

Regional Use of ESPON Knowledge

**Inspiration for Researchers and Practitioners involved in
Regional Territorial Analysis and Policy Development**

Working Paper from the internal ESPON Seminar on 3-4 December 2009 in Malmö



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Preface

The second ESPON Internal Seminar in Malmö, Sweden, closed with new ideas which will improve the ability of our Programme to provide useful facts and evidence, and increase the knowledge about territorial structures, trends and policy impacts in Europe's regions and cities.

It was a pleasure to observe 150 researchers, stakeholders and policymakers use to the maximum this opportunity to communicate, to exchange ideas on new ESPON findings, to network and discuss how regional territorial analysis and policymaking can be given added value by using European wide territorial information from the ESPON knowledge.

The co-operation with the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union supported the success of our event and the hospitality of the City of Malmö facilitated making the Seminar an arena for the main actors of ESPON, an opportunity to stimulate a lively dialogue between the policy makers such as the ESPON Monitoring Committee, the stakeholders participating in Targeted Analyses, the Project Group partners and the network of ESPON Contact Points.

This Internal ESPON Seminar was strongly related to the new findings from the ongoing ESPON Projects, namely how they can provide for inspiration and a debate on potential use of results from the ESPON Programme. In many workshops, the exchange was (1) about the opportunities that ESPON Applied Research and the ESPON Scientific Platform offer for regional analysis and policymaking, (2) the research approaches and techniques that can be used to make the European knowledge base operational for regional territorial analyses, and (3) ESPON Targeted Analyses as good examples of making the European knowledge of the ESPON base operational for regions.

The present report takes stock of the Malmö Seminar's outputs and puts forward concrete orientations towards increasing the effectiveness of ESPON in supporting policy development by providing analyses of territorial trends. The seminar report can be read as a "cookbook" bringing together interesting "recipes and tips" for researchers and practitioners involved in projects introducing the European perspective in regional territorial development. The report is meant to provide inspiration and you are kindly invited to be creative with the information provided and adapt your considerations to the circumstances of your own project and territorial context.

As a Seminar Report, it does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee but rather summarises the reflections from the seminar. In this way it also provides a basis for the discussion on the future contributions of the ESPON 2013 knowledge base to future policy development, at all levels of government, and in particular in bringing European wide information to the regional/local level.

I would like to thank Sverker Lindblad, Member of ESPON Monitoring Committee (Sweden), Christer Larsson, City of Malmö, Charlotte Lindström, Skåne Region, Mikael Stamming, Öresund for their excellent partnership.

Peter Mehlbye
Director of the ESPON Coordination Unit

Executive summary

Regions in Europe are no longer isolated entities but are part of a larger territorial context. The larger territorial context adds to a great extent to the understanding of new and underused potential for the development of regions and cities. A good awareness and openness for including a European dimension in strategy building and policy making is therefore of major importance in a modern regional policy approach. Understanding the position of ones region or city in the larger territorial context and searching for potentials and comparative advantages is a necessity in the accelerating globalisation and competition. New forms of unleashing common potentials through territorial cooperation arrangements are also part of this modern policy approach.

The ESPON Programme offers an innovative knowledge base and tools supporting European regions and cities not only to detect potentials and preconditions for territorial development deriving from their larger context but also in making them operational for regional territorial development strategies and policy action.

The ESPON 2013 Programme introduced Targeted Analyses as a tool to support stakeholders (often representing regions) to enhance their understanding of the larger territorial context, make comparisons to other territories and hereby provide a European perspective to considerations on the development of their territories. The first series of Targeted Analyses started in spring 2009 and the first project results are becoming available in spring 2010.

The ESPON Coordination Unit organised in close co-operation with the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union an Internal ESPON Seminar on 2 and 3 December 2009 in Malmö in order to take stock of the first experiences with the Targeted Analyses. The seminar offered a platform to policymakers, stakeholders and project groups that are closely involved in the ESPON 2013 Programme to discuss how regional territorial analyses and policymaking can be given added value by using European wide territorial information the ESPON knowledge base offers.

The seminar concludes that regions in Europe can benefit from integrating the European perspective in their territorial development strategies and policy actions. The knowledge base and tools that the ESPON 2013 Programme offers can support regions in this process.

The seminar participants agree that the ESPON 2013 Programme offers an innovative knowledge base and practical tools for regions and cities throughout Europe to analyse the territorial development potential that they derive from their wider European territorial context:

- The Applied Research project deliveries offer a treasure of territorial knowledge regions can make use of for further territorial analysis and policy development. This knowledge helps regions to understand the territorial mechanisms they are subject to. An extensive description of spatial structures and territorial development trends and scenarios at different geographical levels is available as well as new research methods for integrated territorial analysis and information on territorial co-operation and territorial impact assessment.

- The scientific platform, that includes comparable regional data and territorial indicators at NUTS2 and NUTS3 level as well as an overview of European typologies of regions, forms an important tool for regional territorial analysis and policy development. It offers a scientific framework allowing regions to compare and position themselves in the wider European territorial context.

The Targeted Analyses, conducted under Priority 2 of the ESPON 2013 Programme, are a new type of projects providing stakeholders the opportunity to receive and use a tailor made analysis based on existing ESPON results in adding a European dimension to their considerations and strategies for their development and growth. The six first Targeted Analysis projects form important test cases in order to see how the ESPON knowledge base can be made operational for regional territorial policymaking practice. The seminar took stock of the first and early project experiences and concluded:

- ESPON knowledge presents important opportunities for detecting territorial development potential for regions and cities. The Targeted Analysis projects have already initiated new forms of territorial co-operation and have introduced the European dimension into the policymaking debate, in some regions resulting in an approach to territorial development balancing economic, social and territorial concerns.
- It remains however a challenge to make European wide knowledge operational for practical use at regional and local level. The establishment of tangible results requires a clear commitment of the project stakeholders involved. Targeted Analysis projects should clearly focus at the practical use of the project results and undertake communication efforts addressing regional and local actors. The ESPON 2013 Programme should consider to reinforce the practical use of the European wide knowledge base of comparable information by demanding more detailed results from Applied Research (enhancing analyses below NUTS3) and by developing scientific tools useful for translating Europe-wide information to the regional/local level.

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Introduction

The ESPON 2013 Programme introduced Targeted Analyses as a tool to support stakeholders to enhance their understanding of the larger territorial context, make comparisons to other territories and hereby provide a European perspective to considerations on the development of their territories. It offers regional stakeholders the possibility to analyse their specific regional situation in a tailor-made way and discuss the analytical results with regional policymakers involved. The first Targeted Analysis projects started in spring 2009 and the first project results are becoming available.

This Seminar Report provides inspiration for practitioners and researchers at regional level and stakeholders and researchers within the ESPON network on how ESPON knowledge can be used in order to better integrate the European perspective into regional territorial analysis and policymaking.

The report is mainly based on the following sources:

- The Internal ESPON Seminar on 2 and 3 December 2009 in Malmö

The ESPON Coordination Unit organised in close co-operation with the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union an Internal ESPON Seminar on 2 and 3 December 2009 in Malmö in order to take stock of the first experiences with the Targeted Analyses. The seminar offered a platform to policymakers, stakeholders and project groups that are closely involved in the ESPON 2013 Programme to discuss how regional territorial analysis and policymaking can be given added value by using European wide territorial information the ESPON knowledge base offers. The presentations and discussions at the seminar provided valuable information that is incorporated in this report.

- A Quick Screen of Targeted Analyses

The ESPON Coordination Unit carried out as part of the preparation of the ESPON Seminar in Malmö a Quick Screen of the Targeted Analyses. It analysed available Expressions of Interest by stakeholders, Project Specifications, Project Proposals and Inception and Interim Reports in order to have a more structured view on how European wide information out of the ESPON Knowledge Base is being used in regional territorial analysis and policymaking.

Part A of the report describes a framework for Targeted Analyses. To support the development of strategies and policy actions the context of a region needs to be clarified. This part presents different approaches how to understand the policy demand and to conceptualise the European context using ESPON knowledge. Part B formulates lessons for the future. In order to support regions in the best possible way in their development this last part is dealing with the challenges which the Programme has to overcome in the future with regard to the development of Targeted Analyses. The annex provides an overview of current practices. It presents ongoing Targeted Analyses and highlights added value which the European perspective can bring to the regional level.

Part A – A framework for regional territorial analysis

Regional policymakers in Europe demonstrate a clear demand to integrate the European perspective in their regional territorial development strategies and policy actions. They wish to have a better understanding of the interaction between European developments and the territorial trends they observe in their region in order to make better use of territorial potentials and to better adapt to certain challenges. Regional policymakers often appeal to researchers and practitioners in the field of territorial development and cohesion in order to support them in meeting this policy challenge.

The framework for regional territorial analysis that is presented in this part of the report provides some considerations researchers and practitioners can take into account when developing and implementing a project. The considerations can be of use both inside and outside the framework of the ESPON 2013 Programme.

1. Understanding regional policy demand

Policymakers at regional level are more and more aware that their region is becoming part of a wider European territory. In their daily practice, they are confronted with increased socio-economic interaction across borders caused by the ongoing European integration process. They realise that policy events like the establishment of the Single European Market, the growing number of EU Member States or the introduction of the Euro, have a severe impact on the territorial development in their region. Policymakers seek for answers to the new challenges these impacts pose on their region. Although these macro developments are very general, the examples of regional territorial challenges observed in Expressions of Interest are often very tangible:

Table: Examples of regional territorial challenges with a European dimension

- The long term competitiveness of the region is being threatened as highly educated citizens leave the region in order to find a job in another European region.
 - The housing market and some services of general interest like language schools are under pressure as new citizens enter the region.
 - The infrastructure network is not capable of adapting to increases of cross-border commuting.
 - Enterprises are relocating their production to other regions in Europe.
-

Regional policymakers sometimes also wish to better address European strategies like Europe 2020 or the Territorial Agenda. They need better understanding on how they can implement and monitor these strategies at regional level.

The Quick Screen of Targeted Analyses shows that although the general objective of integrating the European perspective in regional territorial policies often seems rather similar, the more detailed policy demand may differ. The first step in formulating a project to enhance the European perspective in regional territorial development policies is therefore to develop a good understanding and operational elaboration of the regional policy demand.

A project can benefit from a close analysis of the policy demand and take this into account in the preparation and implementation of the project. The following considerations can be picked up in that respect:

- The project preferably focuses at bringing results that are of use within the competences and room of manoeuvre the region has at its disposal.

The competences and room of manoeuvre of regional authorities know limits. Regional territorial analysis that takes the European perspective as a starting point often runs the risk to remain too abstract and might therefore not deliver results the regional policymaker can make use of within its own competences. In order to secure the future use of project results it is a prerequisite to have a clear overview of the policy processes and instruments they are expected to serve. Analysis at European level often needs to be downsized to the regional purposes. Furthermore, effective project results rather demonstrate what the region can do in order to contribute to the development of the European territory than formulate what Europe should do for the development of the region. This approach focussing at the own strengths regions possess, also seems better attached to the pro-active role regions are supposed to play in territorial development and cohesion.

- The project preferably links up to policy ambitions at regional level.

The results of a territorial analysis project from a European perspective should support and deliver added value to the region in meeting its own territorial development objectives. The researcher and practitioner involved in the project should be aware that European oriented projects run the risk of being overambitious and deviating too much from the regional expectations. It seems indispensable to have a good knowledge of the territorial policies of the region at stake as from the early start of the project. This allows for a project design that aims at bringing added value from a European dimension to the existing territorial strategy.

- The project is tying in with the level in which the European perspective is already integrated.

The first experiences with Targeted Analysis projects demonstrate that the European perspective has not been equally taken up into territorial policy in the different regions throughout Europe. The ambition set for the project is to acknowledge that the integration of the European perspective into regional policies is a learning process. Different phases might be distinguished, having an impact on the elaboration and implementation of the project. In some regions the European perspective is still a new feature that might enrich regional territorial policy development. In this case the learning process can be emphasised. The project should have a clear focus on delivering knowledge that creates a better understanding amongst regional stakeholders and politicians. Other regions already have reflected the European perspective in territorial policymaking. In this case the project can more focus on the definition of policy challenges and action. If regions have already developed a common understanding of the policy challenges a new level of ambition can be included focussing on governance in order to better co-ordinate policies with neighbour regions and other administrative levels.

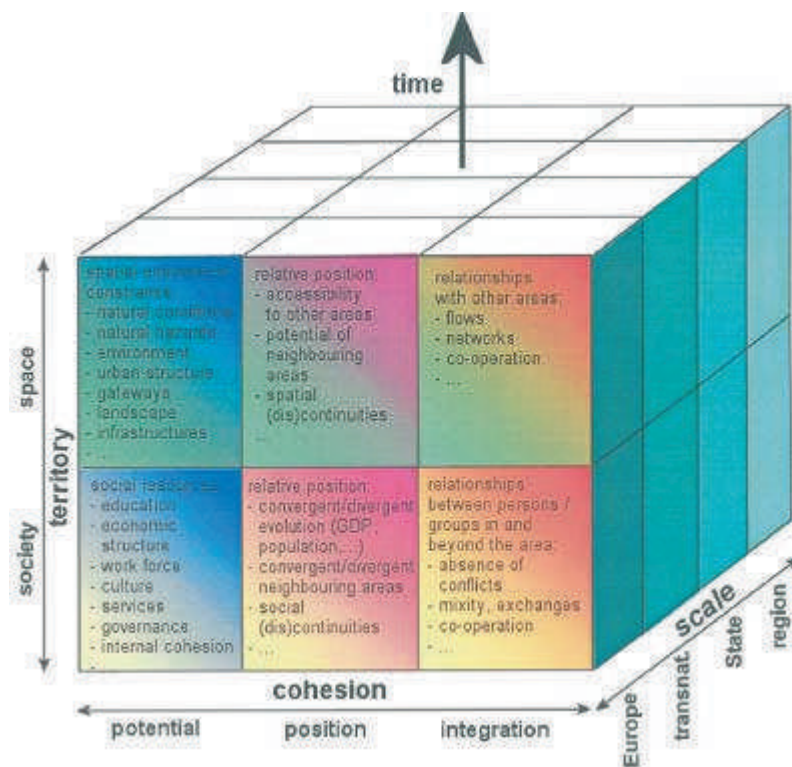
2. Translation of the policy demand into an appropriate analytical approach

This chapter presents a more analytical breakdown of how the regional territorial analysis project can conceptualise the European context. It attempts to make an abstraction and synthesis of the way the first series of Targeted Analyses have addressed the European territorial context. The breakdown departs from the notion that regions maintain different types of relationships with their wider territorial context. The project can benefit from reflecting this as it may help to set the project focus and to define an appropriate analytical approach.

The larger territorial context of a region can be approached in different ways. Looking at the existing Targeted Analyses the following approaches to reveal territorial potential can be distinguished:

- Exposing characteristics of a region
- Indicating performance of a region
- Detecting network relations of a region
- Detecting the larger functional area a region belongs to
- Detecting influences that impose themselves on a region
- Detecting influences a region imposes on other territories

The so-called Hypercube that was developed in the ESPON 2006 Programme is worth mentioning in this respect. This analytical tool summarizes a range of components for territorial policy, including different levels of analysis, different dimensions of policies and different types of regional situations, as the regions' own potential, the relative position to other regions and the level of integration with other regions.



Figure

The Hypercube

Source: ESPON Project 3.1, Spatial Scenarios, 2004, 55

The way a project approaches the European territorial perspective determines to an important extent the research output. The policy questions and the output policymakers expect hence require careful attention in order to set the analytical frame of the project.

The following paragraphs describe different ways to approach the larger territory and intend to provide corresponding examples of policy and research questions, research methods as well as research outputs. In practice projects often combine different approaches as policy demand is often complex. The information should be read as a “cookbook” bringing together interesting “recipes and tips”.

2.1 Exposing characteristics of a region



This approach starts from the assumption that every region in Europe is unique. They all possess of assets that define their regional character or identity. In particular unique selling points often turn out to be important levers to create regional prosperity including economic growth and jobs. These assets also contribute to the economic strength of the European territory as a whole.

In order to identify these specific assets of a region or city, the answers to the following questions can be used as starting point for new actions to take:

- What type of region am I?
- What are my intrinsic characteristics and specific development trends?
- What makes me special compared to others?
- What are my development assets / territorial potential?

A suitable instrument to define territorial characteristics can be a comparative analysis. Another option would be a comparative SWOT analysis which is particularly helpful in identifying territorial potentials and areas for development. The outputs resulting from this research method are often suitable to be integrated into future planning strategies.

This approach allows for sharpening to regional profile and to become better in what you are already good at by finding levers for spatial development and detecting regional assets that might require specific preservation measures. By building up and strengthening the regional identity it is possible to compete on a more advanced level with other regions.

Added value can be gained also with regard to territorial co-operation and governance. By defining and identifying regions that share the same challenges as the research area it is possible to learn from each other by exchanging experiences. A network can be set up by developing common activities as for example studies on specific relevant themes. Even on hindering issues this approach can be useful as for example when networking activities are utilized in order to defend specific burden.

Not just by searching for regions with the same assets also by defining complementary regions added value can be gained. This way it is possible to improve interaction with other regions and to avoid unnecessary competition by collaboration and the creation of networks.

The TEDI project, for instance, analysed how the geographic specificities of European regions outside the main metropolitan and urban areas can be used to enhance economic development focussing on particular niches related to the specific characteristics of these regions.

2.2 Indicating performance of a region



The idea behind this approach is that every region and city wants to be the best. They are in permanent competition to persuade investors and to create the best living conditions for their citizens. This competition boosts positive action and investment that finally benefits not only the individual region or city but the quality of life and economic performance of Europe as a whole.

The implementation of this type of relation can give answers among other things to the following questions:

- How am I performing?
- What are my comparative advantages?
- What am I good at, what are points for improvement?
- What type of investors could be interested in my region?
- On what shall I focus my development perspectives?

As method a SWOT analysis can be appropriate as well as benchmarking. Benchmarking can provide an impression of the performance of the region in question. This method allows developing plans on how to make improvements or adapt specific best practices. It may be a singular event but it can also be treated as a continuous process in order to implement a fine tuning on strategies.

Similar to the perspective of characterising regions it is also possible to use performance in order to define comparative advantages that can function as lever for territorial development. The demonstration of comparative advantages in an investment strategy is one possible output by using this concept. Another one is to save actions and funds by detecting weak points of the region in question in time and to implement suitable policy actions at an early stage. This way the region in question will be able to set up well developed strategies rather than opting for a short term solution.

With regard to territorial co-operation and governance this approach can foster the understanding of regional strength. Knowledge can be gained about corresponding target groups as for example private investors or the labour force. With this understanding it is possible to open a policy debate on territorial strengths and

weaknesses in order to be able to define strategies that are directly adjusted to the research region.

The EUROISLANDS project for example compares the economic, social and environmental state of several European island regions. The comparison should help to detect successful elements in development strategies for this particular type of regions.

2.3 Detecting network relations of a region



This approach starts from the idea that all European regions and cities are part of a wider territorial network and structure. Related regions can benefit from each other's intrinsic qualities. Shared territorial structures as rivers, economic zones or infrastructures can encompass potential for new territorial developments. It might be that the assets of these structures need to be reinforced. This requires a common vision and common policy actions.

Research questions under this type of relation are:

- Where is my region situated?
- What territories, regions and cities am I related to?
- How am I related to other regions?

Considering these questions spatial positioning as well as relation and flow analysis can be appropriate methods for research. The simulation of flows offers for example a better comprehension of the surrounding and its correlation as well as cause and effect chains by presenting development options over time.

This approach enables to define spatial structures. Road, rail and water infrastructures as well as ecological networks that are to be reinforced are just some possible themes of research. Also fields that require policy actions can be identified on this basis. Possible synergies and complementarities defined under this approach can be the starting point for future co-operation.

Under the perspective of territorial co-operation and governance added value can be gained by defining partners with who the region has a common interest for a territorial investment. It might be that obstacles in respect to differences in governance or not adequately developed governance have to be overcome. Questions have to be answered on how to make the best use of existing institutional structures and governance. If these questions can be answered satisfactory it will be possible to position the participating regions on a European or even world scale.

The METROBORDER project that analyses cross-border metropolitan polycentric regions, for example, measures cross-border interaction on the basis of commuter flows and the existence of transport lines.

2.4 Detecting the larger functional area a region belongs to



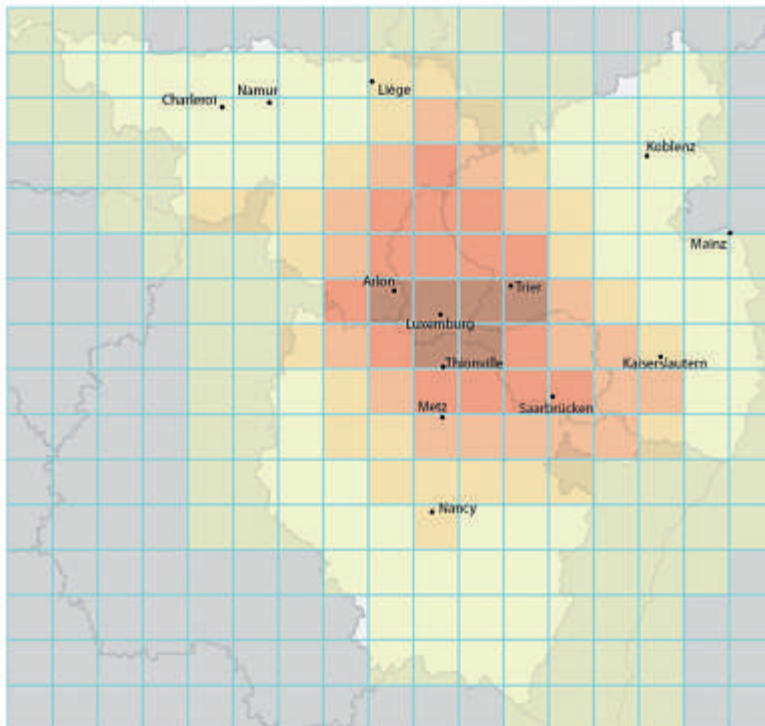
The starting point for this approach is that European regions and cities are part of a wider more or less functionally coherent territory like macro or cross-border regions. Regions in these wider territories share territorial challenges and can often create synergies and complementarities via common policy action.

Possible research questions are:

- To what territory do I belong to?
- With whom in my direct environment I share policy challenges?
- What is the appropriate level to approach my policy objectives?

An appropriate approach in this perspective is the definition and delineation of territories. This way it is possible to clarify the belonging of the region in question and to identify regions that have to deal with the same challenges.

This approach may help to define the territorial context and direct sphere of influence of a region. The region becomes able to face the growing competition of other European regions and it is possible to reinforce the internal territorial cohesion along the regional or national borders.



Figure

The Metroborder project maps the functional area of the Greater Region using an expert Delphi

Source: Metroborder Interim Report, 2010

With regard to territorial co-operation and governance this approach offers the possibility to define a macro- or cross border-region for collaboration. Strategy building is a crucial process in these territories due to the variety of actors involved. This approach can offer a first step to find a common understanding between the actors in order to agree upon a joint implementation to respond to particular challenges.

2.5 Detecting influences that impose themselves on a region



This approach takes a basic idea that territorial development potential and preconditions of regions and cities are often influenced by forces deriving from outside or playing at a higher level of geographical scale. Understanding the external context in which the region is to operate helps in defining the policy actions that can lead to successful outputs. It also helps to understand for what issues the region depends on others and where collaboration seems required.

Research questions with regard to this type of relation could cover various factors which are influencing the development. Also factors which are hindering the development of a region can be explored.

- How to deal with key challenges like globalisation, economic recession, demographic change, climate change and the change of the energy paradigm?
- What influence does the external environment have?
- Which factors and characteristics are common?

The translation of global and EU-wide scenarios and trends into the regional or local context is one possible approach for these thematic.

Especially effects that have influence on a level higher than the regional can bear a high burden for effective political policies. By identifying regions that have comparable initial situation it is possible to create a common language and a shared approach of regions that face the same challenges. This way options can be pointed out how policy shifts developments in a more favourable way. Actions can be developed that enable the targeted regions to achieve a continuous long-term improvement as for example in respect to quality of life.

In order to be able to create a common language and a shared approach it is necessary to develop further territorial co-operation and governance. Consequently does this approach offer a step towards a better understanding of multilevel relations in policymaking. Participating regions will be able to gain added value while cooperating. The SURE project gives a good example of a project fitting to the approach of this type of relation. The focus lies on convergence regions and despite the fact that these regions have been awarded with extensive funds, not all have taken advantage to the

same extent. By identifying relevant factors and the dissemination of results the project is aiming to create a common language and to focus attention on the consistency of the results.

2.6 Detecting influences a region imposes on other territories



This approach departs from the assumption that regions have a sphere of influence. They contribute in both a positive and a negative sense to their surroundings. Understanding the sphere of influence helps regions in defining their importance to a wider territory. Not just the neighbouring regions but also a higher level of geographical scale can be subject of interest in this respect.

Different research questions are of political interest considering the given context.

- What can the city, metropolitan area or region contribute to their neighbours in terms of economic growth and job creation and congestion control (commuters)?
- What is the share the research area takes over on issues like pollution or garbage?
- What kind of spill-over effects exist as example with regard to GDP or out-migration of people and spatial activities?
- How to take the best advantage of the potentials of the region taking into account their institutional and territorial specificities?

Useful research methods for this field of research are for example impact or flow analysis. These methods can be helpful in order to create a definition of the areas that compete with the region in question. Also fields on which competition takes place can be further defined. Impact assessment is another methodological approach suitable for this type of relation. To meet this demand there is a need for comparable information and data, which will help to identify priorities, to target actions and to assess progress.

Targeted Analysis projects dealing with this type of relation are able to act as a catalyst to raise both awareness and understanding of European regions. They help European partners to understand the potential for their own region as well as for their surroundings. Added value can be found by developing further understanding of territorial trends and opportunities at a finer grained level of detail than covered previously. Also understanding can be created why regions address the case study regions to discuss certain issues.

The approach of the influencing region offers the identification of regions with whom interrelation exist. This can be useful with regard to further development of territorial co-operation and governance. Best practice examples in this context help to identify the best use of existing institutional structures and governance. The results of this research can be used as basis to define custom-fit strategic options.

The METROBORDER project can be an example for an approach of this type of relation. The project aims to bring regional and local actors in the position to select, develop and implement a strategy towards cross-border polycentric metropolitan regions by internally fostering the governance and externally positioning the region in the mind of decision makers. A main characteristic of the territory that is addressed is a high level of economic interaction within the area such as commuting and collaboration of economic actors.

3. Using the ESPON Knowledge Base to support regional policy making

When the project has made the policy question operational and has defined the analytical approach it may check the information availability necessary to carry out the analysis. The ESPON 2013 Programme offers important information for researchers and practitioners that wish to integrate the European perspective in regional territorial analysis and policy development. The ESPON Knowledge Base includes territorially relevant information at different levels of geographical scale (from the global to the local). The information covers economic, environmental and social matters and therefore allows for integrated analysis. The close involvement of policymakers from the European Commission and Member States guarantees the policy relevance of the thematic areas that ESPON covers.

The ESPON Knowledge Base offers a wide set of information regions and cities can use to better understand themselves in the larger territorial context:

- Comparable regional data and indicators at NUTS2 and NUTS3 covering EU27 + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland
- European typologies and classifications of regions and cities
- Description of the territorial structure of Europe at global/European, (trans-)national and regional/local level:
 - Partial structures making up this structure (e.g. economic structure, urban structure, agriculture, nature)
 - Functional coherent sub-entities
 - Interdependencies between different levels of geographical scale
- Description of the development of the European territory at global/European, (trans)national and regional/local level:
 - Development trends for specific activities and within partial territorial structures and sub-entities
 - Changes in the allocation and distribution of spatially relevant activities and functions and in sector oriented parameters (e.g. GDP, employment)
 - Driving forces behind territorial challenges
 - Interdependencies between different levels of geographical scale
 - Future developments and scenarios

- Information on territorial co-operation and governance including co-operation models, best practices and Territorial Impact Assessment of EU policies
- Innovative research methods and approaches for applied territorial research

The following paragraphs explain the structure set out for European wide information gathering at programme level in the ESPON 2013 Programme and highlights some specific features that can be of interest for further use at the regional level.

3.1 Scientific platform

The Scientific Platform of the ESPON 2013 Programme includes data, indicators, technical reports and analytical tools that can be used for territorial analysis and policy development. It represents a core element in the ESPON Knowledge Base.

The ESPON Database offers comparable regional data covering the entire European Union plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It also includes data sets covering the entire world and case-based in depth data sets for specific areas within Europe, mainly based on the outputs from the Targeted Analysis projects. It integrates data from different spatial scales (from global to local levels) as many policy objectives, especially in the field of territorial cohesion or in management of functional urban regions, can only be observed at local level but should at the same time be taken into account at the global level. The ESPON Database combines heterogeneous sources amongst which EUROSTAT plays an important role. Statistical quality control and data validation will rectify the fact that they are produced by different organisations using different spatial delimitations or statistical definitions. The ESPON Database includes already medium time data series in order to be able to analyse and monitor territorial trends and dynamics at different geographical scales. In this process the estimation of missing values in a retrospective way (reconstitution of past trends) is an important step. ESPON data is permanently updated and extended. Statistical quality control and data validation respecting European standards for spatial referencing and (meta)data storage ensures the compliance with the INSPIRE principles.

In connection with the ESPON Database several technical reports were developed. One is a mapping guide focusing on how to symbolize ESPON data with good rules of graphic semiology and the use of maps as tool for communication. Maps offer not just a great way of displaying statistical data they also allow to summarize complex and important information into a clear and compact presentation. The technical report allows understanding how to produce easily an effective and operational map.

The ESPON HyperAtlas is a tool ESPON offers to analyse and visualise spatial phenomena, taking into account its relative situation and location (multi-scalar territorial analysis). By aggregating and disaggregating territorial units it is possible to see how local values add up to form territorial contexts and regional positions. In practical terms, it gives the opportunity to derive several indicators on the basis of the ratio of two initial geographical indexes (target index) according to different spatial contexts or territorial contexts. This means that it maps the deviations of a certain region to the following three

different levels: global (e.g. EU 27 + Norway and Switzerland, EU27, EU 25, EU15, CEEC) or a specific value, medium (NUTS 0, 1 and 2) and local (contiguity and units less than 2, 4, 6 or 8 hours by car).

3.2 Applied Research

The ESPON 2013 Programme offers regions for analytical and policymaking purposes interesting project results from Applied Research projects. These projects are thematically defined by policymakers and create European wide, comparable information and evidence on territorial potentials and challenges focusing on opportunities for success for the development of regions and cities. Cross-thematic Applied Research is a major activity integrating existing thematic analysis as well as studying impacts of EU policies. The following table provides an overview of project themes the ESPON Monitoring Committee has decided upon at the date of publication of this report. The themes followed by an acronym indicate running projects.

Table: Themes for Applied Research projects decided upon by the ESPON Monitoring Committee

1. Cities and Urban Agglomerations/Functionality and Development Opportunities for European Competitiveness and Cohesion (FOCI)
 2. European Development Opportunities in Different Types of Rural Areas (EDORA)
 3. Demography and Migratory Flows Affecting European Regions and Cities (DEMIFER)
 4. Effects of Rising Energy Prices on Regional Competitiveness (RERISK)
 5. Territorial Impact Assessment of Policies (TIP TAP)
 6. Climate Change and Territorial Effects on Regions and Local Economies (ESPON CLIMATE)
 7. Attractiveness of European Regions and Cities for Residents and Visitors (ATTREG)
 8. European Patterns of Land Use
 9. Territorial Cooperation in Transnational Areas and Across Internal/External Borders (TERCO)
 10. Transport Accessibility at Regional/Local Scale and Patterns in Europe (TRACC)
 11. Secondary Growth Poles in Territorial Development (SGPTDE)
 12. European Perspective on Specific Types of Territories (GEOSPEC)
 13. Territorial Dimension of Innovation and Knowledge Economy (KIT)
 14. Continental Territorial Structures and Flows (Globalisation) (TIGER)
 15. Services of General Interest
 16. European Seas in Territorial Development
 17. Territorial and Regional Sensitivity of EU Directives (ARTS)
-

The projects that have been implemented within the framework of the ESPON 2006 Programme also offer an important amount of information that can be of use for regions. The project results offer thematic information (e.g. polycentricism, urban-rural relations, demography, transport, telecom, information society, natural hazards and cultural and natural heritage) and information on the territorial impact of various European policies. The cross-thematic projects on Scenarios and Europe in the World are also often used as reference for Targeted Analyses at regional level.

3.3 Scenario-building

ESPON Applied Research knows a strong future oriented dimension that also may support regions in understanding their future territorial challenges. The Applied Research projects frequently apply scenario development as methodology to understand

the future development of the European territory. Scenarios serve both as analytical and as communication tool. They provoke discussion on the territorial consequences of different policy directions. Scenarios are no forecasts providing unassailable facts but are to be considered as a supporting tool for the political decision making process.

The capacity to transfer methodologies of spatial scenarios to the local-regional scale is a subject of major relevance. Nevertheless, it seems essential as one of the first steps to clarify the different needs of policy makers. Actors working on the European or national level try to deal with trends from a superior level, to guide and control them. This approach is defining their way of using scenarios. Authorities on the local-regional level, however, are directly constrained by external influences, trying to handle and survive current trends. It is important to keep these different starting points and needs in mind while developing tailor-made scenarios that serve as useful and adequate policy tools.

4. Project implementation

Projects aiming at the integration of the European dimension into the regional territorial development context can meet some specific challenges researchers and practitioners should take in mind during the implementation. Policymakers and stakeholders involved in regional territorial development often don't find it easy to understand European wide territorial information and may have difficulties in grasping the significance for regional territorial development. The researcher / practitioner therefore is encouraged to take measures to overcome the problem of producing research output that is considered "too vague", "too complex" or "not of my concerns". The ESPON seminar raised some good practices and ideas in this respect that may help you implementing your project:

- Create close contact with stakeholders / policymakers demanding support
Stakeholders / policymakers that demand support could take part in a Steering Committee that is regularly consulted if the project delivers new results. Involvement can further be reinforced via workshops, interviews and Delphi rounds.
- Keep focussed on the regional needs
The European territorial analyses should always be linked to the regional importance. The researcher and practitioner can be advised to check the text in the reports by regularly posing the question: why does my audience need to know this? And see if the text provides you with an answer to this question.
- Keep things simple
The researcher or practitioner in the project is advised to adapt the language used in texts, figures and maps to the end user. Regional policymakers may have difficulties in understanding European geographical and territorial development vocabulary and may have difficulties in reading a European map. Keep things simple is the motto!

5. Conclusion

Projects aiming at the integration of the European dimension into regional territorial development require a good preparation. The regional policy demand is to be made operational before defining the appropriate research approach. When the approach has

been set the ESPON Knowledge Base is at your disposal to find the information you might need to execute the project. The table here under provides an overview of the most relevant elements of the ESPON Knowledge Base for the different approaches discussed above.

Useful elements from the ESPON Knowledge Base in Regional Analysis and Policymaking Grey = applicable information X = very useful information	Characteristics	Performance	Networks	Functional area	Influences on a region	Influences caused by a region
Comparable regional data at NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 covering EU27 + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland	X	X				
Comparable regional territorial indicators at NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 covering EU27 + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland	X	X				
European typologies and classifications of regions and cities	X	X		X		
Description of the territorial structure of Europe at global/European, national, regional and local level , including:						
o partial territorial structures composing this structure			X	X		X
o functional coherent territorial sub-entities:			X	X		
o interdependencies between different levels of geographical scale			X	X		X
Description of the development of the European territorial structure at global/European, national, regional and local level, including:					X	
o driving forces behind territorial changes					X	
o development trends for specific activities and within partial territorial structures					X	
o changes in the territorial allocation and distribution of spatial activities and functions and sector oriented parameters (e.g. GDP, employment)		X			X	
o recent past developments		X			X	
o future developments and territorial scenarios					X	
o interdependencies between different levels of geographical scale				X	X	X
Information on territorial co-operation and governance, including:						
o Co-operation models			X	X	X	X
o Best practices						
o Territorial Impact Analysis of EU Policy					X	X
Innovative approaches and methods for applied integrated territorial research		X	X	X	X	

Part B – Lessons for project and programme development

The ESPON 2013 Programme supports regions in territorial analysis and policy development by providing evidence on territorial development in Europe. The first series of Targeted Analyses (see the annex) very much form a test-case for direct application of ESPON knowledge in the regional context. On the basis of some good experiences, the report intends to offer inspiration for preparing a project. The ESPON 2013 Programme wishes to make further progress in its task to support regions.

The challenges that the ESPON 2013 Programme might address within the forthcoming years are the focus of this part of the report. Of course some lessons are being drawn for future project and programme development.

6. The Challenges for ESPON

The seminar took stock of the Targeted Analyses and discussed with involved stakeholders and researchers the challenges they experience in implementing their projects. The discussions were focussed on the following topics: data, timing, communication and dissemination, all of which will be described below.

6.1 Data and the knowledge base

In general, the Targeted Analyses as part of the ESPON knowledge base provide the regional policy makers with comparable data and support them to understand the relations with the larger territorial context. They also raise awareness on EU perspectives and they are supported to integrate the European perspective at regional scale.

However, some aspects could be improved in order to enhance the impact of the Targeted Analyses. Data at the NUTS 3 level has its limits for regional policy making purposes and Targeted Analyses need to go beyond NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level in order to accurately map and analyse functional geographies. The fact that the ESPON Database is still under development is considered as an obstacle due to missing data on time series and NUTS 3 level. The existence of a knowledge base is also sometimes experienced as an obstacle to develop new knowledge because the knowledge already available is considered as being the truth. The ESPON knowledge base should be more open for criticism, discussion and adjustments when needed. Finally it would be good if the applied research projects are better adapted to regional use.

6.2 Timing

The long process before Targeted Analyses can start was the topic of an extensive debate. It now takes a long time before the stakeholders receive their results. ESPON will try to streamline the process in order to shorten the procedures. However, due to the involvement of the stakeholders in the specification of the projects it will always remain a comparatively long process.

Another aspect that is experienced as problematic for the running projects is the timing of the database project. It would have been better if the database project had started earlier so that the projects could have made more use of the data gathered and the methodologies developed by the former. The coming projects, however, will have the privilege to have access to a more mature ESPON database.

6.3 Communication

A substantial part of the discussions was related to communication. The fact that in the Targeted Analyses the policy links are considered essential is confirmed as a good model. However, the communication between researchers and policy makers could be strengthened. The projects should develop new relationships between research and policy and identify the fundamental questions. Difficulties are encountered here due to the fact that two “lines” have to be crossed: one from global to local and one from research to policy. Both groups of actors have to play a role to improve the communication, the researchers as well as the policy makers. On the one hand, the researchers, as academics, should (be able to) question the foci of stakeholders, because it is possible that researchers are able to see other possibilities than stakeholders. On the other hand stakeholders should strengthen their commitment to the project, make a link to practical policy action and pose clear and focussed policy questions without having too ambitious expectations.

Another point for improvement is that reports of Targeted Analyses could be better focussed on the use of research for stakeholders. They should deal more clearly with the question where the results are going to be used and also describe more clearly the territorial potentials and study the dynamics of success. The message and lessons learned from the regional level should also be taken into account by the territorial cohesion community at EU level.

To sum it up, the Targeted Analyses have to show that they are successful tools for policymakers by strengthening an increased dialogue between stakeholders and researchers. A symbiosis between stakeholders, researchers and CU should make this possible.

6.4 Dissemination

At the moment Priority 1 projects are not sufficiently aware that their results should also be used at regional level. They should increase their efforts to make the results better accessible and understandable for people working at national and regional level. Here

the ESPON Contact Points could play a role by making the results of Priority 1 projects more accessible for the regions.

Finally it is advised to take stock of the Targeted Analyses and what they have produced. ESPON should play a broker role in this and on the results of all ESPON projects in order to be the spider in the web of territorial development and cohesion policy in Europe at all levels.

7. Sound basis for further consolidation

The ESPON Knowledge Base is at the service of regional policymakers. How may they make use of it to position their regions and cities – based on their regional territorial potentials – in the European and even global context? What may the base offer them?

It offers a European perspective on their region and cities which is developed in a continuous dialogue between policymaking and the scientific community. This perspective provides them with all possible room for manoeuvre to act in favour of their regional policy community and to set policy priorities in various fields, such as housing and urban policies.

A holistic approach to various topics, such as sustainable development, economic competitiveness and social cohesion is taken. This guarantees that all relevant aspects, including cross-sectoral matters, are covered.

Cross-border regions might be of particular focus as they are concerned with various national, cultural and geographical settings. Here, the ESPON Knowledge Base delivers advice for policymaking by identifying territorial aspects of cross-border development.

Finally, the ESPON Knowledge Base materialises in seminars and workshops where central topics, such as (new) functional urban areas, are taken up and discussed with policy makers in order to integrate their need for tailor-made evidence into updating the base and further developing programme activities.

The ESPON 2013 Programme wishes to build further on the first experiences of using ESPON knowledge in the regional context. The following recommendations provide some points of attention the entire ESPON Network can consider within the next period of programme and project implementation in order to even better support regions in territorial development.

7.1 Improving regional territorial analysis and policy support

The six first Targeted Analysis projects form important test cases in order to see how the ESPON knowledge base can be made operational for regional territorial policymaking practice. The seminar took stock of the first and early project experiences and concluded:

- ESPON knowledge offers important opportunities for detecting territorial development potential for regions and cities. The Targeted Analysis projects have

already initiated new forms of territorial co-operation and have introduced the European dimension into the policymaking debate, in some regions resulting in a more sustainable approach to territorial development.

- It remains a challenge to make European wide knowledge operational for practical use at regional and local level. The establishment of tangible results requires a clear commitment of the project stakeholders involved. Targeted Analysis projects should clearly focus at the practical use of the project results, always referring back to the stakeholders' initial demand, and undertake communication efforts addressing regional and local actors. The ESPON 2013 Programme can consider to reinforce the practical use of the knowledge base by demanding even stronger clear and comprehensible results in Applied Research (allowing analysis below NUTS3) and by developing scientific tools to translate Europe-wide information to the regional/local level.

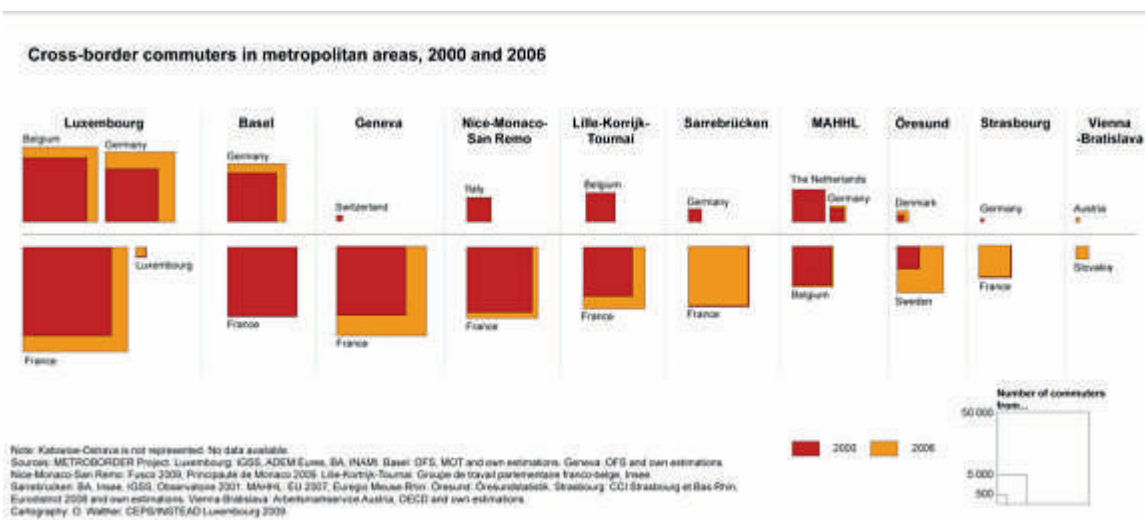


Figure
Communication of results of comparative analysis
 The METROBORDER Project uses innovative ways to communicate comparative results.

Source: Metroborder Interim Report, 2010

7.2 Improving the ESPON knowledge base

The seminar participants agree that the ESPON 2013 Programme offers an innovative knowledge base and practical tools for regions and cities throughout Europe to analyse the territorial development potential that they derive from their wider European territorial context.

The scientific platform, that includes comparable regional data and territorial indicators at NUTS2 and NUTS3 level, as well as an overview of European typologies of regions, forms an important tool for regional territorial analysis and policy development. The scientific platform forms an important tool for regional territorial analysis and policy development. It offers a scientific framework allowing regions to compare and position themselves in the wider European territorial context. The seminar nevertheless points out that the ESPON Database can be improved in order to better serve the purpose of

supporting Targeted Analyses at regional level. Therefore the seminar recommends ESPON to:

- Collect more data at NUTS3 and below in order to be more suitable for analysis at a more detailed level of geographical scale.
- Collect more time series of data in order to better analyse territorial trends.
- Deepen the understanding of linking up detailed local data to ESPON data (at NUTS2 and NUTS3) and stimulate the exchange of knowledge on this issue between the different Targeted Analysis projects.

The Applied Research project deliveries offer a treasure of territorial knowledge regions can make use of for further territorial analysis and policy development. This knowledge helps regions to understand the territorial mechanisms they are subject to. An extensive description of spatial structures and territorial development trends and scenarios at different geographical levels is available, as well as new research methods for integrated territorial analysis and information on territorial co-operation and territorial impact assessment. The seminar, however, learned that also Applied Research should become better adapted to regional use and therefore recommends ESPON to:

- Create better awareness amongst researchers in Applied Research projects (Priority 1) that their research also serves to support more Targeted Analyses at regional and local level.
- Reinforce the information flow from Applied Research to Targeted Analyses by improving the access to results, including intermediate results.
- Stimulate Applied Research projects to clearer present the regional and local significance of results.

7.3 Improving project development and implementation

Regional analysis shall serve the purpose of meeting the evidence demand from stakeholders at regional level in using this evidence. The ESPON Knowledge Base substantially contributes here in different ways, taking an integrated approach and combining regional and European as well as global perspectives.

The ESPON 2013 Database, the ESPON Typology Compilation (in development) and ESPON Targeted Analyses can be used by regional analysts and stakeholders to prepare, on an evidence-base, detecting territorial regional potentials, and communicate the positioning of their region and cities by choosing a European perspective.

The inception phase of the project should stronger focus on understanding and making operational the policy demand of the region (the stakeholder). Targeted Analysis projects require a deeper investigation of the competences, the policy ambitions and the level of Europeanization of existing territorial policies of the stakeholder. This is necessary in order to formulate policy options that can be of use for the stakeholders involved.

A close contact with the stakeholders / policymakers demanding support remains crucial during the entire implementation of the project in order to check if intermediate results meet the expectations.

The presentation and communication of results also requires specific attention taking into account that not everybody understands the specific European geographical and territorial cohesion vocabulary and is capable of reading (complex) European maps.

Annex – Overview of current practices in Targeted Analyses

How can your project translate European wide territorial information into the regional context and what possibilities do you have to open a dialogue with policymakers and a wider group of stakeholders involved in territorial development on the significance of the European context in their daily practice? This overview of the first six Targeted Analysis projects under the ESPON 2013 Programme that all started early 2009 demonstrates some current practices and experiences and illustrates how the projects address the questions mentioned above.

METROBORDER / Cross-border Polycentric Metropolitan Regions

Project lifetime: January 2009 – December 2010

Project budget: € 250.000

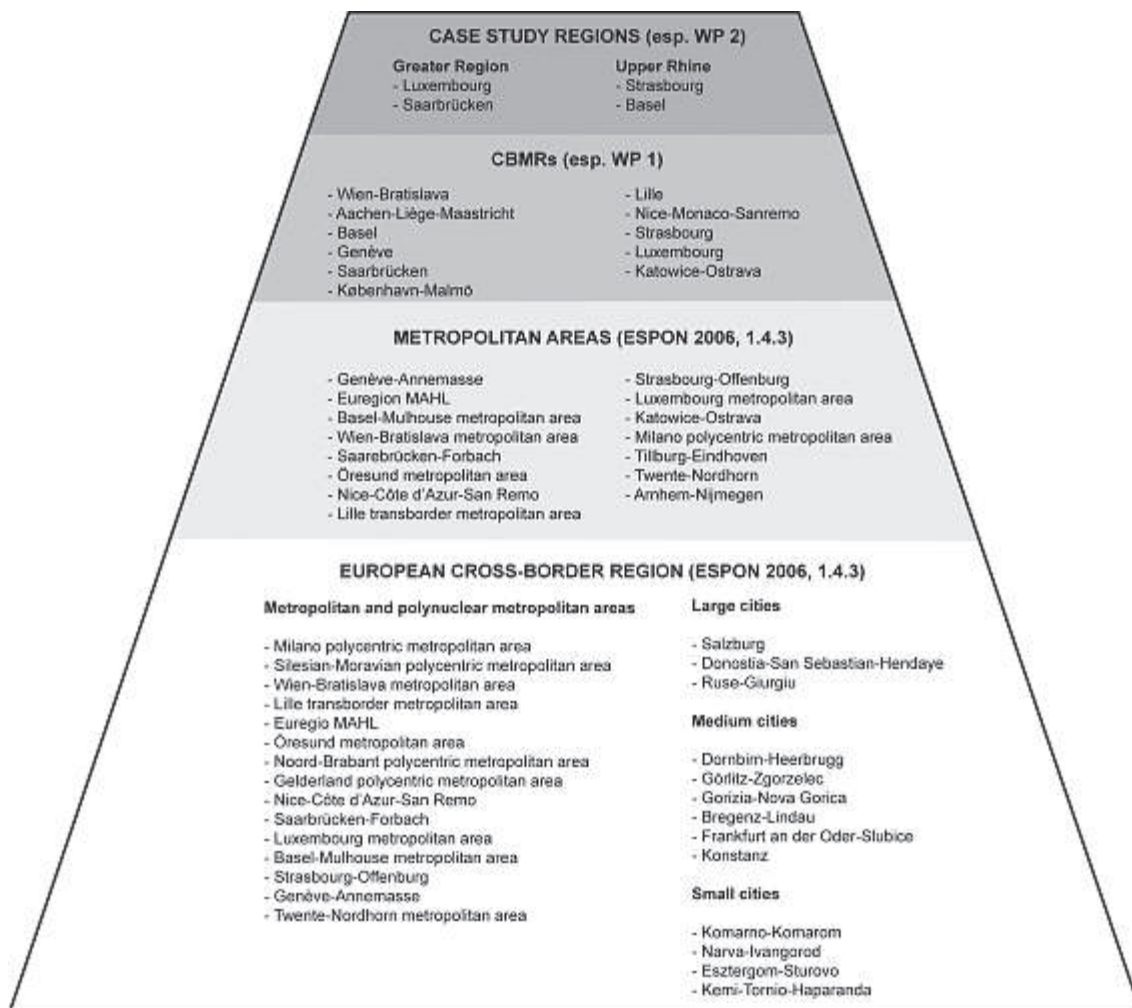
The objective of the METROBORDER Project is to identify on the basis of ESPON knowledge criteria, potentials and governance practices that can support development strategies for polycentric cross-border metropolitan regions throughout Europe.

The project makes a clear attempt in order to relate the European and the regional territorial development perspective. It combines a deductive and inductive research approach. The deductive approach allows looking from the European level to the regional level. This approach has proved to be useful to select similar regions for comparative analysis and to recognise relevant development trends. The inductive approach allows taking into account regional characteristics explaining why things might work differently than in other European regions.

The Transnational Project Group interacts intensively with the stakeholders behind the project idea. The project not only organises regular meetings between researchers and stakeholders, it also delivers direct input like presentations and discussion papers to policy events. In particular the latter stimulates the project to stay in touch with the perception of the involved policymakers.

The project furthermore carries out a Delphi in which experts representing regional actors are asked to reflect on the European territorial perspective of their region. The Delphi not only forms a good method to test the meaning of European information in the regional context, it also contributes to the awareness-raising on the European perspective amongst players at the regional level.

The project results are to contribute to the policy demand to better use metropolitan regions, in particular those situated in a cross-border setting, as drivers for territorial development. The specific potentials and barriers of metropolitan development across borders require both, a deeper understanding as well as awareness amongst policymakers and stakeholders.



Figure

Definition of proper regions / cities to compare yourself with in comparative analysis

The METROBORDER Project uses results from the ESPON 2006 Programme to define what cross-border regions in Europe show similarities to the case study regions and are hence of interest for comparison.

Source: Metroborder Interim Report, 2010

TEDI / Territorial Diversity in Europe

Project lifetime: February 2009 – April 2010

Project budget: € 209.800

The overall objective of TeDi is to provide a better understanding of development processes in territories outside the Pentagon that are defined as mountainous, insular, sparsely populated or areas with high population density in peripheral positions such as islands. The underlying research questions the project is requested to address are the following:

- How to ensure a sustainable development based on regional comparative advantages?

- How to improve the foundation of development by supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, a creative business environment, small scale economies (small is beautiful), the conservation and management of natural resources, etc.?
- How to develop actions that enable the targeted regions to achieve a continuous long-term improvement of quality of life, inter alia by tapping existing ecological and social innovation potential of the economy?

The ESPON TeDi project investigates development opportunities at different levels of economic and policy governance.

The European and national scales are included as the essential contexts for the conception of policies and elaboration of potential actions.

The regional and local scales are highlighting path dependencies in the local economic development structure in places. Also the capacity of regional and local actors are pointed out to develop new policy practices and to foster the adaptation of their territories to contemporary challenges.

In the attempt to establish an overall typology of TeDi regions, the Transnational Project Group developed a synthetic characterisation of the eight different case study areas. The studies are taking into account physical characteristics, settlement patterns, accessibility and connectivity. In terms of research methods, this complies to a definition of territorial characteristics; other methodologies that contributed in sub-steps to this definition of territorial characteristics were e.g. the application of criteria and delimitations of specific types of territories as defined in European policy documents to the case study regions.

The project is investigating the degree to which territorial diversity is considered in the objectives and methods of European, national and regional policy, as well as in the plans and strategies developed at the regional and local levels. Considering this the qualitative results of the project shall make it possible to create the framework for a dialogue between the regional stakeholders and the European and national policymakers.

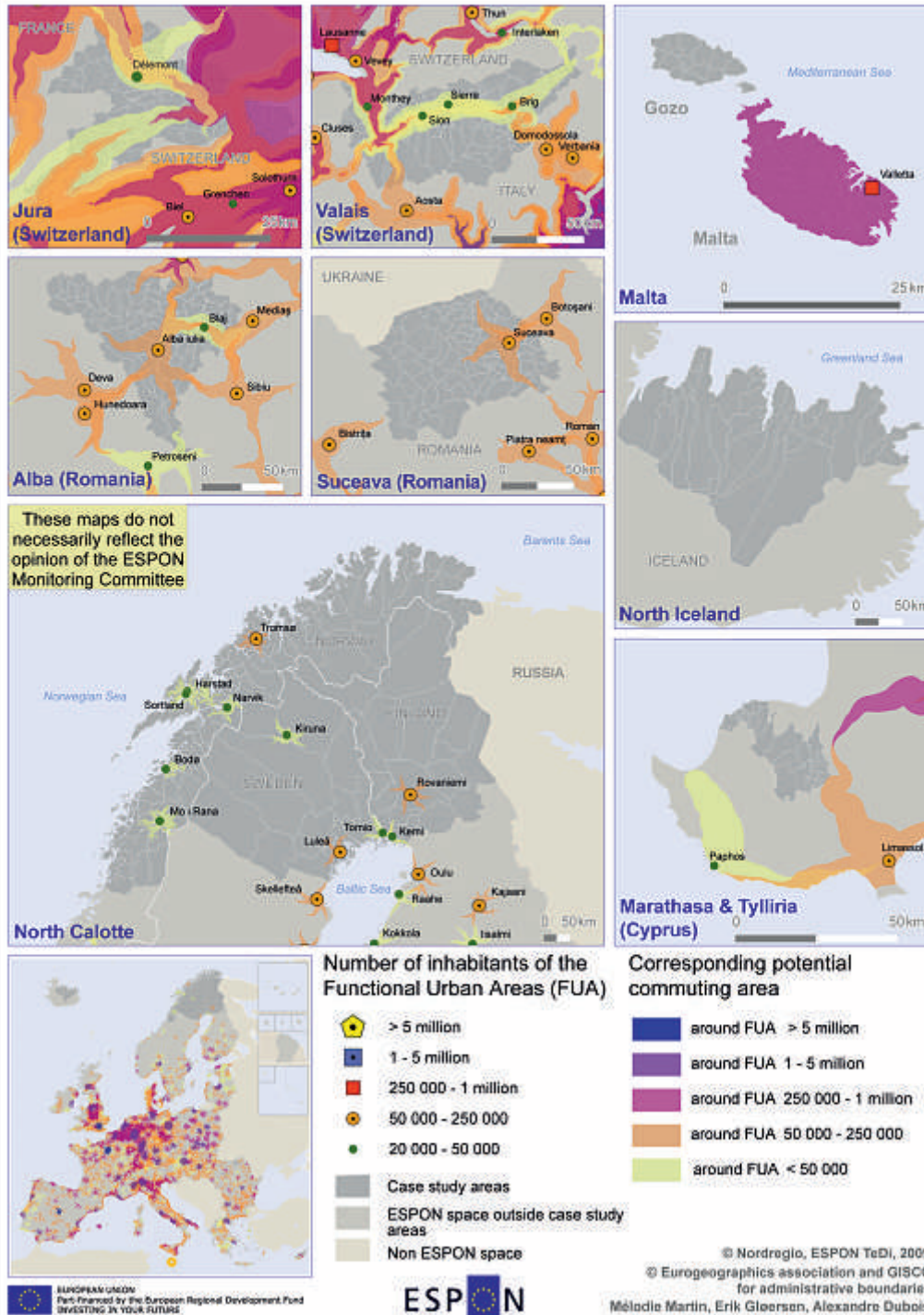
The developed classification demonstrates the uniqueness of the situation in each case study area. However, this great diversity makes comparisons between the case studies rather difficult.

As a basis for further discussions within the Transnational Project Group and with the stakeholders a comparison was implemented of European typologies with the observed structure at the level of ESPON TeDi case study areas.

Crossing scales in this way allowed to assess the degree to which European maps and representations may reflect patterns of territorial diversity that are being perceived as relevant for social and economic development by regional and local stakeholders.

In the following figure, "Access to urban nodes", the TEDI Project shows how a European indicator works out in a regional context by analyzing a several range of different areas along Europe.

Access to urban nodes



Figure

Access to urban nodes

The TEDI Project shows how a European indicator works out in a regional context

Source: TEDI Draft Final Report, 2010

CAEE / The Case for Agglomeration Economies in Europe

Project lifetime: March 2009 – June 2010

Project budget: € 200.000

The CAEE project proposes strategic policy options for policy-making bodies in the participating city regions of Barcelona, Dublin, Lyon and Manchester and for those in other cities being interested. The territorial potentials this project strives to detect are basically interrelated with agglomeration economies and the way regional governance settings have been arranged accordingly or might need to be managed in a more effective way in the future.

The CAEE project is serving the broader purposes of the ESPON Programme by providing added value to urban territories by offering new comparative insight and understanding on territorial potentials and challenges from a European perspective. Complementary it is intended to bring the European perspective to the local level. The dissemination of academic outputs of a cross-national collaborative nature is supposed to deepen the level of collaboration between partner institutions and individuals.

In order to evaluate the impact of agglomeration economy effects, the project's challenge is to assemble consistent, cross-national evidence on agglomeration economies and thus to put city regions into the European context and its territorial economic change as well as to identify the sources of agglomeration processes. The story behind goes: What is agglomeration economy about? In principle, that means to carefully review the varying channels through which agglomeration economies might be realised. A further methodological development then follows, estimating the effect of employment density on productivity across several European countries.

In addition to agglomeration economy effects, city-regional governance arrangements – whether they are historically grown and well-functioning or to be adapted to contemporary concerns – set the other end of the framework for action. Here, the project specifies a small number of key quantitative and qualitative indicators of city-regional-autonomy focusing on the assessment of the notion of 'urban-regional autonomy' through a critical interrogation of central-local government relations ('autonomy from') and urban coalition formation ('autonomy to'). By interconnecting the research approach on agglomeration effects and the one on city-regional governance is the project examining European-wide the impact of the territorial structure of governance on GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth. This is based on the hypothesis that growth supporting policies are more likely and should be more effective where administrative boundaries of local / regional entities match existing areas of economic activities.

Gathering this evidence on agglomeration economies and embedding it in city-regional / functional geographies serves the purpose to scope the influence on agglomeration development which political decision-makers in city regions might have.

SS-LR / Spatial Scenarios: New Tools for Local-Regional Territories

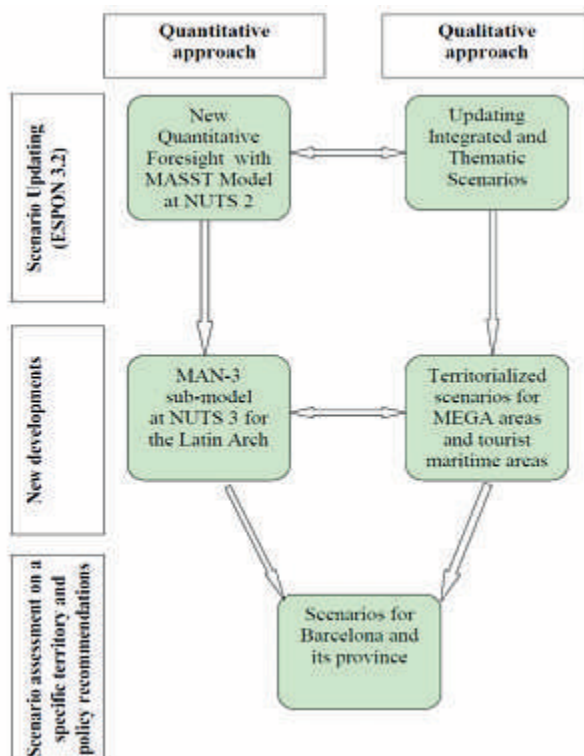
Project lifetime: March 2009 – June 2010

Project budget: € 178.000

The objective of the project SS-LR is to develop on the basis of the ESPON Applied Research Project 3.2 (Spatial Scenarios in relation to the ESDP and EU Cohesion Policy) a territorial forecasting instrument in relation to the ESDP and EU Cohesion Policy. The project is dealing with the thematic of global economic and financial scenarios, the role of the emerging economies, the energy and oil price scenario as well as the new emerging role of the rural areas. It is aiming to detect the main critical factors and trends in order to anticipate changes in the environment. The instrument resulting from this research is supposed to be used on NUTS 3 or an even lower territorial scale. Tools of spatial scenarios are developed for the local-regional level including both, integrated scenarios as well as thematic scenarios.

The outcome of this project should enable policy makers to draw up regional, social and economic territorial policies and development strategies for their territories. Competences can be developed to transfer methodologies of spatial scenarios to the local-regional scale.

The project intends to detect the local-regional significance of European territorial scenarios. It makes an effort to bring scenarios from a European and national level down to a local-regional scale. The developed tool produces scenarios on single territories that can be used by policymakers for communication purposes. This way the project is stimulating the discussion at regional level on possible territorial futures. The inclusion of the European perspective in a tool used on local-regional level gives strategic knowledge input and added value for comparative analyses. Below you see the general structure of the project indicating the different territorial levels.



Figure

The analytical frame showing how the SSLR Project transposes European approaches developed in ESPON to the regional level.

Source: SSLR Interim Report, 2009

SURE / Success for Convergence Regions' Economies

Project lifetime: March 2009 – June 2010

Project budget: € 200.000

This project focuses on specific challenges of the development of convergence regions within the EU. Despite the fact that these regions have been awarded with extensive funds, not all have taken advantage to the same extent and therefore are still unable to improve their socio-economic performance and competitiveness. Qualitative, descriptive and empirical analyses are used in order to identify potentially relevant as well as statistically significant factors for success. Extensive interviews are conducted with the politicians, practitioners and academics from the stakeholder regions. Focus within these interviews is put for example on different factors influencing the success of a region or the successful implementation of cohesion policies in disadvantaged European regions.

This approach has a wider EU relevance for all EU convergence regions. It alerts public stakeholders on the regional, national and EU level of similarities in the physiognomy of these regions and identifies relevant success factors that efficiently address the goals of Cohesion Policy. It needs to be highlighted that the results can directly take influence on cohesion policy, if the gained knowledge is mainstreamed by policy makers on the different territorial levels. To incorporate the regional, national and European level gives added value to the stakeholder regions by gaining comprehensive results. The SURE project implemented a literature review and retrieved hypotheses.

This project seeks to understand why some convergence regions are unable to improve economic performance and competitiveness. Against this background it offers a synthetic analysis of what a region can do to improve economic prosperity. Factors and characteristics will be identified that are common for all convergence regions in the EU. In addition an evaluation will be implemented on the cause-effect relation of the economic performance and competitiveness capacity of lagging European regions and of the impact of EU co-funded projects on the overall economic performance of the regions. Through case studies this project analyses in-depth the evolution of convergence regions and provides bench learning examples. The stakeholders gain external expertise which enables them to evaluate for example the appropriateness of their Operational Programmes.

EUROISLANDS / Development of Islands – European Islands and Cohesion Policy

Project lifetime: February 2009 – June 2010

Project budget: € 250.000

Most European islands, island complexes and archipelagos are considered as disadvantaged regions which face specific problems. The aim of the EUROISLAND project is to deliver an appropriate reference work and a set of policy recommendations and strategic guidance. In order to face weaknesses of these territories and to exploit strengths and opportunities an analysis of policy options is considered. Overall an in-depth knowledge of islands' situation will be gathered.

The EUROISLANDS project presents a detailed analysis of the conditions for promoting and exploiting territorial potentials from a European, transnational, national and regional/local perspective. In order to enable islands to play a more active role in the EU both economically and socially this project offers non-binding recommendations so that the European, national and local policies could be appropriately adapted to the specific conditions of regions in question.

The policy recommendations and strategic guidance resulting from the project are aiming to foster the sustainable development of the European islands, ensuring equal terms and opportunities with other non-handicapped regions. A general evaluation of the existing policy measures for the islands is supposed to lead to the discussion on their adequacy and the possibility for alternative measures. The results of this project can be used for an assessment of the intensity of constraints based on an islands typology of the case study regions.

It is envisaged to offer comparative insight and understanding on territorial potentials and challenges from a European perspective. In order to do so the analysis is aiming at identifying the common characteristics of islands in comparison with other European territories taking into account e.g. their territorial and administrative particularities.

<http://www.espon.eu/>