
Baltic Sea Region 2050: Scenario 'Growing into green-tech giants'



Regional centres and transport
Baltic Sea Region 2050: Scenario 'Well-being in a circular economy'



time when market liberalisation has taken place in EU and economic growth is the main driver of development. Countless offshore wind farms and the Helsinki-Tallinn Tunnel have been built.

'Profitability under the environment's terms' presents a future in which recreation and environmental protection thrive in the Baltic Sea near Finland, consumption decreases and sustainable choices are being made.

Under the 'Baltic Sea of restrictions and tensions' scenario, the Baltic Sea becomes a playing field for superpowers, the EU strengthens its joint environmental and energy policy, and tension with Russia increases.

Clearly, there are many striking similarities between developed scenarios, which demonstrates how interdependent these planning processes are and the need to take an integrated approach to terrestrial and maritime planning. The scenario 'Profitability under the environment's terms' extend the 'Well-being in a circular economy' scenario, and 'Growing into green-tech giants' and 'Dancing with big business' go hand in hand.

In the context of the pandemic, we can see that some of the predicted future trends, such as e-health development, remote working and alternatives to mass tourism, have accelerated. However, the indications are that in the long run the impacts of the pandemics are minor. This highlights that if we want to change territorial development, we have to introduce radical changes through the policies and plans we develop.

The examples of scenarios given here have been or will be used to develop strategic spatial planning documents. The Finnish maritime scenarios have served as an input into the Finnish maritime spatial plan 2030, and the ESPON BT2050 scenarios will serve as an input into the process of updating the Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) strategic document Long-term perspective for the territorial development of the BSR. They could also provide a basis for political discussions (e.g. at the next VASAB Ministerial Conference) or discussions with other EUSBSR stakeholders and stakeholders in Europe more broadly. Furthermore, they could be used in developing national, regional and even local strategic planning documents in the BSR countries.



Taking transnational cooperation forward in central Europe



Anna Sirrocco

The ESPON CE-FLOWS targeted analysis is currently investigating the spatial dynamics of and integrated territorial development scenarios for central Europe. An intermediate finding of the experts is that central Europe is a highly integrated functional area, in which cooperation is central to developing and implementing relevant strategic actions beyond borders. Transnational funding from Interreg Central Europe enables such cooperation, bringing people together to find solutions to common challenges that do not stop at national borders.

Our project partnerships foster relationships of trust and often become the fertile ground for further cooperation beyond borders. In many cases, including those presented below, cooperation outlasts the Interreg Central Europe funding.

For more examples, you can always visit www.interreg-central.eu/cooperationiscentral.

The Ketgate network

Turning a creative idea into a product often requires studies or tests for which smaller businesses lack the in-house capacity. External research and technology organisations can offer the necessary technology or facilities, but this comes with another challenge: it is often the case that the right partner is based in a different country. Many SMEs struggle with getting in touch with such organisations in other countries, or even knowing about them.

The newly created Ketgate network provides a solution to this problem. **It offers the missing link between SMEs and providers of the key enabling technologies (KETs)** that they need to take their innovations forward.

The network was created by the Ketgate project (2017–2020), which established Ketgate access points in all partner countries. Here, experts offer advice to SMEs to on finding research and technology organisations, often located abroad, that can help them with KETs. Having built a model network and tested the matchmaking of SMEs and KET providers as part of the project, the partners will keep this service running to increase the innovation capacity of central European regions.



Routes of Reformation

The Routes of Reformation are the result of transnational cooperation under the European Cultural Route of Reformation (ECRR) project (2016–2019). The aim was to spotlight all those places around central Europe that played an important role in the Reformation movement, which gave rise to a revolution in the Christian world during the 16th century. **Thanks to the ECRR, more than 80 sites are now part of a single cultural route**, reflecting an important part of the common history of the area.

In April 2019, the Council of Europe officially certified the new route as it 'offers the chance to affirm the values of solidarity, hospitality, intercultural dialogue, and cooperation by fostering learning, discourse, and shared projects among the members and the visitors along the Route'. Thanks to this recognition and the founding of the Routes of Reformation Association by the ECRR partnership, the network continued to work together after the project's end. This new non-profit association is responsible for the governance of the route. It not only takes care of valorising the common history and heritage of the selected sites but also welcomes and evaluates applications from potential new members to join, thus enriching the route with more and more points of interest.

The COME-IN! label

The COME-IN project (2016–2019) embraced the challenge of **helping museums in central Europe to make culture more accessible** to people with different kinds of disability. After developing and successfully testing a new set of guidelines on making exhibitions inclusive, they created the COME-IN! label, to be used by museums that comply with a set of standards carefully drawn up by the project partnership.

As a way of expanding the community of museums committed to inclusivity, the former COME-IN! partners plan yearly calls to award the label to museums who believe in making cultural heritage truly accessible to all. The first call for applications was opened in the summer of 2020. A transnational selection committee composed of eight former project partners is responsible for assessing the candidate museums and awarding the label to those that meet the standards and values of the COME-IN! label. The committee is also in charge of monitoring the continuous commitment of awarded museums to label standards.

First evaluations show that early adopters of the label have benefited from the reduced barriers to access. For example, the Archaeological Museum in Pula, Croatia, staged the exhibition 'Prehistory in our hands' ('Prapovijest u rukama') and won an award for the best exhibition of 2018 in Croatia. The museum's efforts to make archaeological content more accessible to people with disabilities have won a great deal of recognition from the local authorities.



Natural risk management in the Po Basin, Italy



Adriana May

Why is research on the economic impact of natural disasters so important, especially now? The answer lies in our daily life experiences.

In Italy, as in many other European countries, natural disasters are part of our history; these kinds of phenomena affect the economy, but addressing them integrates the resilience formed as part of our cultural heritage.

Natural events do not care about administrative borders, demonstrating the need for transnational

📍 ***addressing natural disasters integrates the resilience formed as part of our cultural heritage.*** 🗨️

policies, particularly as a growing number of regions face similar challenges as a result of climate change.

At a European level, we need cohesive policies, particularly with regard to setting common standards for data and information, sharing experiences and methodologies, identifying those risks that affect strategic infrastructures and setting transnational policies for the main river basins.

The Solidarity Fund for post-disaster recovery is a much appreciated measure, but, for the future, we need to invest in prevention.

The Italian regions have legislative power with regard to spatial planning, as well as risk management; the national state sets the legislative framework, has a coordinating role and is the source of a relevant share of the funding.

In the Po Basin, an area of 71.000 square Kilometres and 16 million inhabitants that encompasses seven Italian regions and one Swiss canton, the 'modern approach' to natural risk management (NRM) was developed following the disaster that occurred in Valtellina and other mountain territories in 1987.

Heavy rain lasted for days, mountain slopes collapsed, huge amounts of debris choked streams and a huge landslide (around 40 million cubic metres of rock) destroyed more than 3 km of the valley, including villages, infrastructures and fields.

Fifty-two people died in the disaster. A total of EUR 894 million (equivalent to EUR 2.1 billion in today's money) of public funds was invested in immediate damage recovery, and a reconstruction plan worth EUR 1.2 billion was launched.

To prevent a repeat of such a disaster, the national and regional governments set up comprehensive prevention and emergency management policies:

Spatial planning at regional and local levels is now based on previous natural risk assessment: Since these maps influence land use, they are built at a very detailed, local scale.



Structural works for risk mitigation: new technological solutions for flood containment and slope stabilisation and protection for houses and infrastructures have been adopted.

A regional system to monitor the main landslides and rivers, connected to alert functionalities, has been developed.

Detailed emergency plans for residual risk now exist; these are modeled on subsidiarity-based civil protection, where local authorities are the first respondents.

Maintenance is split into three areas: structural works, river beds and banks, and slopes and woods. Traditional agricultural practices were and still are quite effective in risk mitigation.

An additional step that is currently being worked on is **delocalisation measures** for those buildings built during the economic boom (before risk assessments were carried out) and located in areas affected by relevant risks.

This integrated approach is based on two pillars: multilevel, participatory, subsidiary and flexible governance and a multiscale, cartographic, open data knowledge platform.

The governance actors are public governments and administrations, agencies, not-for-profit associations, technical professionals, enterprises and universities.

At basin level, the Po District Authority, comprising representatives of state ministries and regions, supports national, regional and inter-regional cooperation. The model is flexible, and the roles and tasks for each actor change depending on the policy action.

The knowledge platform is developed at the local

“ **emergency plans are modeled on subsidiarity based civil protection, where local authorities are the first respondents.** ”

scale. Detailed data and information are collected in line with common standards; circular data flow ensures permanent updating, and wide-scale maps and analysis are produced through specific indicators and geographic information system tools.

In Lombardy, we face constant environmental challenges, but these cause much less damage than in the past. We cannot stop natural phenomena, but we can live with them; the key words from our experience are adaptation and resilience.



Spatial planning and climate change



Ludwig Scharmann

People still remember the state of emergency in parts of Austria, Croatia, Germany and Italy in June 2017 – and again in May 2018 – when torrential rain led to streets, cellars, underground stations and garages being flooded and cars being swept away.

To address the problem of heavy rain events, 10 partners from Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Hungary and Poland developed and tested innovative methods and instruments for the integrated management of heavy rain risks up to summer 2020.

🗨️ ***there is a need for action in spatial planning on the topic of 'risk', spatial planners carry out risk assessments as part of their work*** 🗨️

The RAINMAN project came just in time to 'support municipalities and regions in dealing with the dangers of heavy rain and reducing the risk of heavy rain as much as possible' explains Dr Ludwig Scharmann from the Saxon State Ministry for Regional Development.

The project consortium has produced a methodological guide, which should enable responsible people and agencies to select and

implement a suitable method for risk analysis or assessment, taking into account the conditions and requirements of any given framework.

Pilot actions to raise awareness and involve stakeholders

To check the feasibility of the jointly developed methods and tools, they were used in the participating partner regions as part of pilot actions. The municipalities of Meissen and Oderwitz in the Free State of Saxony, both of which are characterised by urban and rural features, were involved in the pilot activities.

Both municipalities tested and validated various approaches to risk assessment and prevention; for example, with the help of the catalogue of methods developed in the project, the rural Oderwitz community revised the alarm and operational documents for flood protection.

In another example of stakeholder engagement during an event at Oderwitz, it was emphasised that home owners should make structural provisions to their comes to improve damage susceptibility.

To assess individual risk, owners can use the flood prevention certificate recently introduced in Saxony, which experts use to objectively assess the susceptibility of residential buildings to flooding.



Heavy rain flood risk in spatial planning

The term 'risk' is not found directly in spatial planning law – neither in Germany nor in other European Member States. However, there is a need for action in spatial planning with regard to the topic of 'risk', because de facto spatial planners frequently carry out risk assessments as part of their work. The need to deal with risk in spatial planning also arises from the principles of preventive flood protection and the identification of critical infrastructures as special assets.

📍 **emergency plans are modeled on subsidiarity based civil protection, where local authorities are the first respondents.** 🗨️

Spatial planning aims to coordinate competing land uses and conflicting objectives and to identify and promote multifunctional use potentials. By integrating goals for heavy rain risk reduction, spatial planning can be a powerful tool for reducing risks locally and even regionally. The implementation of risk reduction measures in spatial planning depends on the specific legal situation in the respective country and region. The **RAINMAN Toolbox** offers an overview of measures and insights from different perspectives.

General guidance and recommendations:

integrate water-sensitive urban planning in new developments – an early consideration of flood prevention is worthwhile;

consider synergies and conflicting objectives – heavy rain risks are only one possible environmental risk;

adapt local and regional planning levels to heavy rain risks as these are the levels particularly affected;

coordinate sectoral strategies into an integrative spatial development strategy and make use of formal and informal instruments for strategic spatial planning;

review spatial planning decisions on a regular basis;

keep planning flexible for changing conditions (e.g. climate change) to reduce the vulnerability of regions and settlements;

establish appropriate cooperation and coordination mechanisms for the implementation of measures;

work towards securing resources and finances to ensure the implementation of set goals.



Ageing matters to all of us



Julia Wadoux

Europe is ageing – there is nothing new about this observation. However, what if we were to look on the bright side of this change? Today, in the European Union, people can expect to live, on average, to 81 years and over, and the healthy life years expectancy is continuing to increase; this is a remarkable achievement.

The COVID-19 outbreak has shed light on the situation of older persons, revealing the serious adverse consequences for older persons living with

“ **Ageing isn't something that happens to us in the second half of our life: it's a lifelong process. We age from the moment we are born. In this sense, ageing is another word for living.** ”

Anne Karpf – How to age

underlying health conditions. However, paradoxically, older people have not been consulted as part of the response to the pandemic: a huge number of deaths has happened behind closed doors in care homes; the number of elderly abuse cases has increased; older persons have experienced social isolation; and

decisions have been made without their input, as if older persons were 'others' and not 'us'.

Fortunately, many spontaneous and solidarity-based initiatives have bloomed during the outbreak, and numerous older persons have taken the floor, notably for the International Day of Older Persons. This again shows how much we can be inspired by grassroots examples.

Everyone has something to give

For the team of 'Invisible Talents', everyone would benefit from communities in which ordinary older people – including the oldest old – get to share their life stories and competences. Participation benefits older persons and their communities at large, and encouraging self-advocacy is a way to ensure a more diverse representation of older people that is far from the idea that they are a homogeneous group.

Similarly, there are many intergenerational exchanges that form a strong basis of our societies. For instance, measures aimed at promoting a work-life balance are key and often lead to 'win-win' situations: they can support longer working careers, and therefore contribute to the sustainability of pension systems, while helping older workers to take care of dependent relatives or grandchildren, which thus supports young parents' professional careers. Many older people also make a valuable contribution to society by volunteering beyond their own families. By helping others in need, older people not only have a high

social impact on their neighbourhoods and communities, but also transform them into more cohesive and inclusive places to live. In return, older volunteers feel more useful and fulfilled, which improves their own well-being and health.

Those examples contribute to revisiting our narratives around ageing. In doing so, we can also use the existing windows of opportunities to engage with a wider and systemic change.

Key political hooks to change the narrative

The current political context offers several hooks that allow us to move forward and ensure a true change. These include the following:

The World Health Organization has endorsed the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020–2030), which seeks to improve the lives of older people, their families and communities through collective action. One of the areas of action is dedicated to age-friendly environments in which local and regional authorities have a key role to play.

On 13 October 2020 the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on ‘Human rights, participation and well-being of older persons in the era of digitalisation’, inviting EU Member States and the European Commission to adopt an integrated approach to ageing and deploy initiatives across many different domains, such as communication, citizen participation, social inclusion and social protection, healthcare and long-term care, and digital education.

In early 2021, the European Commission will publish its Green Paper on Ageing. This document responds to AGE’s longstanding call for a coordinated EU policy on ageing, and we invite all interested stakeholders, including civil society organisations and local authorities, to be ready for the public consultation that will follow the release of this Green Paper.

We are all ageing, but our well-being in old age depends as much on our lifelong expenses as on our capacity to debunk the fear of growing old. We all have a role to play in defining and implementing policies related to ageing, from the youngest person to the oldest person among us. Only then will we be able to build a society for all ages.

ESPON Conference Week on Ageing // Adapting European Cities to Population Ageing: Policy Challenges and Best Practices

Monday 30 November - Friday 4 December 2020

Together with AGE Platform Europe, Eurocities and the World Health Organisation, ESPON is organising an online conference week about population ageing. The week starts with an opening event, with a number of high-level speakers and experts, including vice president of the European Commission and Commissioner on Democracy and Demography **Dubravka Šuica**.

The opening day is followed by sessions on the case study cities investigated in ESPON ACPA: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Gothenburg, Greater Manchester, Hengelo, Nantes, Oslo and Zaragoza.

Programme and registration available on: <https://www.espon.eu/ageing>

Let’s not treat older people as invisible or powerless. Many older people depend on an income and are fully engaged in work, in family life, in teaching and learning, and in looking after others. Their voices and leadership count.

**António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the United Nations, 1 May 2020**

ESPON Conference Week on Ageing Adapting European Cities to Population Ageing: Policy Challenges and Best Practices

30 November – 4 December 2020

Register now!



Demolishing Picasso?



Christin Krohn Zintis Hermansons

Cultural heritage can help us create a sense of belonging and get to know our roots – something that is important to most humans. Europe in this sense is fortunate, as we have a lot of heritage, both material and immaterial. For most of us, it is therefore important to make sure that future generations can also benefit from this.

Built cultural heritage can sometimes be an impediment to expansion and development, especially in cities experiencing growth. Developers (both private and public) are keen to put a lot of effort into finding arguments for their projects. Nevertheless, most European countries have some sort of official government bodies that safeguard the built cultural heritage. For decades, they have developed and refined arguments concerning archaeology and art history to preserve the built cultural heritage.

However, the problem is that developers put forward other arguments detailing the need for development that is economically advantageous, sustainable, climate friendly and more secure.

Norway has recently seen one of its most prominent post-Second World War buildings torn down. In 1969, Picasso and Norwegian artist Carl Nesjar created five murals, one of which was placed on the outer wall of the so-called Y-block, a modernist building in Oslo's government quarter.

“ **Built cultural heritage can sometimes be an impediment to expansion and development, especially in cities experiencing growth** ”

Ever since the right-wing terrorist Anders Behring Breivik damaged the building in 2011 by detonating a car bomb, the fate of the Y-block has caused international controversy.

In line with the government's plans to redevelop the

government quarter and demolish the Y-block, in July 2020 the government detached Picasso's concrete mural. The New York Times noted at the time that 'the mural's removal was the culmination of a years long fight between the authorities, who argue the demolition is necessary for security reasons, and activists, who believe the decision represents a crime against Norwegian cultural heritage'.

Many believe that the government did not want to tear down the building, but ultimately the arguments to do so were more convincing than those in favour of keeping it. As a result, the building was demolished, despite the countless protests and petitions,

it is important to understand how cultural heritage is connected to our wellbeing and the economy



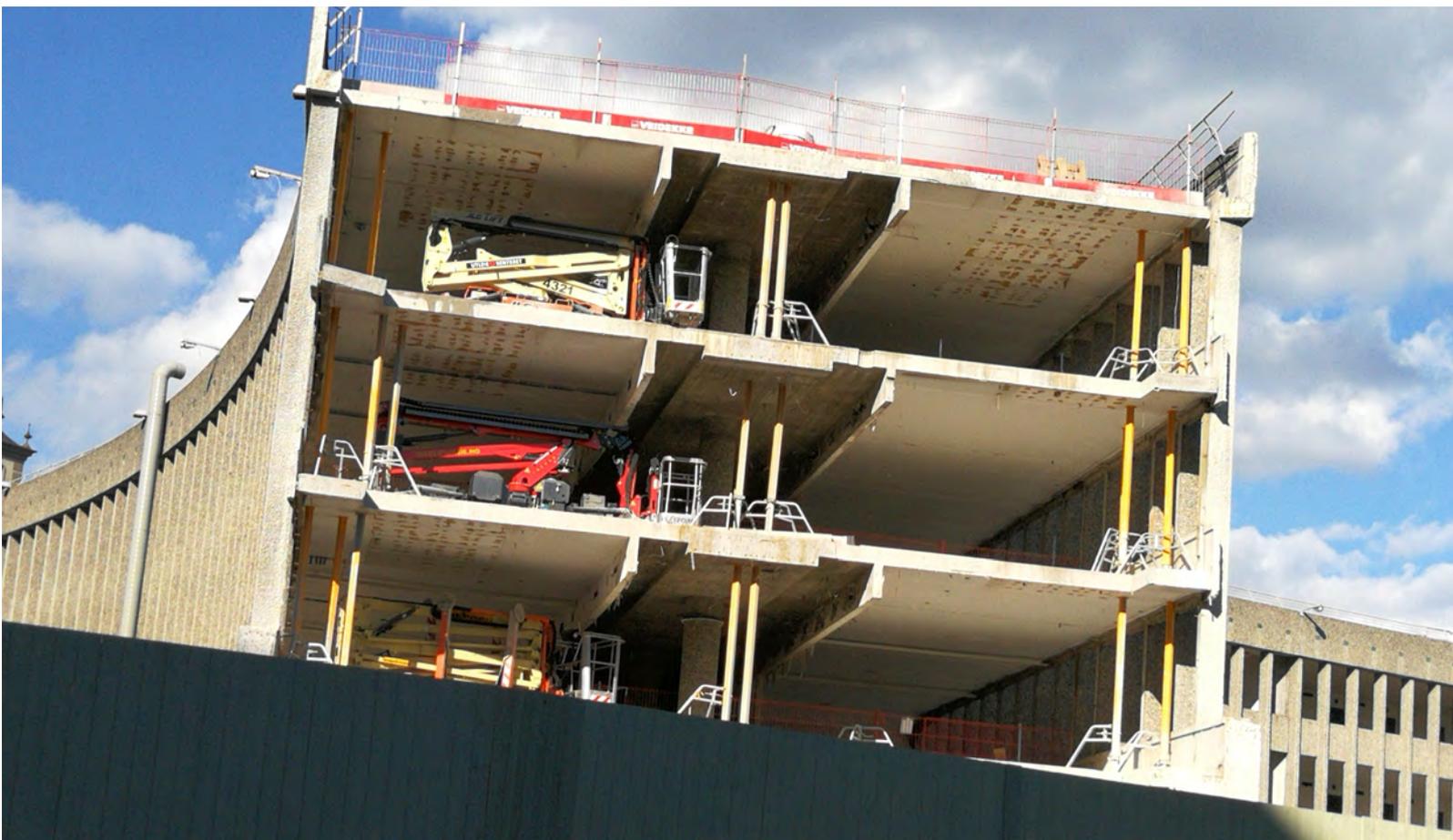
international pressure, Europa Nostra announcing the Y-block as one of the seven most endangered heritage sites in Europe and, above all, the fact that the building represented a symbol of social democracy for many Norwegians.

If we are going to preserve the built cultural heritage

in the future, it is important to understand how cultural heritage is connected to our well-being and the economy. The ESPON HERITAGE and ESPON HERIWELL projects are, in many ways, a testimony to the fact that, despite the scarce amount of evidence and statistics, it is possible to showcase the benefits that cultural heritage brings to economic growth and wellbeing.

The ESPON HERITAGE project illustrated how the built cultural heritage plays a major role in most economies in Europe that were included in this study. The built cultural heritage was important in many sectors, but it played the largest role in the tourism and construction sectors. The ongoing ESPON HERIWELL project (to be finished in 2022) has already showcased the many links that cultural heritage has with quality of life, societal cohesion and material conditions across European countries.

In conclusion, once we tear our cultural heritage down it is lost for ever as a resource for societal wellbeing and economic growth. There is a need for a deeper understanding and more evidence and knowledge of the many ways that cultural heritage connects with people and places, and its potential to be a driver of development rather than an impediment to it. This is particularly true right now, as cultural heritage is a 'tool' that can help us feel a sense of belonging in a time when everything has been turned upside down because of the COVID-19 pandemic.





Rural areas should ride the wave of COVID-19 recovery



Andrew Copus

Rural depopulation has been a legitimate focus of EU policy since the early days of the Union. However, in recent years it has become a very visible phenomenon, fuelling popular discontent.

Responses to COVID-19 will accelerate change and stimulate further debate. Repopulation of depleted rural areas, or at least better adjustment to the demographic status quo, are probably more feasible now than they have been for many decades. The first, very simple, step will be to acknowledge the increasing divergence between “accumulating” and “depleting” rural areas, and the need for appropriate policy responses.

“ **Almost 60% of predominantly rural or intermediate NUTS 3 regions meet the criteria for rural shrinking** ”

Depopulation is, in itself, an issue which deserves a specific policy response. However, the various place-specific issues and processes which lie behind demographic trends, reflect the overall condition and “performance” of rural areas.

Analysis of available regional data reveals that rural shrinking is widely distributed across the EU. Almost 60% of predominantly rural or intermediate NUTS 3

regions meet the criteria. These regions cover almost 40% of the area of the EU and contain almost one third of its population.

However, the chronology of the shrinking process, and the relative importance of the two demographic components (natural change and migration) vary considerably between different parts of Europe. In terms of intensity, there is a very clear centre-periphery contrast.

The most conspicuous concentration of shrinking rural regions is along the Eastern edge of the EU, stretching from Finland, through the Baltic States, and across the former socialist Member States and into Greece.

The “belt” of rural shrinking continues along the Mediterranean through Italy, Sardinia, to Spain and Portugal. In these areas “active” shrinking, due to out migration is dominant. Residual shrinking areas (where age structure legacy effects are more in evidence) are found in the Atlantic fringe (Ireland and Scotland).

NUTS 3 is often an insufficiently granular framework to fully capture the phenomenon of rural shrinking, which is often “masked” by the presence of expanding cities and towns, which dominate the regional indicators.

In-depth case studies of shrinking rural areas in Croatia, Bulgaria, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Spain,



Greece and Finland have provided fresh perspectives on contemporary shrinking processes.

Depopulation trends are commonly driven by economic restructuring, locational disadvantages, peripherization, or events and transitions. However, these four drivers are variously combined, so that each area experiences a more-or-less unique pathway. An understanding of such pathways should be the starting point for rational and tailored policy responses.

Case study findings very much underline the timeliness of a renewed vision for rural Europe which

“ **it is vital that the long-term vision for rural areas ‘rides the wave’ of the spatial reorganisation of economic activity** ”

recognises the contrasting needs of depleting and accumulating rural areas, acknowledging specificities, blending mitigation with adaptation, building upon existing strengths, and responding early to new opportunities.

A broadening of goals, beyond economic growth, to address (territorial) inclusion, spatial justice,

well-being, and a Just Transition to a decarbonised economy, present opportunities for many shrinking rural regions. However, many rural communities would benefit from strengthened and more coherent capacity to respond.

Demographic indicators, together with a place-sensitive appreciation of the processes behind them, can add value to conventional economic measurements. In terms of implementation, the formal recognition of differentiation between depleting and accumulating rural areas, so that the former may more consistently be the subject of the most appropriate interventions should be considered.

At the same time, it is vital that the long-term vision for rural areas “rides the wave” in terms of opportunities for spatial reorganisation of economic activity in the post-COVID-19 world.

The vision should provide a platform for both strategic mitigation, and adaption, with an emphasis upon well-being, and due recognition of emerging opportunities for economic activities in a rural setting.



Supporting cities and regions in measuring and monitoring digital transformation



Martin Gauk

Digital transformation and the scaling up of digital innovation are current topics in the global arena as well as for the EU and its Member States, regions, cities and communities. They also form one of the central elements of the new cohesion policy, the priorities and strategic agenda of the new European Commission and global and European commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals and living-in.eu declaration.

Within the next programming period, the EU will invest billions of euros to benefit from the digital revolution, to support the roll-out of the digital single market and the development of data platforms, and

“ **The success of transformation relies on local and regional communities and governments, and their capacity to manage this change** ”

to help our cities and communities recover from the economic crisis, build resilience, meet their climate targets and reduce their environmental footprint while fostering citizen participation and bringing prosperity to businesses, including SMEs and start-ups.

Although the technological revolution holds great promise, the transformation can take many paths. It

can make our continent more prosperous, more competitive, more just and greener if it is driven by the voices of citizens and local communities and delivered under fair market terms. However, it may also increase inequalities and inefficiencies, reduce the number of opportunities and infringe upon many European values we currently uphold if it is left to be shaped – unchecked – by the powerful global dynamics.

The success of this transformation relies on local and regional communities and governments, and their capacity to manage this change, largely through multi-level governance mechanisms and cooperation with other actors from other cities, regions, countries and the EU, within a common market, through joint agreements, investments, projects and public procurement. So far, the main beneficiaries of this digital revolution have been the most open and agile cities and communities with a strong vision, leadership and networks and collaborative mindsets. Although these pioneers and early adopters praise the positive impact of digitalisation, large-scale holistic uptake and upscaling remains slow and uneven across the continent.

The key elements in this process are shared knowledge, vision and action. As a result, initiatives and political commitments, such as the living-in.eu declaration, are crucial to its delivery. The process brings together cities to scale up good practices related to finances, technical and legal issues, education and capacity building, and monitoring and

measuring. Developing and validating local key performance indicators and data collection procedures for common and transparent monitoring and being able to compare smart city solutions across European cities is a crucial horizontal element in all digitalisation efforts. To promote the digital transformation and the scaling up of digital innovation in cities and communities, we need to know what different actors are doing, what works, and what does not work and why.

ESPON also plays an important role here. We aim to support digital transformation efforts across Europe by providing the necessary evidence of what is happening at local and regional levels to help different cities and communities benchmark themselves against others to develop better policies and actions. We are currently developing a holistic monitoring framework called LORDI (Local and Regional Digital Indicators) that will help cities and regions develop and steer the relevant policies, fulfill commitments and actions and support access to different financing opportunities.

This set of indicators maps cities and regions into five broad categories:

- local digital **infrastructure**;
- local digital **skills and capacity building**;
- local digital **economy and services**;
- the digital single market and **governance**;
- socioeconomic context**.

The LORDI framework is being co-designed with cities and regions, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and key networks and organisations, such as living-in.eu signatories and the Open and Agile Smart Cities network.

In parallel, we have recently launched an applied research project called DIGISER (digital innovation in

it is vital that the long-term vision for rural areas 'rides the wave' of the spatial reorganisation of economic activity

governance and public service provision). This activity will provide evidence of how different public administrations across Europe are going about their digitalisation efforts, and a handbook to assess digital maturity and provide advice on designing better policies and actions. The DIGISER project will be closely linked with the LORDI framework whereby both activities will support each other in terms of methodology and indicators.





Urban and economic transformation of metropolitan areas



Rudolfs Cimdins

Metropolitan areas across Europe face visible changes in the productive activities of city regions and their role in industrial development. As the coordinating organisation of metropolitan cooperation and planning initiatives in the Riga region, the Riga Planning Region participates in the ESPON targeted analysis Metropolitan Industrial Spatial Strategies & Economic Sprawl (MISTA), focusing on the productive sector's main trends and future perspectives.

During the past two decades, as a result of the expansion of urban territories, great changes in spatial structures have taken place in Riga – the capital of Latvia – as well as in the surrounding areas

🗨️ ***Riga, Together with the metropolitan area is an area with a huge population and level of economic cooperation*** 🗨️

forming Riga's functional region. Riga is home to nearly one half of the country's residents, and, together with the metropolitan area (about 1.1 million inhabitants), is an area with a huge population and level of economic cooperation (it represents two thirds of Latvia's overall socioeconomic activity – GDP, industry, investments, education and science). A

long with the spatial changes in the Riga metropolis,

the role of urban–suburban economic and social relationships has also changed.

The most characteristic socioeconomic structuration processes in the Riga metropolitan area are associated with

a relative increase in the population, particularly the working-age population,

migration from the capital Riga to the suburbs, and

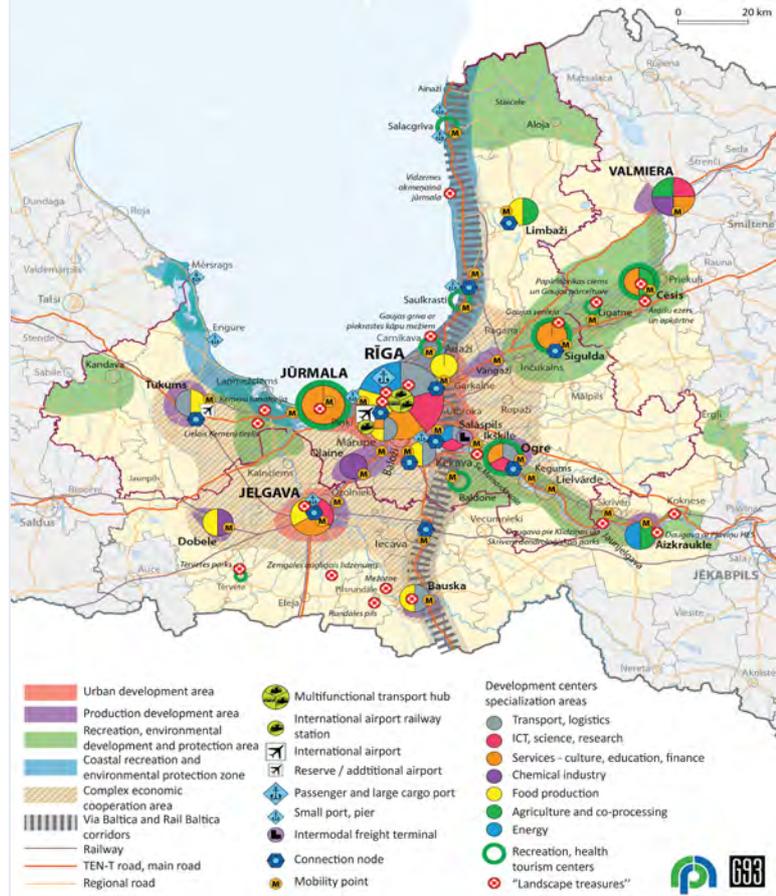
everyday commuting within the metropolis.

The above mentioned processes determine changes in the basic population and lead to the transformation of economic activities and the spatial distribution of metropolitan-scale businesses.

An evaluation of these processes, the identification of key development issues and the need for an adequate planning process for the metropolitan region were the main conditions that activated wider functional-scale planning initiatives in the Riga region.

At the beginning of 2018, the Riga Planning Region started to develop a joint Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area. The idea was to achieve the coherent development and coordination of ongoing processes by using an integrated approach and complex solutions to coordinate the interests of the state, Riga city, the surrounding local governments and the inhabitants.

One of the main goals of the metropolitan plan is to serve as a strategy for settlement structure, mobility,



services and job location in the functional space of Riga. Alongside the development of the Riga metropolitan area plan, the Riga Planning Region started to search for appropriate functional urban areas and regions in Europe to collaborate with regarding economic development aspects.

Participation in the ESPON Targeted Analysis MISTA, together with other cities and regions across Europe (Vienna, Oslo, Berlin, Warsaw, Turin and Stuttgart), has helped the Riga Planning Region to recognise urban and economic transformation trends of city regions, as well as identify the state of the Riga metropolitan area development processes.

🗨️ **One of the main goals of the metropolitan plan is to serve as a strategy for settlement structure, mobility, services and job location in the functional space of Riga** 🗨️

When identifying main policy issues and key questions to be addressed within the MISTA process, the Riga region focuses on activities to identify criteria for defining industrial and new development territories (existing and potential ones) in the metropolitan area, taking into consideration new development trends, IT development, global

tendencies and local habits, significant future projects (e.g. RailBaltica) and the changing spatial structure. Taking into account metropolitan-scale spatial transformation processes, it is crucial to identify existing and potential territories for industry and other 'space-consuming' sectors (e.g. waste management, the transport sector, energy, leisure opportunities) in the metropolitan area.

Identification of specialisation sectors of the region and the spatial distribution of different businesses is key to the implementation of the abovementioned Riga metropolitan area plan. In the case of the Riga region, the main point of interest is the interaction of the metropolitan area's core territory (50 km radius, 30 minute accessibility) with regional centres and smaller satellite cities.

When the Riga metropolitan area plan is approved by the Riga Planning Region Development Council and the MISTA process provides useful findings regarding the changing role of industry on a spatial scale and explains the main trends in productive activities of city regions,

it will be important to think about the spatial consequences of urban sprawl, the distribution of economic activities and the readiness of metropolitan areas for potential future jobs.

Adopting regional policies to support the Fourth Industrial Revolution



Roberta Capello, Camilla Lenzi, Reda Nauseidaite



A review of policy measures to manage the current technological transformation, conducted as part of the Technological Transformation and Transitioning of Regional Economies (T4) project, demonstrated uneven interest across Europe. In the EU-27 and EFTA countries, only a relatively small number of regions (at NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 levels) have adopted policies specifically connected to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Regional policies supporting the emergence of Industry 4.0 can be discussed in relation to three topics: sectors targeted by policies, support available through policy measures and expected impacts.

over two thirds of regional policy measures are designed to support Industry 4.0 development across multiple sectors without targeting individual industries.

Breaking down the regional viewpoint on Industry 4.0 support

Looking at sectoral trends, it is evident that over two thirds of regional policy measures are designed to support Industry 4.0 development across multiple sectors without targeting individual industries.

Those sector-specific regional policies that are in place most often target the ICT sector, followed closely by the marine/naval sector (a particular feature in Spanish regions), agriculture/food (primarily in French regions) and energy (most often targeted by German regional policies).

As for the types of support made available, regional Industry 4.0 policies and measures can be broken down into three broad categories:

support through funding (e.g. for the acquisition and/or introduction of 4.0 technologies),

support through consulting (e.g. training courses for businesses, evaluating readiness to deploy 4.0 technologies)

support through dissemination (e.g. networking platforms for industrial actors working with 4.0 technologies).

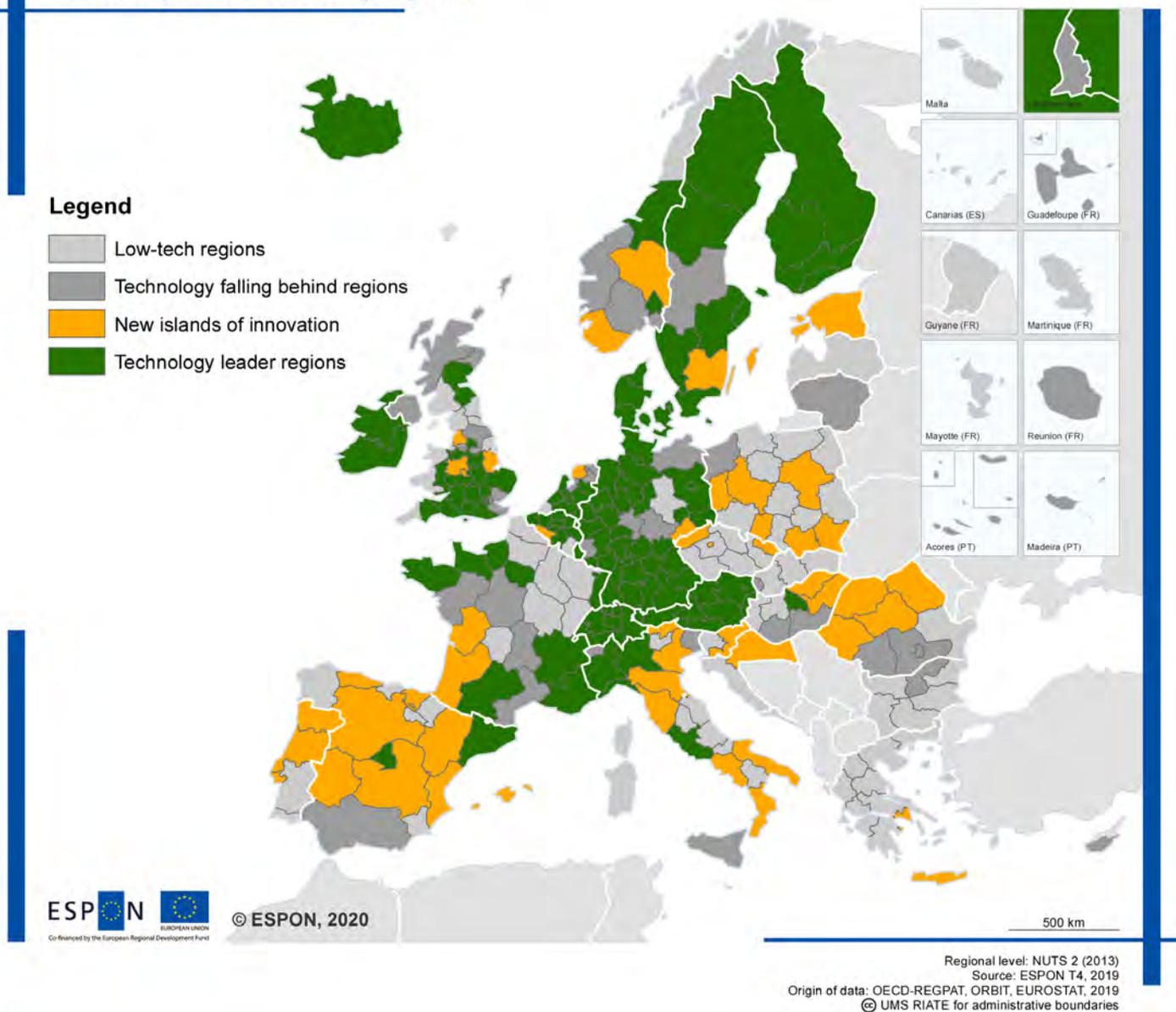
Of these, funding actions are the most common, being employed in nearly two thirds of regional measures aimed at Industry 4.0. The second largest category is dissemination support. Here, evidence shows fairly strong interest from regions in investing in awareness-raising actions. Nearly half of policy measures include dissemination activities (most commonly found in Belgian, Spanish and German regions). Consulting is the least employed support action, identified in over a third of measures and most common in Spanish regions.

the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not yet understood as an effective way to solve regional underperformance.

Finally, with regard to the expected impacts of Industry 4.0 and measures supporting it, the largest proportion of policies in this area are designed to utilise Industry 4.0 as a way of maintaining current regional performance.

The second largest proportion of policies aim to improve the performance of regions that are already doing well (this type of policy is most common in Belgium, France and Austria).

Taxonomy of 4.0 inventing regions



These policies can be broadly divided into those that target specific sectors that have a strong regional presence and long-term strategies connected to innovation, research and development, and smart specialisation. The third largest group of policies is made up of those designed to reduce poor performance in regions through the introduction of 4.0 technologies (these are most frequently found in Greece, Spain and Italy).

Strength where strength is - untapped opportunities

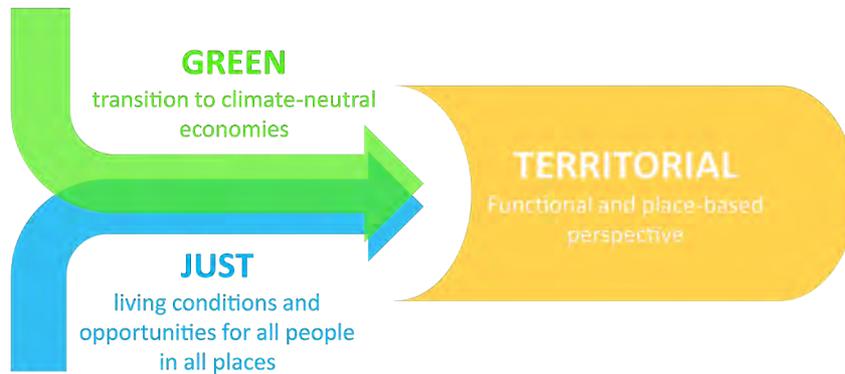
The analysis of regional policy measures found relatively few actions that are designed to utilise 4.0 technologies in low-performing sectors to uplift industries. This suggests that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not yet understood as an effective way to solve regional underperformance.

Most regional policies are designed around the

principle of maintaining strength where there is strength already, which suggests that, at regional level, policy-makers view 4.0 technologies as the next stage in the evolution of industry but not necessarily as a tool to advance regional competitiveness. Work carried out by ESPON will hopefully go a long way towards raising awareness of the potential of 4.0 technologies to drive regional industrial performance.

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Work carried out by ESPON will hopefully go a long way towards raising awareness of the potential of 4.0 technologies to drive regional industrial performance.



Results of the public consultation on the strategic orientation of the next ESPON programme

A contribution from the ESPON Managing Authority

As reported in the last edition of TerritoriALL, the countries participating in the ESPON programme formed a Joint Working Group (JWG) to prepare a proposal for the ESPON programme covering the coming funding period, 2021–2027. The JWG formulated an intervention logic and its understanding of the territorial challenges ahead.

A public consultation was launched, inviting all policy-makers and practitioners at all administrative levels, researchers, academics, students and citizens, especially those who think that ‘territory matters’, to provide input, in particular on the emerging territorial challenges ahead of us and the specific needs for territorial evidence and knowledge that ESPON should meet in future.

By the deadline set, a large number of responses had been received from participants, including policy-makers and researchers, representing all the European countries (and beyond).

The results of this public consultation, summarised in the following sections, were discussed by the JWG on 10 September 2020.

Emerging challenges ahead of us

ESPON is embedded in Cohesion Policy and should contribute to its main goals while also supporting the EU Territorial Agenda 2030 and its implementation, with a particular focus on territorial cohesion.

ESPON should support policy-makers at all levels by providing territorial evidence and knowledge for policy responses. The focus should be on strengthening EU

territories’ resilience to and recovery from crises by achieving a green transition to climate-neutral economies while ensuring at the same time just living conditions for all people in all places.

Territories are exposed to diverse territorial trends, competing policy goals and contradictory sectoral policies, which may lead to self-reinforcing negative but also positive consequences those territories. Therefore, territorial policy responses have to offer integrated approaches to steering development in an effective way.

The territorial and functional perspective (as described the article on the future ESPON in last edition of TerritoriALL) is the cornerstone of ESPON’s evidence and knowledge work, which supports public stakeholders to find appropriate and coordinated policy responses across sectors and governmental levels to the advantage of European citizens.

This complexity is reflected in a number of core challenges that have to be addressed by ESPON in the future with regards to their territorial dimension.

The results of the public consultation have confirmed the relevance of the set of territorial challenges to be addressed by the programme, as shown below.

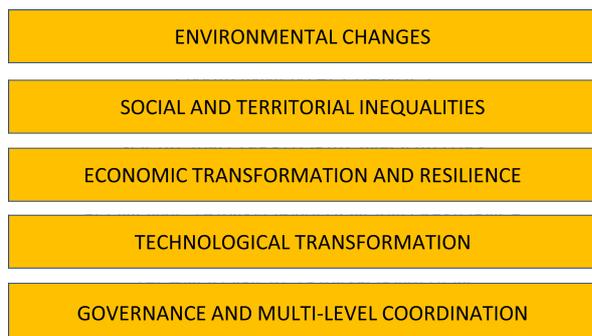
In their responses, participants gave a particular emphasis to disparities, in the larger sense:

social – between generations and age groups, in terms of access to (quality) employment, education, housing, healthcare, etc.;

territorial – core developed areas versus marginal and less developed areas, urban areas versus rural areas, small cities versus metropolitan and functional areas, etc.;

Economic: development potential, disparities in wealth ; accessibilities; etc.

ESPON shall focus on the territorial challenges of

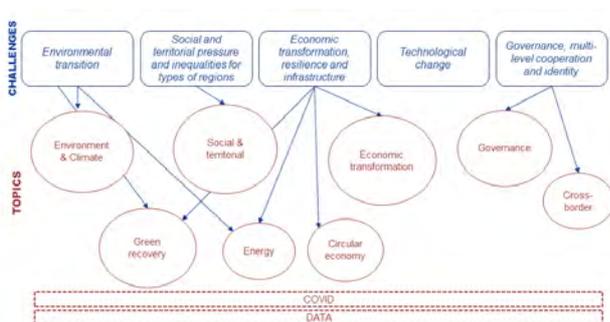


These disparities are perceived as having an impact on governance, as territories, people and economies are competing with each other, thus impacting the willingness to cooperate (between territories and between administrative levels in the same territory).

Economic transition and environmental and technological change are perceived as important tools to be considered for use in achieving cohesion and, subsequently, better governance.

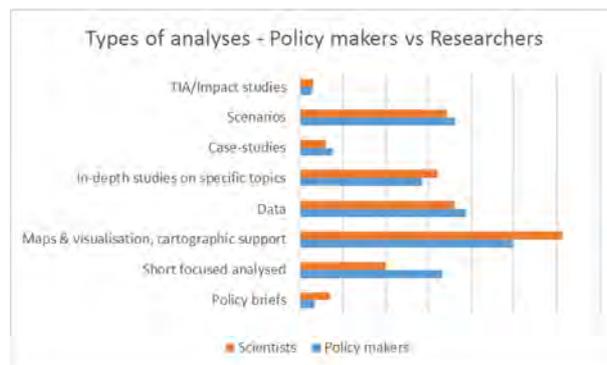
Specific needs for territorial evidence

When participants were asked about specific evidence needs, their responses were in line with the views expressed on the challenges to be faced. Many topics were proposed and the JWG tried to cluster them in a way that would ensure that cross-sectorial relations would be considered and that the territorial and functional dimensions would be properly addressed.



Specific needs for knowledge activities

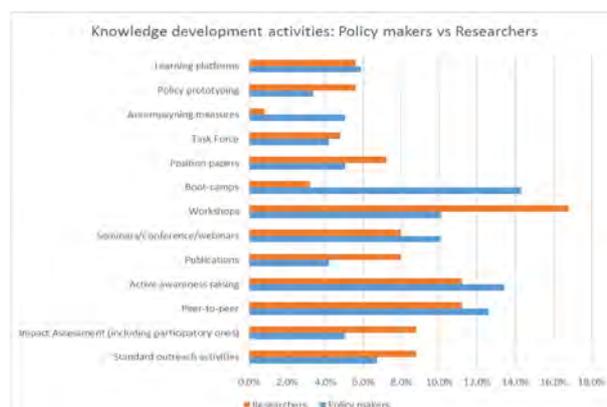
The consultation also asked about the types of analysis that are most in demand, and it was interesting to see the different preferences of scientists and policy-makers. While scientists prefer cartography and in-depth studies, policy-makers are more interested case studies, scenarios and short, focused analyses.



When it comes to knowledge development, policy-makers are more interested in interactive ways of acquiring knowledge. This is not surprising, as the JWG had already argued that the complexity of ESPON evidence calls for more interactive presentation of ESPON results.

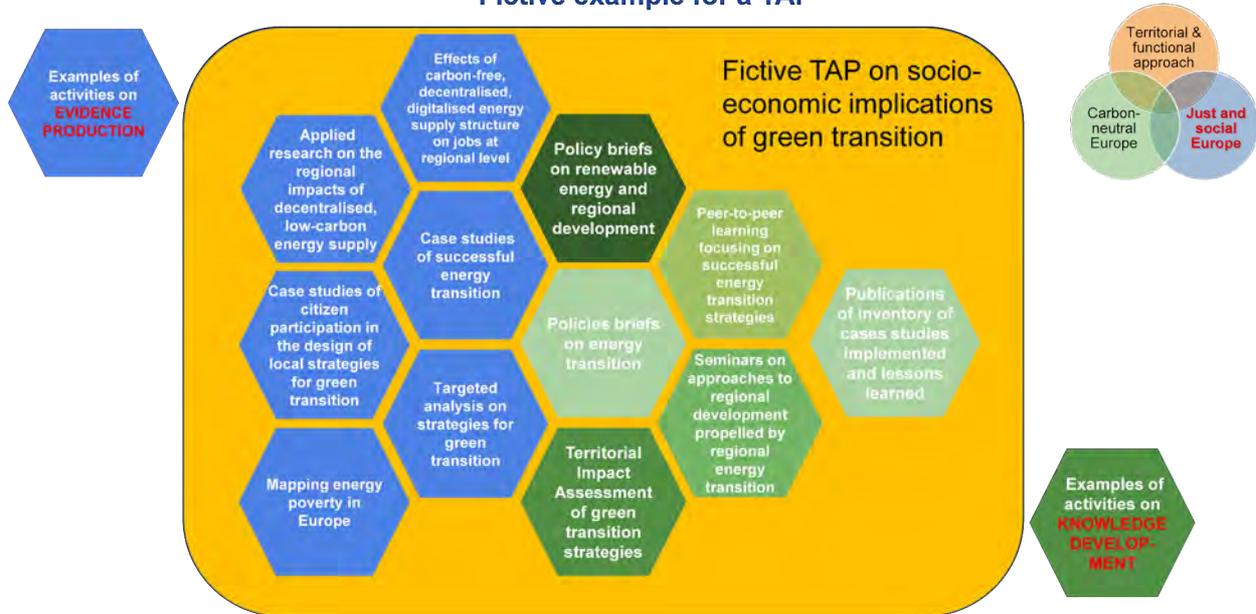
Combining evidence production and knowledge development in thematic action plans

The consultation produced much feedback for the work of the JWG, which helped in developing clearer ideas about the thematic action plans (TAPs) that will



Activities implemented through Thematic Action Plans

Fictive example for a TAP



Conclusion

set the framework and set out specific activities. The TAPs have to ensure a direct link between evidence production and knowledge development so that the best use is made of the evidence produced.

The consultation provided much valuable input to the JWG, which is now further evaluating the results and using them to formulate a first draft of the new programme, which should be ready in the first semester of 2021, depending on the timing of the publication of the regulatory framework for the 2021-2027 programming period.

Responses to the consultation

'Peer-to-peer workshops should be a strong tool to help collaborations between countries (or communities) to overcome differences and share place-based problems and solutions to reach territorial cohesion. Countries have to face together cross-border problems and solutions in any territorial situation (countryside, mountains, sea, etc).'

'Visual data such as maps are good tools when trying to understand "the big picture". Different scenarios help to consider optional paths for development.'

'Emphasise the link between environmental transition, social inequalities and economic transformation, in the sense that economic actors should be encouraged and incentivised to take into account all the other elements when thinking about their strategy, and not only their profit maximisation.'

Upcoming ESPON events

Transnational Outreach

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, all events will take place online

Rome Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism, 26 November

This ESPON conference will deal with the synergetic relationship between cultural heritage and tourism and how it acts as a driving force for the development of territories (urban, rural, coastal zones).



Vilnius tool training event on Sustainable Development Goals 1–17, 8 December

The event will introduce web applications that can be used by governments at all levels to assess progress towards the United Nations SDGs.



Varna Peer Learning Workshop on MSP and Marine Pollution, 15 December, This Peer Learning Workshop will focus on exemplary planning cases of land-sea interactions (LSI), which will be discussed and will serve as inspiration for policy-makers in the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea basins.



Outlook of the Portuguese presidency



Ana Seixas

As we face great social and economic disruption owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and a high risk of increased disparities and inequalities between people and places, it is more relevant than ever that we consider the pandemic's territorial impacts in the framework of territorial development and cohesion in Europe.

We are all living and experiencing a global pandemic, and facing the same economic and social impacts, which can lead us only to the belief that strategic solutions cannot be based on addressing one factor alone but must holistically take into account the interplay of all factors involved. It has become apparent that the economic and social effects of this pandemic will severely increase disparities and inequalities throughout the world and leave places and people behind with regard to development.

We are discovering that an adequate response can occur only if there are strong cross-sectorial approaches and if there is an understanding of places more in regard to their functional relationships than in regard to their administrative boundaries. We are also experiencing the need for a multiscale joint and coordinated effort, whereby the EU and its Member States, regions, cities and stakeholders each play a role in responding to the global challenge and its differentiated territorial impacts.

We have become aware that the economy's recovery can be sustainable only if transition models help us to become a cleaner, more circular and digital economy and lead us towards a greener and more just and inclusive Europe.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 is also more relevant than ever, as the strategic framework for territorial development and cohesion in Europe seeks to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and people by paying more attention to the diversity and specificity of places and their different potentials and challenges. However, it is also even more relevant because it recognises the greater challenges and trends that Europe is facing beyond this pandemic, namely climate change and sustainable development, demographic changes and the digital transition, and how these challenges and trends will have significant effects on territorial cohesion in Europe.

More than ever, ESPON can play a decisive role in collecting and storing data, developing new and more

accurate indicators and better monitoring territorial effects and evolution, and helping to design new policies and better governance responses.

In the first semester of 2021, Portugal will take over its fourth Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As in 2007, this will happen after an informal ministerial meeting and the adoption of the Territorial Agenda, and, as before, we want to ensure its continuity and momentum. We want to develop and implement actions for communication at European, national and local levels and to inspire and engage the relevant stakeholders in the priorities and implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030. Six pilot actions will gain momentum during the Portuguese Presidency, and we will be able to start seeing some progress and assess their implementation.

Through the German Presidency, we now share the collective vision of the New Leipzig Charter, which will guide our cooperation and governance efforts on urban matters. Despite being a national competence of Member States, urban policies have long been promoted under cohesion policy. This has fostered a convergence between Member States, the Commission and regions and cities of all sizes and has led to the de facto sharing of responsibilities for urban policies. The European Urban Initiative proposal builds on this effort and presents us with the opportunity to strengthen the bridges we have built so far.

“ We are discovering that an adequate response can occur only if there are strong cross-sectorial approaches ”

Under the Portuguese Presidency, besides the informal meetings of national Contact Points for Territorial Cohesion and Directors-General for Territorial Cohesion, we will host the ESPON week. In the face of the evolution of the current pandemic, it is still uncertain if and when the Portuguese Presidency will have in-person meetings. Regardless, the ESPON week is due to take place in June 2021.





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Issue 2 • November 2020

Image front cover and back page:

Wikimedia, Adobe Stock

The content pages 10, 14-21, 22, 26,
30-34, 40-52, 56, 60-68, 72, 76-78
include images sourced from Adobe
Stock. Image in page 73 is sourced
from Wikimedia

The ESPON magazine is
produced within the framework of the
ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme,
partly financed by the European
Regional Development Fund.

The ESPON EGTC is the single bene-
ficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation
Programme. The Single Operation
within the programme is implemented
by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed
by the European Regional Develop-
ment Fund, the EU Member States, the
United Kingdom and the Partner States,
Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and
Switzerland.

The magazine does not necessarily re-
flect the opinions of the members of the
ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.

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