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Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

UPTAKE ARTICLE

ESPON Peer Learning Workshop

ESPON and the Territorial Agenda inspiring the ÖREK-2030 process in Austria - an example for enriching national strategies with European knowledge

Virtual

13 November 2020, 9:30 - 13:00 (CET)

Towards national-scale territorial development plans for climate change – lessons learnt from the ESPON peer-learning workshop on Austrian ÖREK-2030

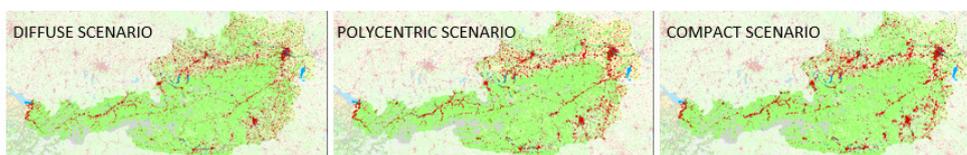


Climate change is becoming a major challenge for strategic planning. Numerous policy documents and programs already address the issue of implementing several adaptation and mitigation measures. However, a national spatial development policy committed to sustainability needs a centralised common ground in order to be effective as the actions should be implemented in several fields targeted by UN 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The central focus of the ESPON ÖREK workshop was on mutual learning from the implementation of national-scale territorial development plans dealing with climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK-2030) offers a strategy for the proactive handling of social, environmental and technological transformation processes on a country level and presents contributions made through spatial planning for coping with pressing economic, social and ecological challenges created by the climate crisis.

This ESPON workshop addressed policymakers responsible for ÖREK-2030 in Austria and stakeholders dealing with national development strategies in the neighbouring countries. It further invited researchers and stakeholders that were involved in ESPON projects to reflect on how make better use of territorial evidence and translate them into national and regional practice. The objective was to show and discuss how knowledge developed in ESPON projects can inspire the development of national policy instruments and how national and regional stakeholders can make (better) use of trans-European knowledge and practices from other countries.

The ESPON SUPER (Sustainable Urbanisation and land-use Practices in European Regions) project was taken as an example of influential input for the process of ÖREK-2030. SUPER provides a framework how sustainable land use can be promoted and how land take, soil sealing and urban sprawl can be avoided, reduced and compensated. This project provided territorial evidence of the land reduction by urbanisation across several EU Central and Western European countries, with Austria among these. Three scenarios were provided for the projected Austrian urbanisation from 2020 to 2050: the diffuse, polycentric and compact scenarios. Confirmed by experts belonging to the ÖREK-2030 working group, the land take scenarios provided necessary evidence for designing territorial strategies for ÖREK-2030.



The diffuse, polycentric and compact scenario for Austria. Source: David Evers/SUPER

Studied as the case study within the SUPER project, the German land take reduction target of 30 hectares was used as a second reference in the ÖREK-2030 process. Put into practice by the German “National Sustainable Development Strategy” (2002), this intervention aims to reduce the daily increase of settlement and transport areas to under 30 hectares by year 2030. Built on the evidence from scenarios developed during the SUPER project and measures put into practice in the German context, the issue of land take issue has become one

strategic priority for ÖREK-2030. The third ESPON project highlighted as providing an input for Austrian ÖREK-2030 was ALPS 2050 (Common Spatial Perspectives for the Alpine Area) that offers an analysis of territorial scenarios for sustainable development inclusive in economic, environmental and energy perspectives.

The outcome from the ESPON workshop on ÖREK-2030 was (with the honour of citing the conclusions made by the Austrian member of the ESPON Monitoring Committee, Roland Arbter) that targeting land take by urbanisation is the future policy for many countries in order to tackle ecological challenges created by urbanisation. As he continued, “evidence is an important tool to kick-off debates”. Debates are needed to overcome the spatial blindness and the decentralising territorial management process. They could also be used to build more effective governance systems.



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