



REPORT

# **Report on the Assessment of Territorial Cohesion and the Territorial Agenda 2020 of the European Union**

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## List of Abbreviations

CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
COCOF	Coordination Committee of the Funds
COESIF	Coordination Committee for European Structural and Investment Funds
CoR	Committee of the Regions
COTER	CoR Commission on Territorial Cohesion Policies
DG REGIO	European Commission Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policies
EGESIF	Expert Group on European Structural And Investment Funds
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EGTCUM	Expert Group on Territorial Cohesion & Urban Matters
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ET2050	ESPON project - European Territory 2050
ETMS	ESPON project - European Territorial Monitoring System
GAC	General Affairs Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INTERCO	ESPON project - Indicators of Territorial Cohesion,
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
KITCASP	ESPON project - Key Indicators for Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning
MC	Monitoring Committee
NTCCP	Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points
TA 2020	Territorial Agenda 2020
TAEU	Territorial Agenda of the European Union
TC	Territorial Cohesion
TCUM	Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters sub-committee of the COCOF
TIA	Territorial Impact Assessments
TRACC	ESPON project - Transport Accessibility at Regional/Local Scale and Patterns in Europe
SAWP	Structural Action Working Party
UDN	Urban Development Network
UDG	Urban Development Group



## Summary

This report has been commissioned by Luxembourg on behalf of the EU Trio Presidency. It supports Action 1 of the Trio Presidency Programme about the assessment of the implementation of the Union's territorial cohesion objective and the necessity to revise the Territorial Agenda (TA) 2020.

The report feeds into the discussion proceeding on territorial cohesion policy between Member States and the European institutions. The aim is to trigger a debate on future steps for territorial cohesion policy and to propose ideas for new activities which can make a difference and can be communicated to Europe's policy makers as well as citizens.

**Measuring territorial cohesion.** Various ESPON studies as well as the 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report show that recent territorial developments indicate centralisation and increasing territorial imbalances, which are contrary to the objectives of territorial cohesion and the priorities of TA 2020. Consequently, the objectives are unlikely to be met and require more political support if current trends are to be reversed.

**Awareness about 'territorial matters'.** More efforts are needed to advocate and work towards territorial cohesion and the application of TA 2020. This includes more action to raise awareness among stakeholders from a wide range of policy sectors about territorial matters and the territorial impact of actions and policies. General awareness of territorial cohesion and TA 2020 is limited beyond those directly working with it. This is also reflected in low political ownership of the territorial cohesion objective and TA 2020.

**Territorial elements in EU policies in general and Cohesion Policy in particular.** The internal coordination of the European Commission regarding territorial issues and urban matters is gradually increasing. Furthermore, the Commission has improved coordination of European policies and its Impact Assessment procedures. On the one hand, cohesion policy became more sector-oriented by introducing investment priorities. On the other hand, in recent years, in the framework of European Cohesion Policy new tools to coordinate policies and work with territorial matters have been initiated such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and a focus on urban development. Urban policy related instruments have also been strengthened in Cohesion Policy by earmarking a minimum of 5% of ERDF resources allocated at national level for integrated actions on sustainable development through support for innovative actions and the establishment of an urban development network. At the same time, there are more actions at local and regional level to work with a place based approach and more integrated development actions.

**TA 2020.** The challenges, potential and priorities set out in TA 2020 are still relevant. There is no need to revise TA 2020 at this moment. In stead, particular attention should be paid to the policy document itself, the debate and concrete action related to the implementation. This includes communication, visualisation (also with territorial scenarios), concrete measures and support tools such as cross-border legal provisions, improved links to the Urban Agenda and urban policy



initiatives and at an appropriate moment the provision of input to the discussion of review of the EU 2020 strategy and the ESIF post 2020 – which starts in 2016.

**Proposals for the future:** Although a lot of territorial evidence and tools for territorial impact assessments have been developed over the past decade – mainly for ESPON – their potential for communication with stakeholders on various policy sectors has not been fully exploited yet.

Proposals for improvement include:

- ◉ Further territorial impact assessments (TIAs) and territorial scenarios for open dialogue with stakeholders. Regular short policy papers addressing the territorial matters of overarching developments or policies and table these at high-level meetings.
- ◉ Identify EU policies of high territorial relevance and engage in an open and focused policy dialogue with sector policies to identify win-win situation and demonstrate, where relevant, the added value of the consideration of a territorial dimensions in sector policy making.
- ◉ Improve communication on territorial matters, their importance and the territorial impact of policies and actions, in particular at European level.
- ◉ Regularly place territorial cohesion matters on the agendas of the relevant committees such as the Coordination Committee for European Structural and Investment Funds (COESIF), the Structural Funds Action Party (SAWP) or Expert Group on European Structural and Investment Funds (EGESIF).
- ◉ Strengthening the implementation focus of territorial cohesion and TA 2020, including stronger user-orientation of ESPON. Improve the link between TA 2020 and the Urban Agenda, including joint meetings of the Urban Development Group (UDG) and the Expert Group on Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters (EGTCUM) as well as with the committees mentioned in the previous point .
- ◉ Regularly place territorial cohesion matters on the agenda of the EU General Affairs Council.
- ◉ Prepare for upcoming policy debates to strengthen the territorial dimension especially in the review of Europe 2020 and the debate on Cohesion Policy post 2020.
- ◉ Encourage players at local and regional level to apply a place based approach, e.g. by disseminating innovative examples.

Putting these and other actions into place, would require active work in the Member States (including the EU Affairs Council European Council), DG REGIO, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European Economic and Social Committee as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) as well as the activation of a wide range of committees and networks including Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP), EGTCUM, UDG, COESIF, EGESIF and ESPON MC and actors at the regional and local level in a multilevel governance approach.



## Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Luxembourg on behalf of the EU Trio Presidency. It supports Action 1 of the Trio Presidency Programme about the assessment of the implementation of the Union's territorial cohesion objective and the necessity to revise Territorial Agenda (TA) 2020.

The aim is to trigger a debate on future steps for territorial cohesion policy and to propose ideas for new activities which can make a difference and can be communicated to Europe's citizens. This study pulls together existing resources and gives short and targeted input to the discussions and work of Member States and EU institutions starting the level of the National Territorial Contact Point (NTTCP) meeting.

Document studies have been complemented by an online survey and interviews with selected NTCCP members and other key stakeholders.

In this Final Report, Chapter 1 provides brief input to the discussion on whether recent territorial developments and trends work towards territorial cohesion and the objectives of TA 2020. This chapter is mainly based on summaries of ESPON findings and territorial analysis presented in the 6th Cohesion Report. The aim is to provide easy-to-read pointers for future developments. This short text cannot compete with long standing analysis and more thorough debate on the definitions of policy objectives in indicators.

Chapter 2 moves from territorial development to territorial policies. An account of the evolution of the TA and the link to territorial cohesion serve mainly as a backdrop for the following chapters which look at progress in implementation and future steps.

Chapter 3 provides an assessment of the challenges and potential when implementing territorial cohesion and TA 2020. This section is mainly based on the online survey and literature studies. It shows that more efforts are needed.

Based on the results presented in Chapter 3 and interviews with key stakeholders, Chapter 4 provides discussion points on how to strengthen implementation of TA 2020. Importantly it differentiates between implementation of European and national policies and implementation at regional and local level.



## Understanding Territorial Cohesion

Territorial cohesion was integrated in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Despite various discussions and an EU Green Paper on territorial cohesion, there is no clear definition or common understanding of the term. The most prominent definitions in European policy documents are:

- ‘(...) particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions.’ (Treaty definition)
- ‘(...) promote convergence between the economies of better-off territories and those whose development is lagging behind.’ (TA 2020 definition)
- ‘(...) transforming diversity into an asset that contributes to sustainable development of the entire EU.’ (Green Paper definition)
- ‘(...) territorial cohesion reinforces the importance of access to services, sustainable development, functional geographies and territorial analysis.’ (5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report definition)

The survey conducted for this study shows that the definitions are of almost equal relevance. Although the one in TA 2020 seems to be the most popular (selected 126 times), followed by the ‘5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report definition’ (112), ‘Green Paper definition’ (103) and ‘Treaty definition’ (102). 14% of the respondents selected all four definitions of territorial cohesion.

Regardless of an exact definition of territorial cohesion, different arguments have been put forward to include the objective of territorial cohesion alongside economic and social cohesion. From an economic perspective territorial cohesion can have an added value as it may lower the cost of non-coordination between different sector policies. Others perceive the added value of territorial cohesion more from the perspective that smart, sustainable and inclusive growth requires acknowledgement of European diversity. Thirdly, from the perspective of the European single market, territorial cohesion can contribute to more balanced development. Lastly, more political arguments are put forward for solidarity. These perceived added values are reflected in the different definitions.





# 1 Is Europe on the way to territorial cohesion?

Territorial policy objectives – such as territorial cohesion or the objectives of TA 2020 – are agreed on to influence territorial development in Europe. In other words, if the European territory is becoming more cohesive, we are moving in the right direction.

Based on ESPON results this chapter reviews whether recent developments and trends work towards territorial cohesion and the objectives of TA 2020. As has been widely demonstrated by ESPON, this is not a straightforward task as results depend on the definition and implementation of policy objectives.

Within ESPON, three projects are important for territorial cohesion and the objectives of TA 2020. These are Indicators of Territorial Cohesion (INTERCO), EU Territorial Monitoring System (ETMS), and Key Indicators for Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning (KITSCAP). While INTERCO suggest a wide range of different indicators, ETMS and KITSCAP have been more selective. Based on these ESPON results and the 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, the next two sections review whether Europe is achieving the objectives of TA and/or territorial cohesion.

## 1.1 General Cohesion Indicators

Territorial cohesion has still not been defined, and various attempts to establish a synthetic Territorial Cohesion indicator have failed. Therefore, this report only provides some insight and does not present a comprehensive discussion on territorial cohesion in Europe.

Based on overviews of indicators presented earlier<sup>1</sup> – and looking at indicators which can demonstrate a change in society in the medium-term, the following points may help with a set of indicators:

- Population development at LAU 2 level within a 50 km radius to assess concentration tendencies;
- GDP per capita to reflect standard economic cohesion;
- Employment at regional level to reflect the impact of the financial crisis;
- Soil sealing to reflect the environmental dimension.

### 1.1.1 Population trends

In Europe population is concentrating in metropolitan areas. This pattern of metropolitan versus non-metropolitan areas seems to be stronger than a distinction between European core and periphery. This is highlighted in the three maps illustrating population change over the last 50 years (Map 1). More recently (1991-2011), overall population development was modest in Europe. During that time large parts of eastern Europe, eastern Germany and rural areas in the Nordic countries experienced population decline.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. ESPON ETMS, ESPON INTERCO and ESPON KITSCAP.



### ESPON ETMS report on population development:

Between 2000 and 2012, many regions in western Europe combine natural and migratory population gains, while the opposite is true in eastern Europe. This includes eastern Germany, the Baltic countries, Romania and Bulgaria, as well as eastern parts of Hungary. However, territorial patterns of migration and natural growth are distinct, especially in western Europe. In peripheral parts of the United Kingdom (Scotland and Wales), northern Italy and western Germany, natural decline is offset by positive net migration. Conversely, North-Eastern France has negative net migration, but positive natural growth.

This is similar to southern Italy. Large parts of eastern Germany and eastern Europe combine negative net migration and natural population decline. Turkey's western regions recorded the strongest combined positive figures for natural growth and net migration, while strong net emigration is combined with major natural population gains in the east.

In more than two third of European countries, population growth has been lower in rural areas than in urban centres from 2001 to 2011. Cyprus was one of the few that witnessed counter-urbanisation, with slower growth in urban areas than in rural areas<sup>2</sup>. Figure 1 the population change in and outside urban areas and the national average for EU Member and Partner States 2001-2011. It shows the extent of urban-rural polarisation. Italy, France, Switzerland and the United Kingdom experience no significant urban-rural polarisation. These countries demonstrate that the shares of urban and rural population can be stabilised.

As for the future, Europe's total population is envisaged to grow from 514 million in 2010 to 530 in 2030. However, as presented in Map 2, this population increase will be unevenly distributed. Many western European regions are expected to grow in population, while regions facing demographic decline are mainly located in eastern Europe. Furthermore, population decline is mostly expected in peripheral regions, while urban regions and regions tend to gain population. These demographic trends to some degree go hand-in-hand with employment trends discussed later.

**Figure 1 Evolution of urban-rural demographic polarisation, 2001-2011**

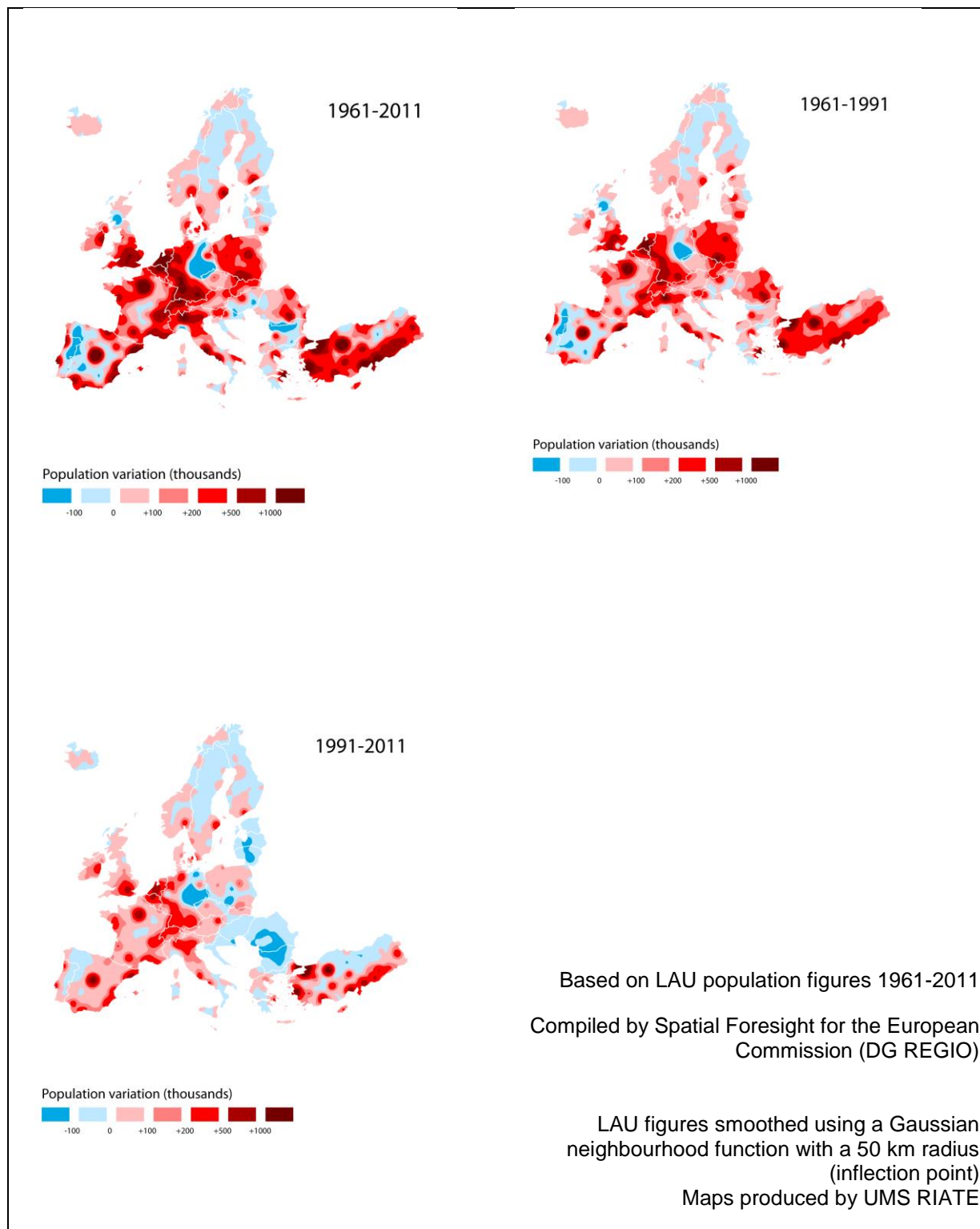


**Source: ESPON ETMS**

<sup>2</sup> The higher demographic growth in rural parts of Cyprus is due to the fact that these areas include the island's main tourism centers.



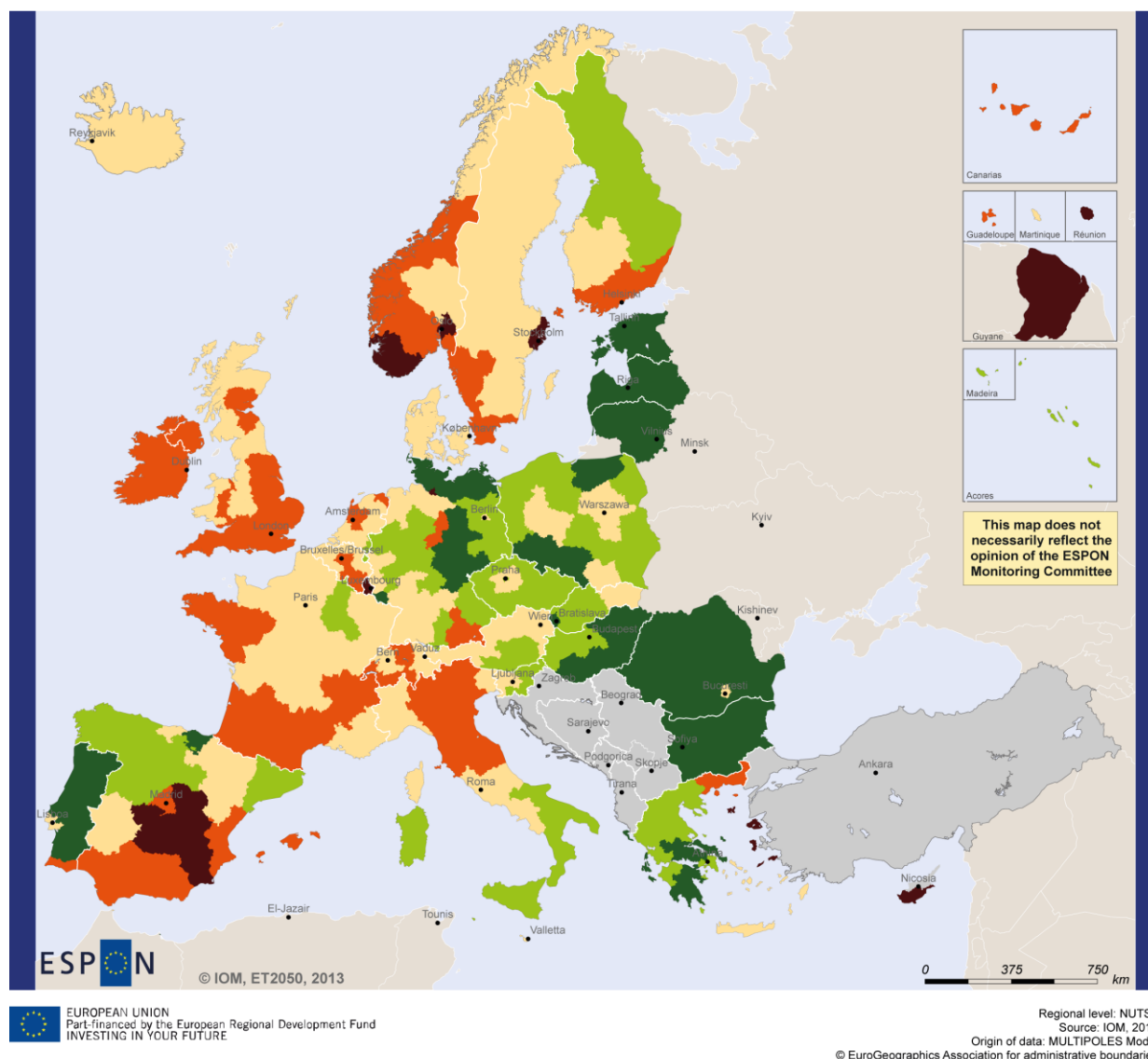
**Map 1. Population development**



**Source: Spatial Foresight and UMS RIATE, 2014**

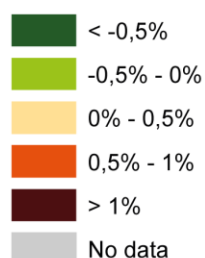


**Map 2. Population change, 2010-2013**



## Annual population change (Units: %)

Measured by MULTIPOLES forecast model as annual population change



**Source: ESPON ET2050**



### 1.1.2 GDP developments

Territorial cohesion in terms of GDP has been put on hold or even reversed by the economic crisis which started in 2008. As pointed out by ESPON and the 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, there are asymmetric effects from the crisis. These imply both widening disparities between countries (in particular an increasing North-South divide), and widening disparities between regions within countries.

In general it seems there is no clear European picture for asymmetric effects of the crisis within countries. The 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report points out that metropolitan areas performed well until the crisis with above average employment. In 2011, metropolitan areas accounted for 67% of EU GDP, with 62% of the jobs and only 59% of population. At the same time many rural regions seemed to be more resilient during the crisis. However this is very different in individual countries.

#### **6th Cohesion Report on GDP development:**

Until the crisis in 2008, disparities between regional economies in the EU were shrinking (the coefficient of variation of regional GDP per head fell by 10% between 2000 and 2008 — Map 3). In 2000, average GDP per head in the most developed 20% of regions was about 3.5 times higher than in the least developed 20%. By 2008, the difference had narrowed to 2.8 times. This was mainly due to the regions with the lowest GDP per head growing faster and catching up with the more prosperous ones. However, the crisis seems to have brought this tendency to an end. Between 2008 and 2011 regional disparities widened (the coefficient of variation increased slightly) (Map 4).

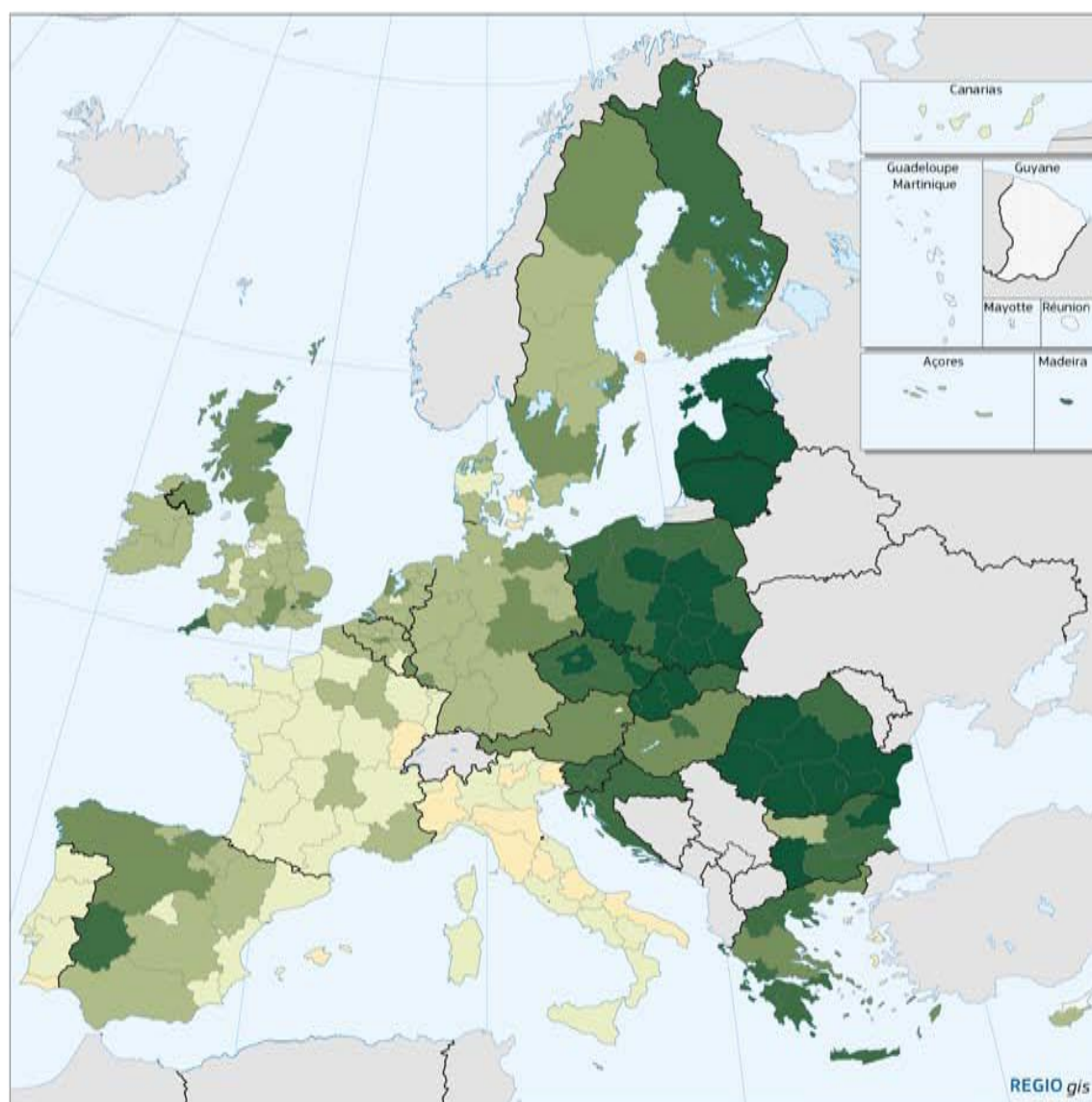
As mentioned in the objectives of TA 2020, there are considerable cross-border discontinuities in terms of GDP per capita in Europe.

East-west cross-border differences in GDP per capita have increased, even though eastern countries had higher growth between 2000 and 2012. The ESPON ETMS report states ‘the growth in the west has on average generated more wealth per capita compared to neighbouring countries in eastern Europe. The only exception in this respect is the Adriatic Sea, where Italy’s economic decline has contributed to reduce the discontinuity between the Eastern and Western shores’.

Within western Europe, there are notable cross-border disparities in wealth along parts of the borders of Norway, Switzerland and Luxembourg. Between 2000 and 2012, the discontinuities along the Swiss-Italian, Swiss-French, Luxembourg-Belgian and Luxembourg-French borders have increased, while they have decreased along the border between Norway and Sweden.

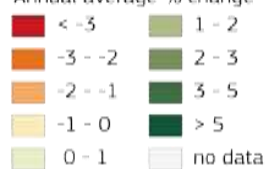


**Map 3. GDP Development 2001-2008**



**Map 1.2 Growth of GDP per head in real terms, 2001–2008**

Annual average % change



EU-28 = 1.7  
DE: NUTS 1 values

Source: Eurostat, DG REGIO

0 500 Km

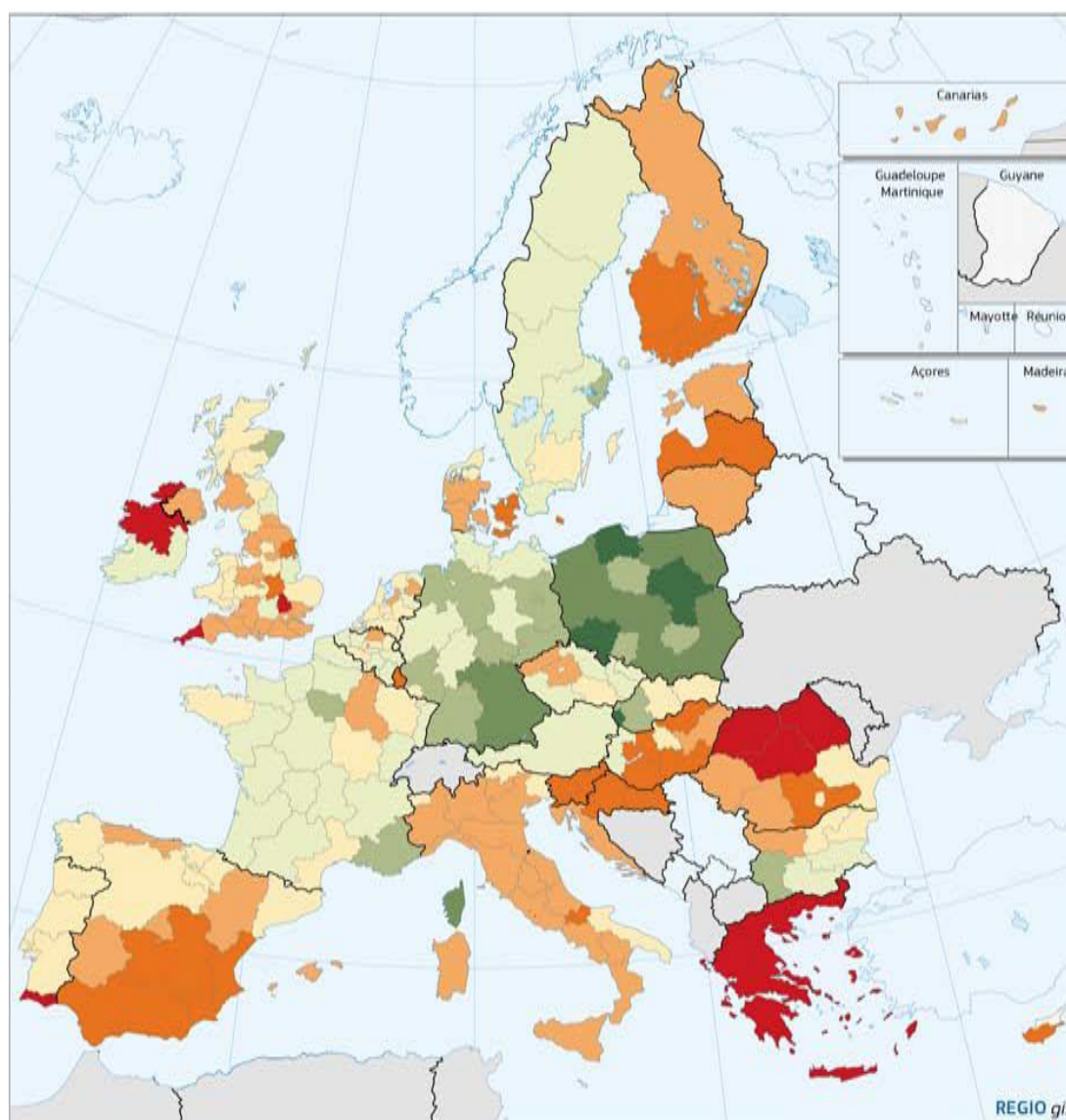
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**Source: 6th Cohesion Report**





**Map 4. GDP development 2008-2011**



**Map 1.3 Growth of GDP per head in real terms, 2008–2011**

Annual average % change	
<span style="color: red;">■</span> < -3	<span style="color: green;">■</span> 1 - 2
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> -3 - -2	<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> 2 - 3
<span style="color: lightorange;">■</span> -2 - -1	<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> 3 - 5
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> -1 - 0	<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> > 5
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> 0 - 1	<span style="color: grey;">■</span> no data

EU-28 = -0.6  
AT, EL: national values; DE: NUTS 1 values

Sources: Eurostat, DG REGIO

0 500 Km

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**Source: 6th Cohesion Report**



### 1.1.3 Employment developments

The economic crisis and 'jobless growth' have demonstrated the limitation of GDP as a welfare indicator. Employment is actually a better indicator for resilience, allowing for conclusions on social cohesion.

Various ESPON publications and the 6th Cohesion Report have looked at employment change and its regional variations. While the EU and its Partner States witnessed stagnating employment with a weak downward trend between 2008 and 2013, there were considerable differences between countries, regions and cities. Employment figures confirm the increasing disparities with regard to GDP, illustrating the change brought about by the economic crisis (see Map 5). The 6th Cohesion Report underlines: 'While regional disparities in both employment and unemployment rates narrowed between 2000 and 2007, they have widened significantly since 2008. In 2013, therefore, disparities in both were wider than in 2000'.

#### **6th Cohesion Report on the development of employment:**

'The crisis has, therefore, tended to widen disparities in employment rates and in 2013, rates were 11 percentage points higher in more developed regions than in less developed ones (72% and 61%).'

The detailed picture presented by ESPON ETMS shows that between 2008 and 2013 (see Map 6), the economic crisis brought considerable falls in employment mainly in parts of southern Europe. In 10 out of 13 Greek regions, well over 10% of the working age population has changed from being 'employed' to 'non-employed'. The labour markets of Spain, Cyprus, and parts of Bulgaria, Portugal and Croatia were also badly hit in the crisis. There were big reductions in Ireland, southernmost Italy, Latvia, southern Denmark, Slovenia, Picardie (France) and western Slovakia.

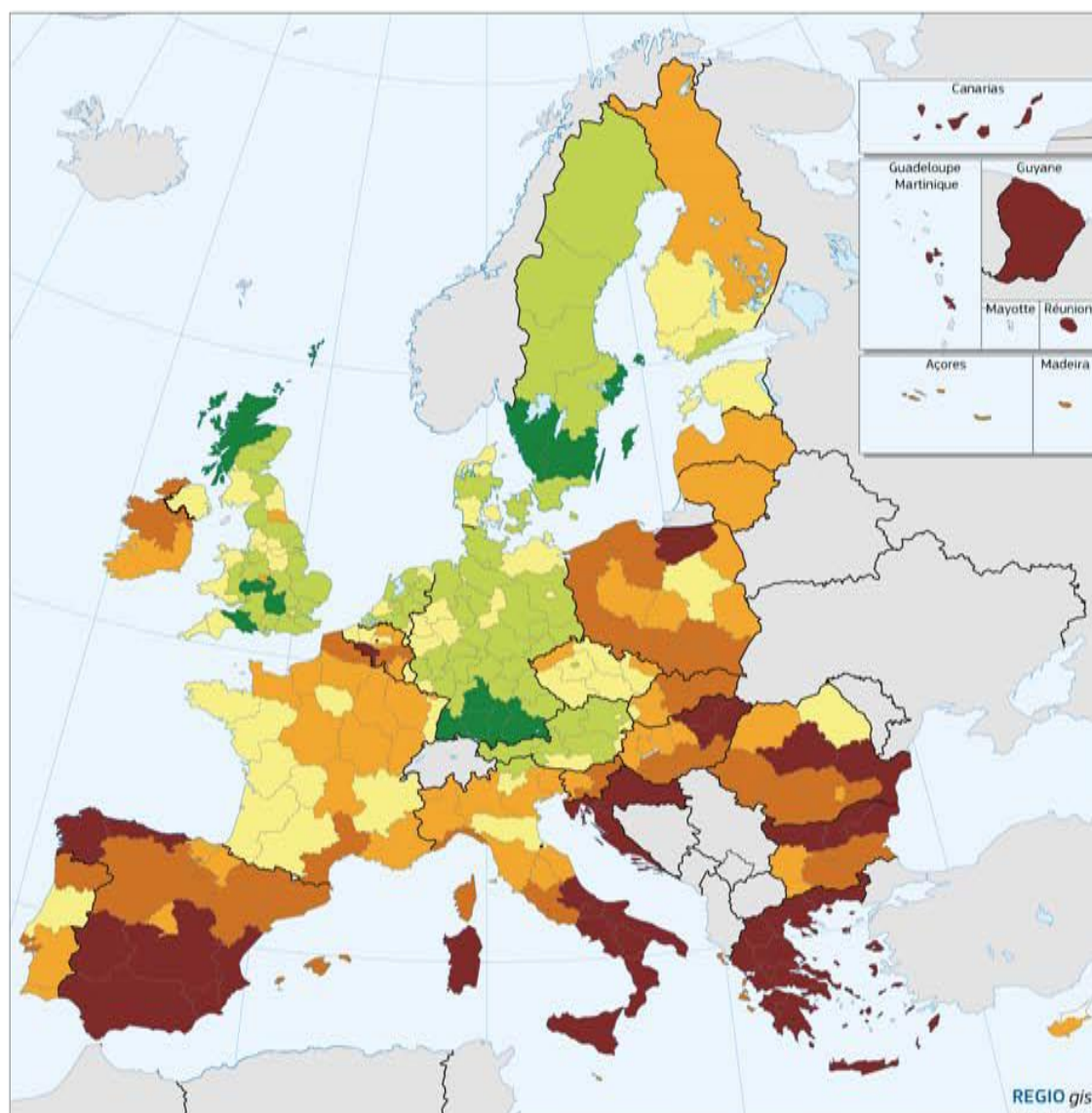
At the same time, other regions e.g. in Germany, large parts of Poland and Hungary, Turkey, Macedonia and south-eastern France saw increased employment. However, reductions of the working age population through emigration and ageing may have contributed to the positive trends (i.e. declining shares of unemployed) in some areas, e.g. in eastern parts of Germany and Hungary, North Sweden and the North-East region in Romania.

Forecasting employment trends is difficult. The ESPON ET2050 baseline for 2010-2030 includes annual employment growth of 1.58% in Europe. Such a development would mean that large parts of the recovery from the crisis come from job creation and lower salaries, instead of productivity gains. The territorial implication in ET2050 is that labour markets are reformed in Southern Europe and more jobs are generated even with low economic growth. Increase in social disparities from reduced public social expenditure may hit specific zones and neighbourhoods.



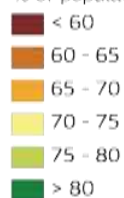


**Map 5. Employment rate, 2013**



**Map 2.1 Employment rate (20–64), 2013**

% of population, aged 20–64



EU-28 = 68.3  
The Europe 2020 target is 75%.

Source: Eurostat

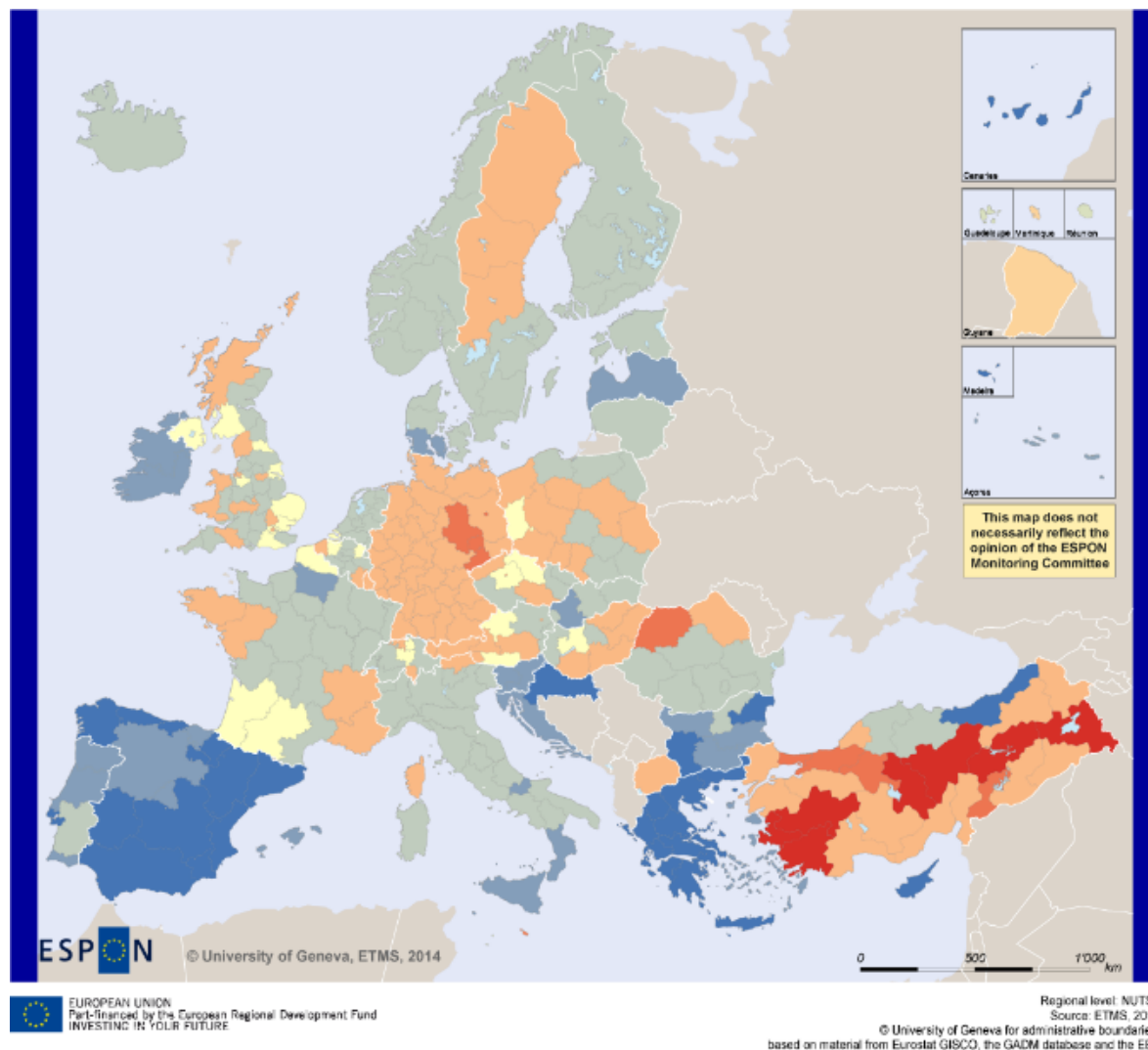
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**Source: 6th Cohesion Report**

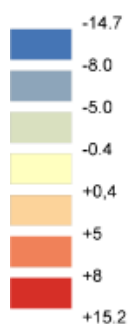


**Map 6. Changes in employment rate. 2008-2012**



#### Change in employment rates between 2008 and 2012

Employed persons / Population between the ages of 20 and 64 years  
In percentage points



**Source: ESPON ETMS**



#### **1.1.4 Development of our environment**

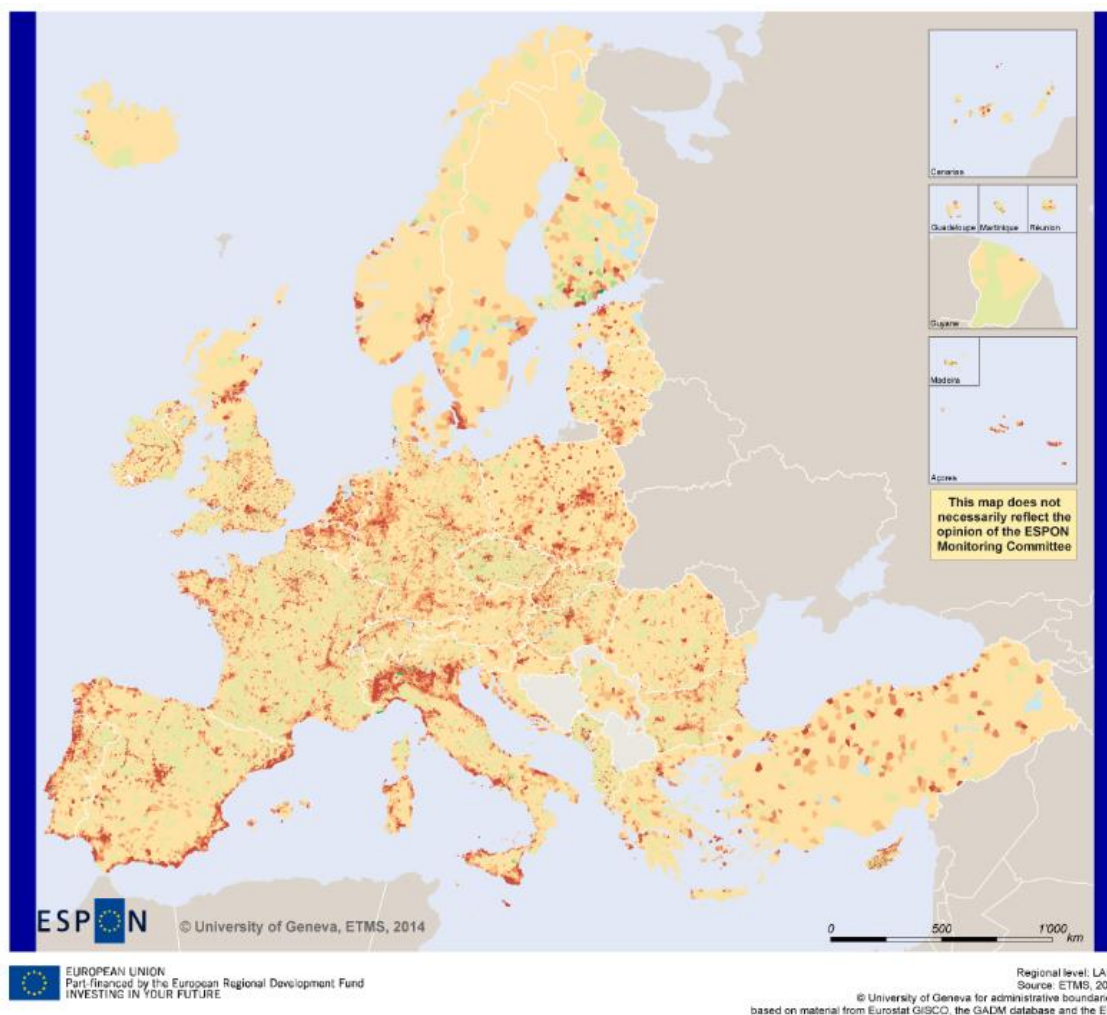
Territorial cohesion cannot be discussed without looking at the environment. Territorial cohesion is also about increasing the quality of the environment to ensure long-term sustainable development with development opportunities for future generations. This is related to improving well-being in general, as well as to the need for sound ecosystems with positive effects on health.

To fully reflect this, a wide range of indicators should be reviewed. The following focuses on soil sealing as a proxy. Soil sealing relates to well-being in terms of preventing uncoordinated urbanisation and infrastructure development, preserved landscapes and risks of floods and heat waves in a context of climate change.

ESPON ETMS highlights an increase in soil sealing between 2006 and 2009 at the level of European local administrative areas (LAU) in most of Europe's urbanised areas (see Map 7). This reflects population concentration in urban areas and along major transportation axes. Only a few areas had a significant reduction of soil sealing, e.g. around Helsinki in southern Finland and some parts of the Ligurian coast (Italy) close to the French border.



**Map 7. Change in soil sealing**



### Change in soil sealing (2006-2009)

Percentage point difference between proportion of sealed surface in 2006 and in 2009



**Source: ESPON ETMS**



## **1.2 Indicators related to priorities in TA 2020?**

The first ESPON Monitoring Report (see ESPON ETMS project) shows the progress Europe has made in achieving the objectives of TA 2020. It furthermore explores how these advances may have contributed to Europe 2020 objectives.

The report concludes that Europe has made some progress in various objectives of TA 2020, although the economic crisis hit countries and regions asymmetrically and brought an increased focus on economic growth. Building on the strengths of the strongest poses challenges to more cohesion-oriented objectives.

Key conclusions of the report regarding individual priorities of TA 2020 are:

### **1.2.1 Promote polycentric and balanced territorial development**

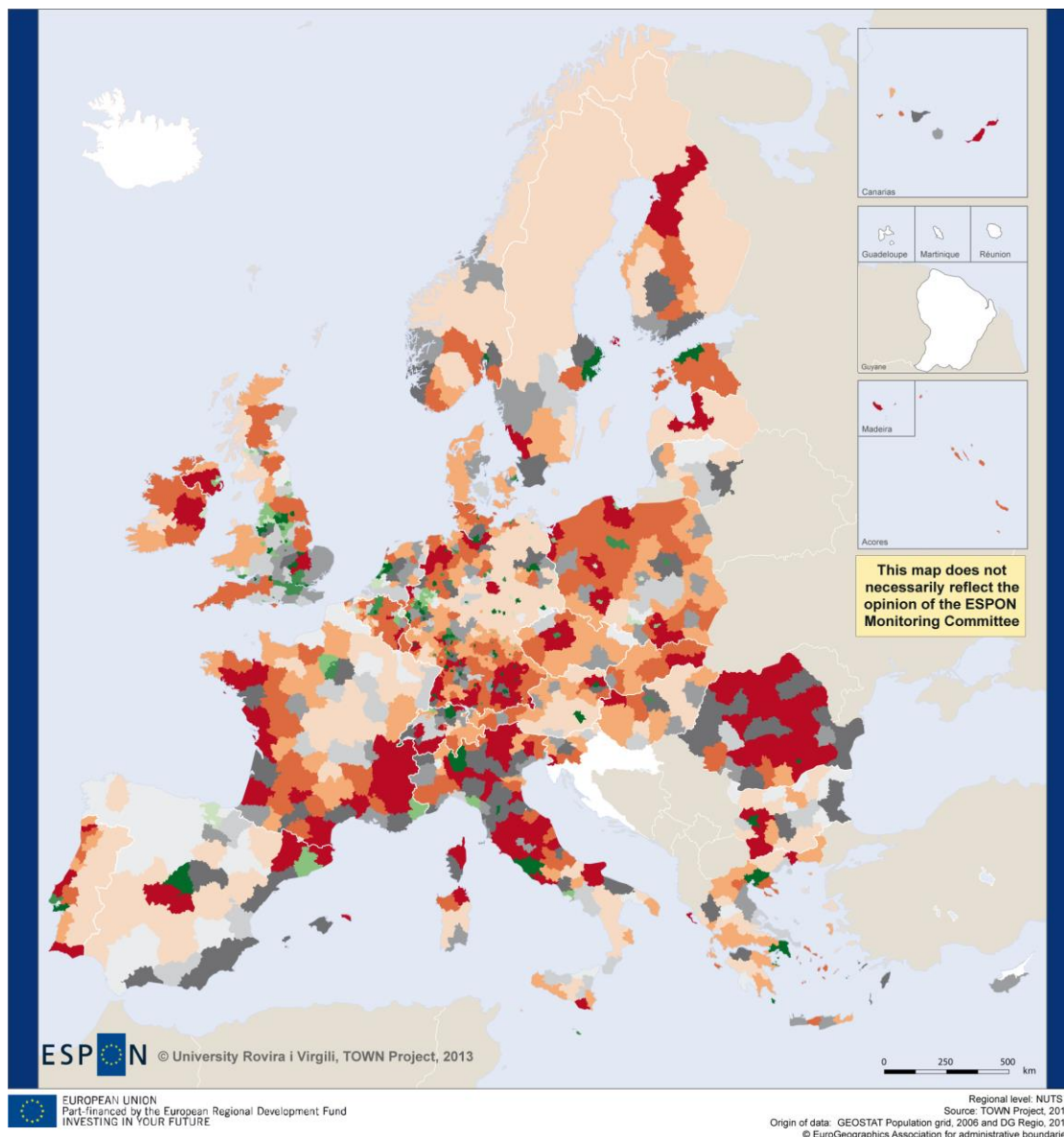
As previous exercises have shown, it is virtually impossible to have an integrated analysis of all the different facets of polycentric development at European level. Therefore the ESPON ETMS report focuses mainly on recent European demographic trends. These point to an increasing concentration of population growth in metropolitan areas. In other words, Europe is seeing a polarisation between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. This development is stronger than the long debated European core-periphery pattern (i.e. the 'EU Pentagon' and the rest of Europe). Demographic concentration processes are accompanied by economic developments, which encouraged balanced and polycentric development until the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008. Since then, however these trends point to increased concentration of economic activities and welfare. In conclusion, recent developments seem not to work in favour of polycentric and balanced development. Accordingly the ESPON ETMS report concludes that 'considering the limited perspectives of experiencing the same high growth levels during coming years, the pursuit of polycentric and balanced development as promoted by the Territorial Agenda 2020 will need to be based on other levers.'

This trend of growing urban centres is shown in Map 8 of population change in NUTS 3 regions compared to the EU average and by urbanisation level. Each European country has different demographic development, depending on birth rates, migration, life expectancy and ageing. There are non-polycentric differences between countries, with most growth in France, northern Italy, Romania and Poland. At national level most population growth is in urban and surrounding regions.

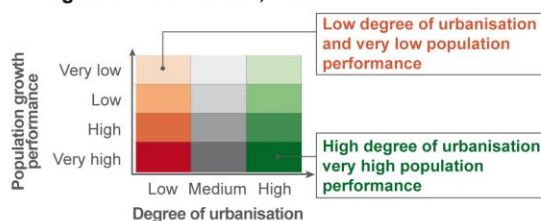




**Map 8. Typology of population change 2001-2011 and degree of urbanisation, 2006**



**Typology on population change, 2001-2011 and degree of urbanisation, 2006**



**Low urbanisation:** population living in HDUC < 30% of NUTS3 population; **medium urbanisation:** population living in HDUC > 30% < 70% of NUTS3 population; **high urbanisation:** population living in HDUC > 70% of NUTS3 population.

**HDUC: High Density Urban Clusters.** These clusters are characterised by a population above 50 000 inhabitants and a density above 1500 inhabitants per square kilometer.

**Population growth performance** is based on change between 2001 and 2011, as difference from average change rate in same indicator for all NUTS3 regions in the country. Thresholds corresponds to the quartiles of the statistical distribution (each class includes 25% of regions).

Whenever either of these data are not available, most recent and older available year within the 2001-2011 range have been used.

**Source: ESPON TOWN**



### **1.2.2 Encouraging integrated territorial development in cities, rural and specific regions**

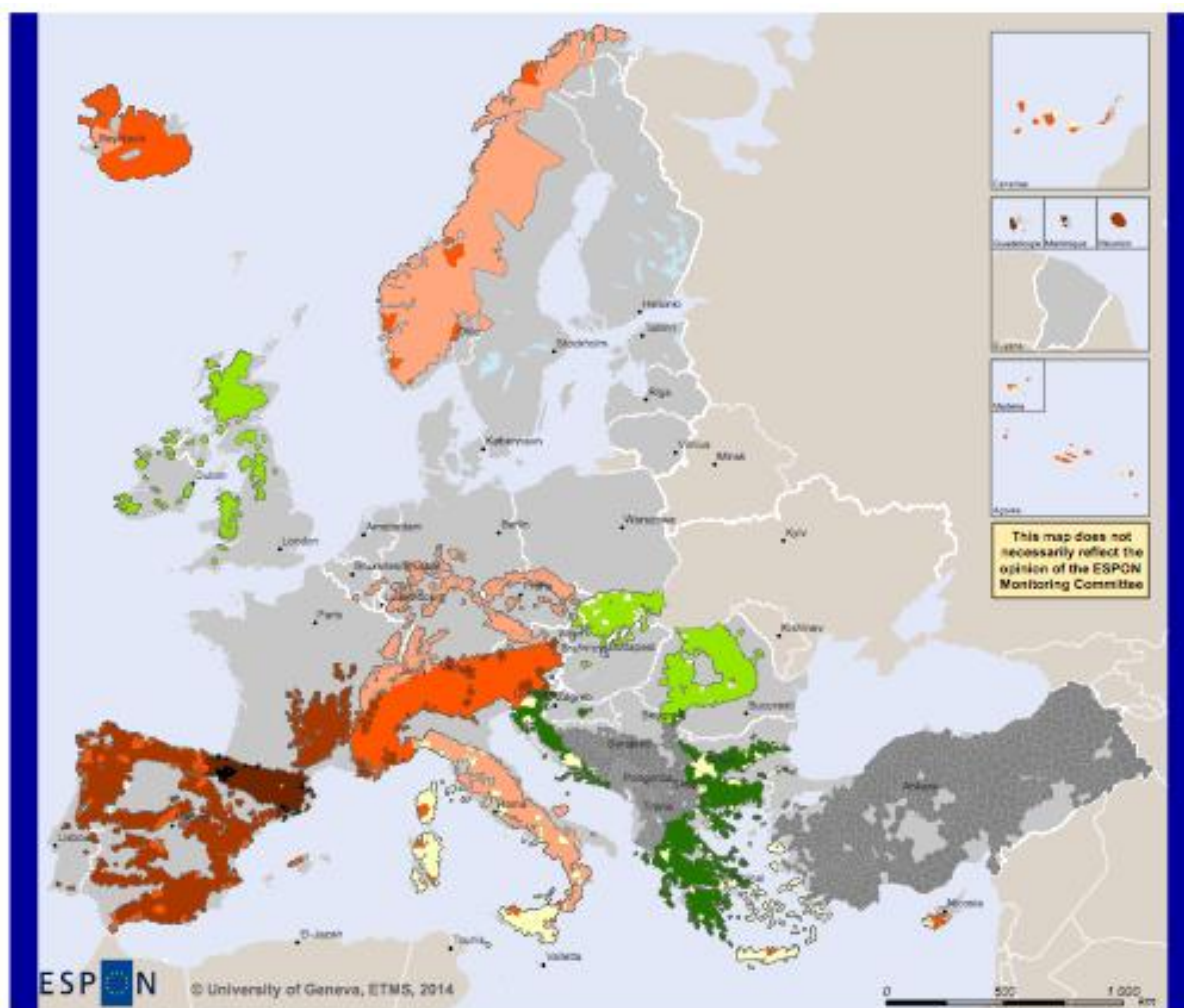
Current development trends do not point to more integration between territories. Indeed, looking at the increasing population disparities between urban and rural areas, the ESPON ETMS report finds that large parts of Europe are moving in the opposite direction. Although there are exceptions, the increasing polarisation between urban and rural areas is also characteristic for areas with geographical specificities (see Map 9 for examples on demographic trends in mountain regions). Accordingly, the ESPON ETMS report argues for integrated territorial development and a more place-based approach to ensure that the unique potential and challenges of each locality bring added value through coordinated regional and sector policy intervention.

### **1.2.3 Territorial integration in cross-border and transnational functional regions**

Cross-border integration – seen as declining economic discontinuities – can be discussed both with the EU, including Partner States, and between the EU and its neighbourhood. Elevated by the economic crisis, cross-border discontinuities – differences in economic wealth – within the EU have grown since 2008. This suggests decreasing territorial integration within Europe. At the same time, economic disparities with neighbourhood countries have been declining, e.g. between Italy and Mediterranean non-EU countries (see Map 10). Accordingly, the ESPON ETMS report concludes that ‘the recent increase in economic discontinuities confirms the need for continued efforts to arrive at high levels of maturity in cooperation across borders in all parts of Europe, in particular in the perception and acceptance of potential benefits of forming functional regions, not only across borders but also across administrative borders inside countries.’



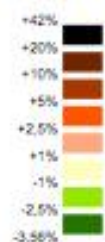
Map 9. Demographic trends in mountain regions, 2001-2011



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Regional level: Mountain massifs and Larger Urban Zones  
Source: ETMS, 2014  
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based on material from Eurostat GISC, the GADM database and the CEA

Demographic trends in mountain massifs between 2001 and 2011  
distinguishing between areas belonging to Larger Urban Zones and other areas



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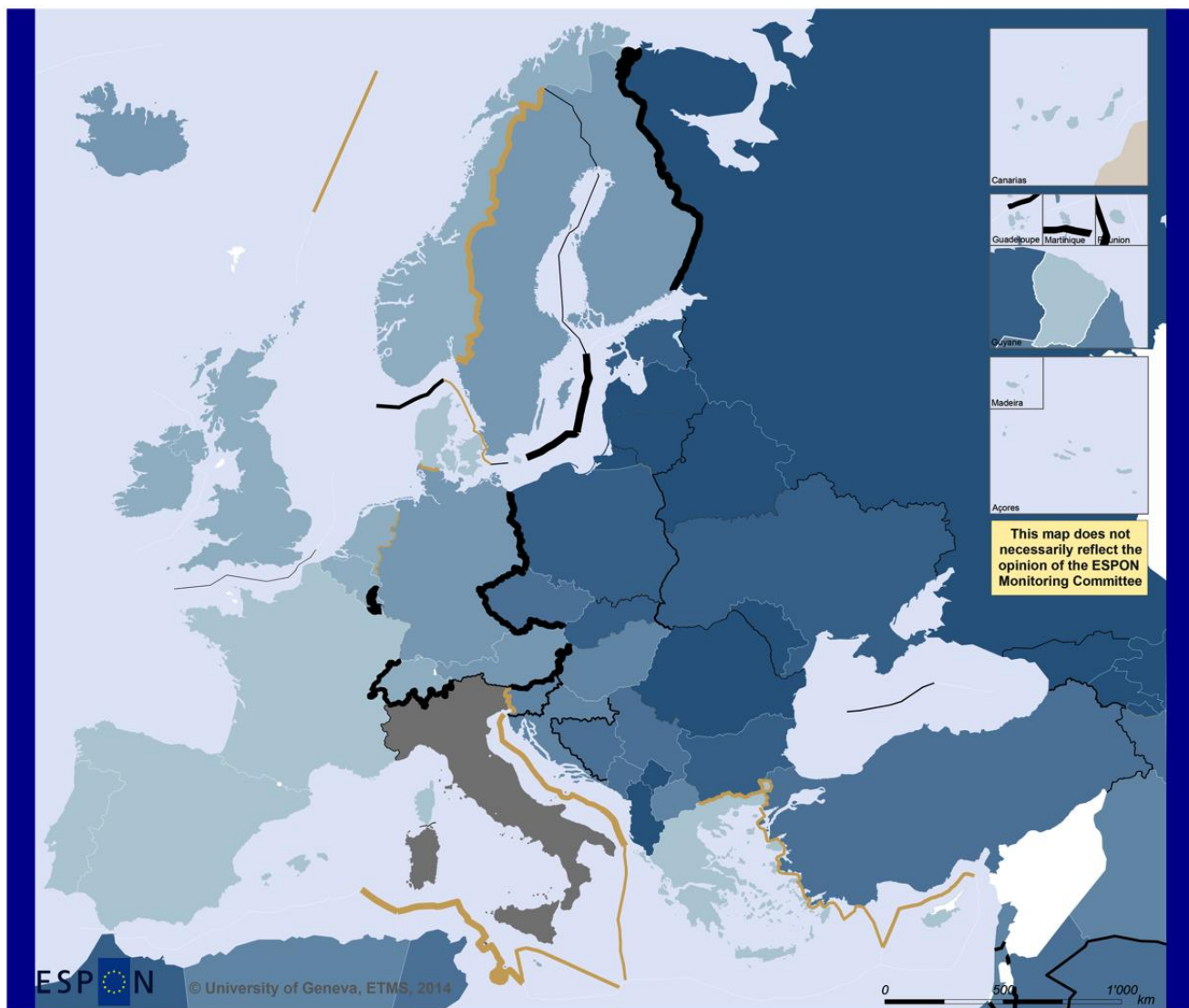
A number of mountain massifs  
comprise multiple continuous units  
(e.g. Massif Central, Caribbean mountain areas).  
The figures correspond to the mountain massifs  
as a whole, not their individual units.

Source: ESPON ETMS





**Map 10. Evolution of GDP discontinuities in border regions, 2000-2012**

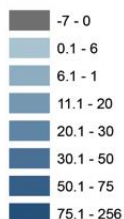


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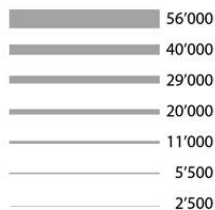
© University of Geneva, ETMS, 2014

Regional level: NUTS 0  
Source: World Bank, 2014  
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based on material from Eurostat GISCO, the GADM database and the EEA

**GDP per capita**  
In constant US\$ 2005  
Evolution in percents from 2000 to 2012

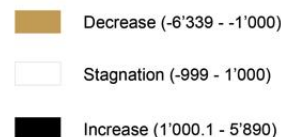


**Extent of border discontinuities in 2000**  
In constant US\$ 2005



**Evolution of border differentials**

Period: 2000 to 2012  
GDP per capita in constant US\$ 2005



**Source: ESPON ETMS**



#### **1.2.4 Ensuring global competitiveness of the regions based on strong local economies**

Discussing this objective with regard to education and employment figures, the ESPON ETMS report offers some hints on the strengths and potential of local economies.

For education, the share of 30 to 34 year olds completing tertiary education in the EU-28 has risen from 25% to 37% between 2008 and 2013 (see Map11). Although there are considerable territorial variations, this can be seen as significant progress. At the same time, it has to be noted that boosting education is a long-term investment and not a short-term response to the effects of the economic crisis. As a consequence of the asymmetric impacts of the economic crisis, the picture is varied. Overall, analysis of employment rates and household incomes indicate that the picture is more nuanced.<sup>3</sup> The ESPON ETMS report points out that 'ensuring the global competitiveness of regions based on their local economy is today even more important than before a must for the recovery and future of the European economy.'

Global competitiveness is concentrated in Europe's gateways, which are important nodes in international business and research networks. The map shows Europe's urban areas ranked by their global economic and research networks. Looking at European research networks and global firm ownership shows that London and Paris are Europe's primary gateways. There are a few second ranked cities that are also well integrated in global networks of leading activities: Madrid, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Zurich, and Munich. In the next category are 16 mainly capital cities but also second tier cities such as Barcelona, Milan or Frankfurt. The majority of European cities, 200 out of 271, have only a modest participation in these research and economic networks.

#### **1.2.5 Improving territorial connectivity for individuals, communities and enterprises**

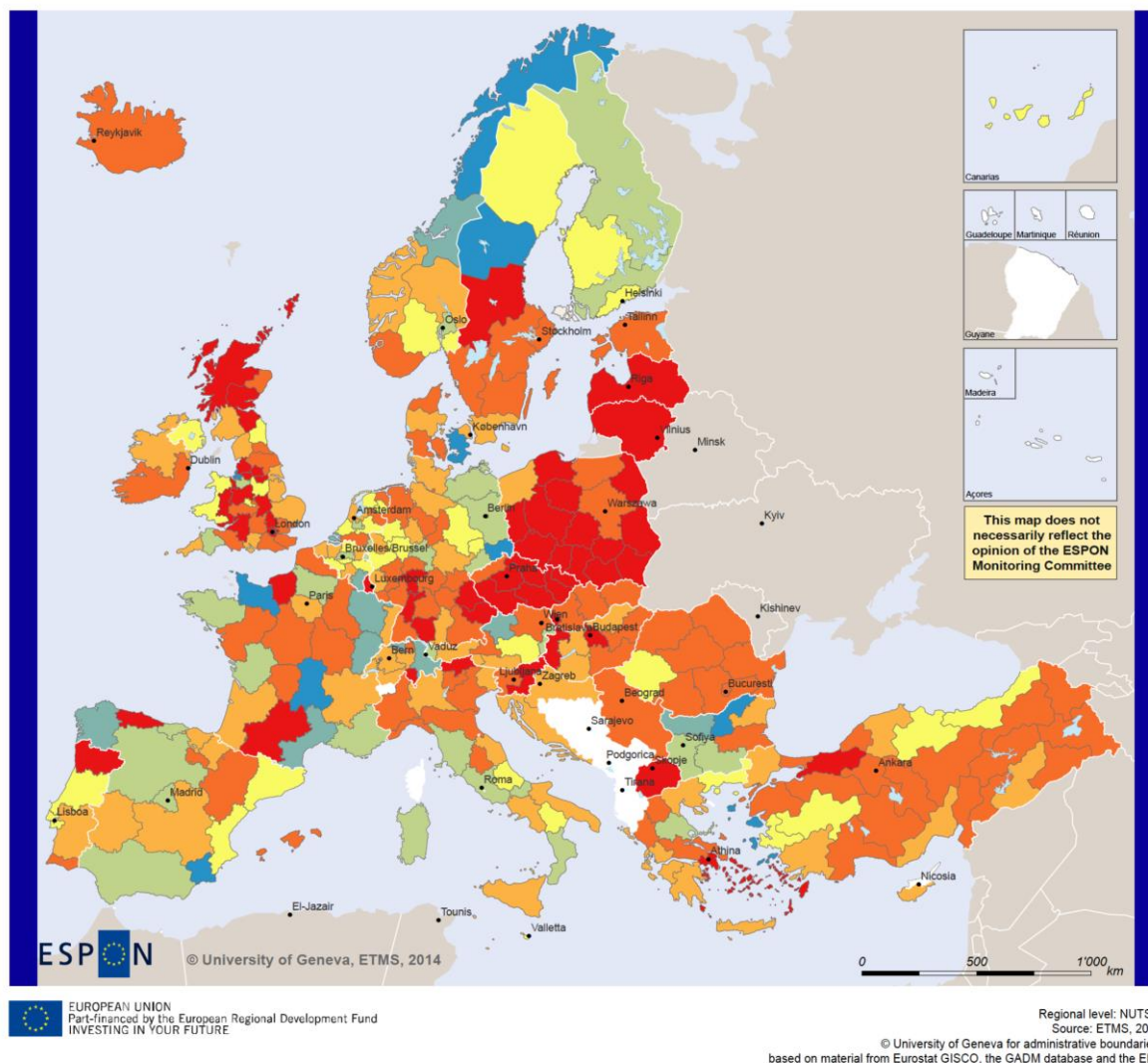
While this priority may target access to workplaces, shops and various services of general interest, European analyses stay at much more general levels of regional accessibility. Overall multimodal accessibility has improved in large parts of Europe in the last decade. At the same time, there is an increased concentration of population in larger cities, which poses accessibility challenges for rural areas and smaller cities in the long run (see Map 13). Furthermore, the ESPON ETMS report points out that for accessibility and economic performance, there is an overall disparity between the core and north of Europe and the eastern and southern regions of Europe. This poses a considerable cohesion challenge in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> In very general terms, the economic crisis has led to sharp drops in employment rates mainly in some parts of southern Europe and drops in household incomes in a number of countries hit by the economic downturn (e.g. Greece, Latvia, Spain, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom). At the same time household incomes remain stable or even increase in other countries in spite of low or negative growth (e.g. Poland, Lithuania).

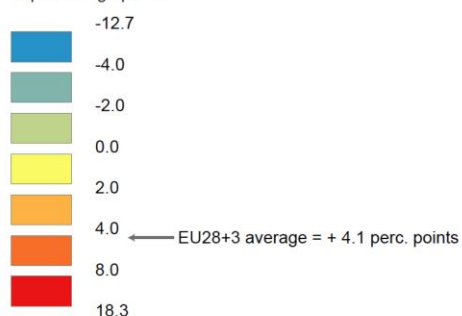


**Map 11. Share of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education, 2008-2012**



Evolution of the share of people aged 30-34 with tertiary education  
between 2008 and 2012

In percentage points

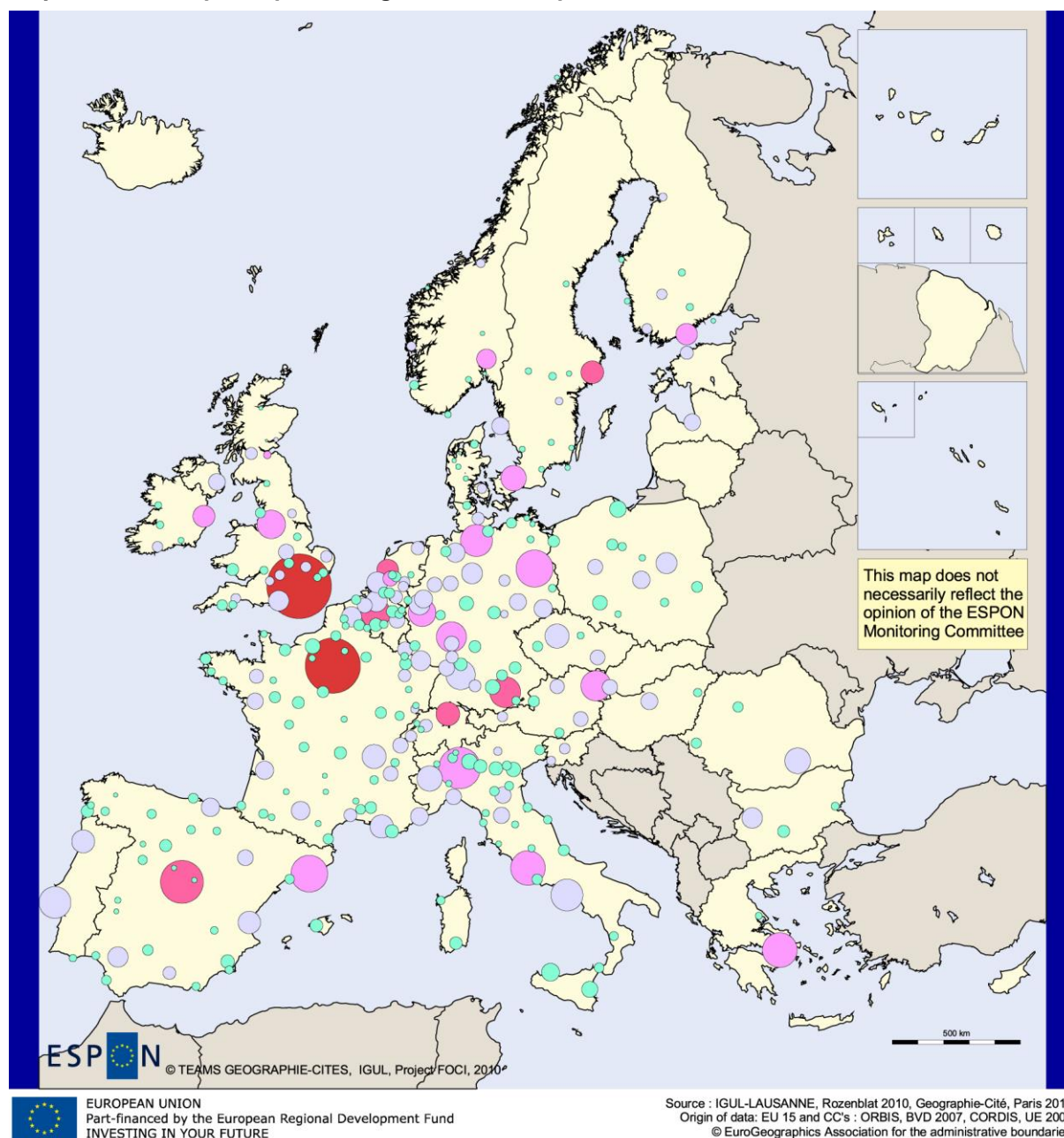


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**Source: ESPON ETMS**



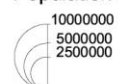
**Map 12. Cities' participation in global and European networks**



Ranks based on the score on the first axis of a principal component analysis :



Population of the FUA

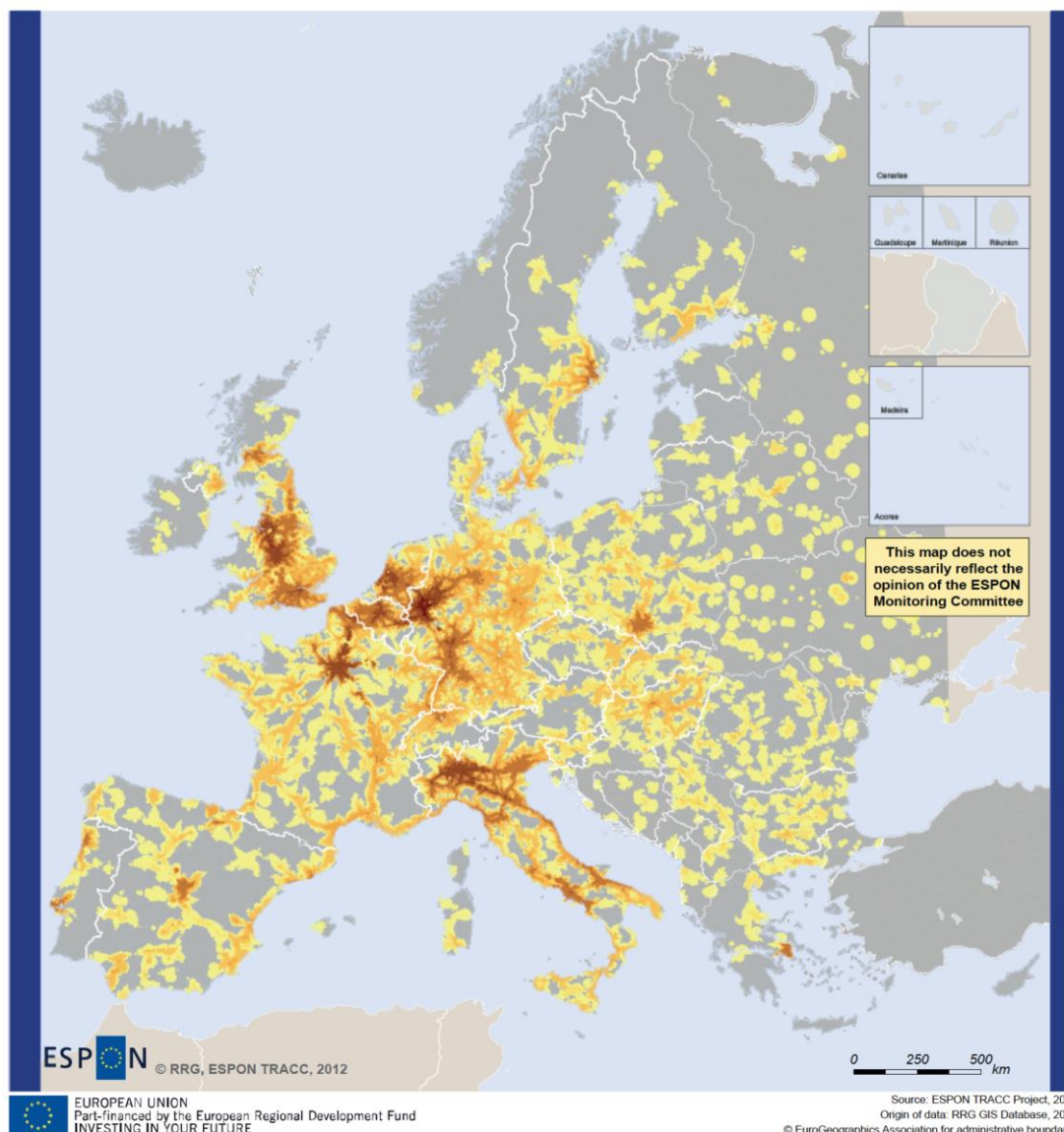


**Source: ESPON FOCI**

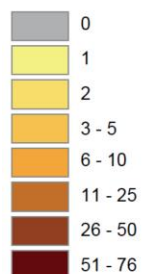




**Map 13. Availability of urban functions by rail (2011)**



**Number of cities above 50 000 inhabitants  
reachable within 60 minutes rail travel time (raster level), 2011**



**Source: ESPON TRACC**



### **1.2.6 Managing and connecting ecological, landscape and cultural values of regions**

Natural biotopes continue to be under threat from the loss of land to urban development and infrastructure. Urban sprawl, soil sealing – and hand in hand with that, fragmentation of the environment (see map below) – are still increasing around most urban areas in Europe. Certainly, there are considerable variations between countries and regions, not least due to different patterns of land use, settlement structures and population densities. The ESPON ETMS report concludes that urban management and connections with ecology, landscape and culture need policy attention to create attractiveness and development, and to balance urban development pressures with the need to ensure habitats and biodiversity for future generations.

## **1.3 Common approach to territorial development**

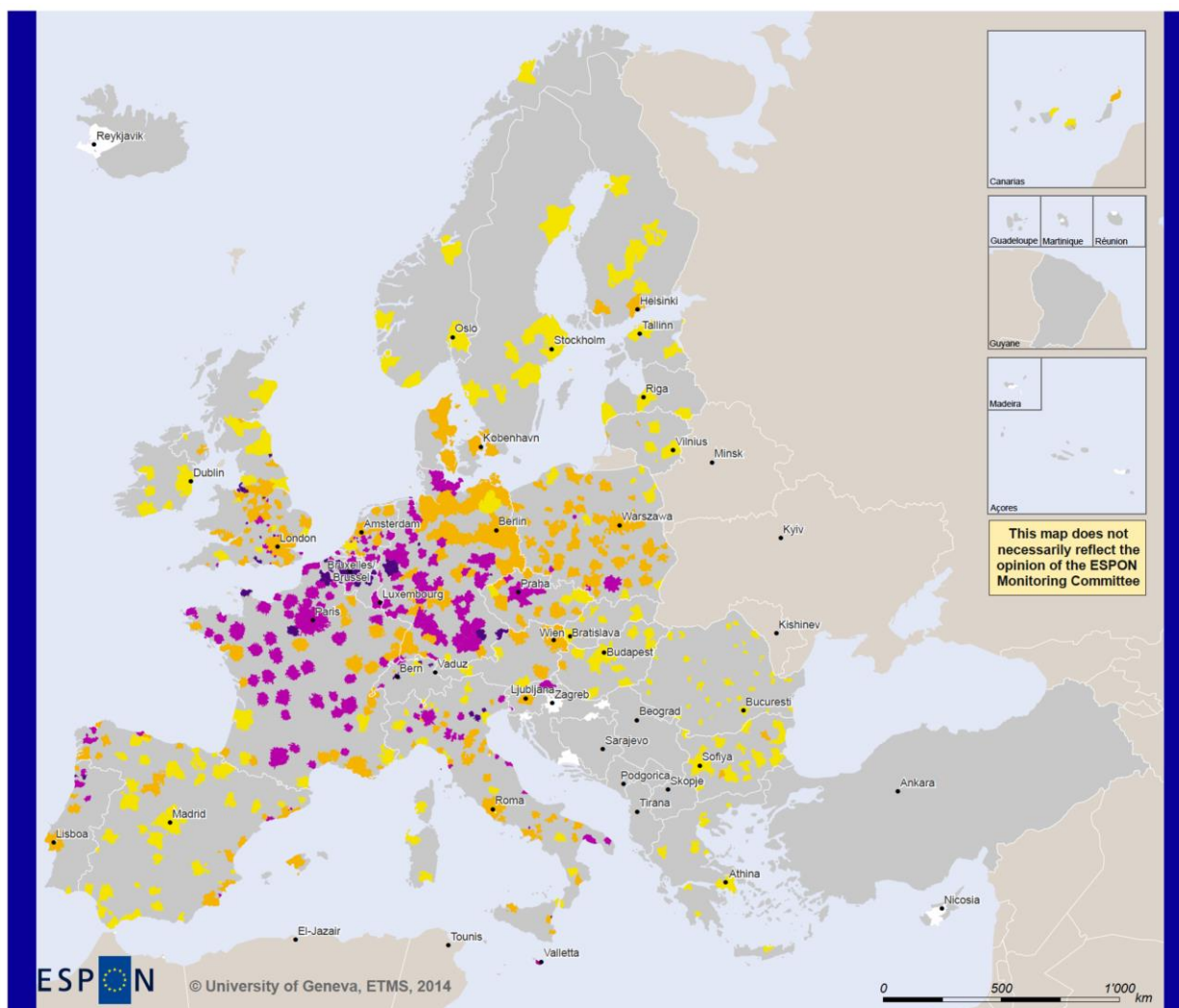
The territorial development indicators presented Europe's diversity. In relation to Europe's future, the ESPON ET2050 scenarios project argues common European visions and policies, in a world which is increasingly integrated. Territorial visions as developed by ESPON ET2050 serve as a common reference framework for the long-term and more consistent development of European policies, as well as better cross-border coordination at local, regional and national policies. It serves therefore also as discussion input for a common approach to territorial development.

At national regional and regional level, polycentricity is the most common vision incorporated in territorial development plans as shown in Map 15. Despite different planning traditions and institutional frameworks, for many parts of Europe territorial visions have been developed, inspired by the idea of polycentric development.

ET 2050 concludes that making Europe open and polycentric is the most coherent territorial strategy supporting the economic growth and competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainability goals promoted by Europe 2020 and TA2020. An open Europe is well connected with the rest of the world and neighbouring countries, which is perceived being a condition for all European cities and regions to take advantage of the development opportunities by global growth and technological progress. This is spread through a hierarchical network of cities. Map 16 presents an open and polycentric vision of Europe towards 2050. The hierarchical network of cities is presented against areas with high population density (light green) and Natura2000 areas (dark green). The blue depicted cities are the cities connect at highest levels, with other European cities and cities and regions outside Europe. The second rank cities as intra-regional cities. The third ranked cities are regional cities.



**Map 14. Green areas continuity (fragmentation index) in Larger Urban Zones, 2009**

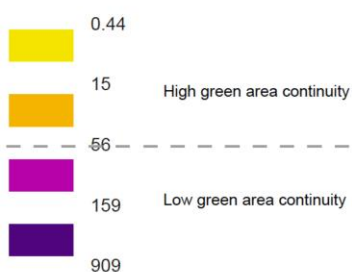


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### Green area continuity in city regions (2009)

Index calculated considering motorways, freeways and other major roads as well as railroads and built-up areas as elements breaking green area continuity.



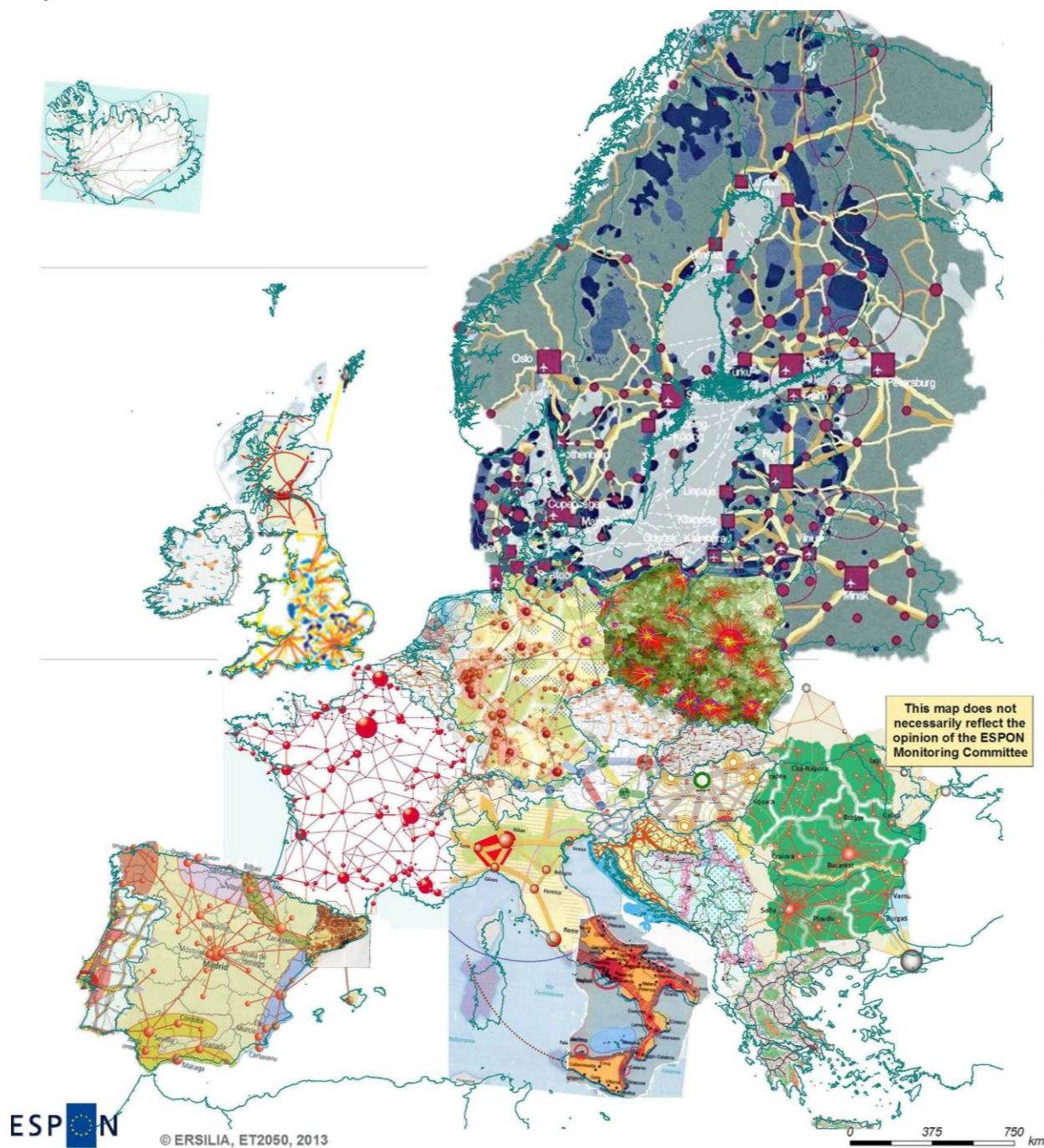
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**Source: ESPON ETMS**





**Map 15. Collection of territorial visions at national and transnational scale.**



**Source: ESPON ET2050**





**Map 16. Open and polycentric Europe vision toward 2050**



**Illustration 16 “Open and Polycentric Europe” Vision towards 2050<sup>52</sup>**

**Source: ESPON ET2050**



## **1.4 Territorial development is currently not in favour of cohesion**

Whereas the 4<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report (2007) presented convergence at national and regional levels and estimated that these trends would continue, the trends have changed since then and recent developments go in the opposite direction. The 4<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report presents a positive trend balancing the territorial implication of the European Single Market. With support from European funds the differences between and within Member States were expected to diminish. Cohesion Policy was expected to generate 2 million additional jobs by the end of 2015.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report (2010) was less positive, but still identified on-going cohesion. The report acknowledges that regional disparities have shrunk in the past decade despite the crisis. In the light of the Europe 2020 strategy (also adopted in 2010) the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report suggests diminishing the gap further by promoting competitiveness and convergence from the region's own assets (endogenous growth) as part of Europe 2020. The report shows that public investment is critical to achieve this and to improve the competitiveness of less developed regions.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report (2014) has a different tone. The report shows that despite the positive outlook at the beginning of the crisis regional disparities in employment and GDP per head have widened in many countries. In other countries regional disparities have stopped narrowing for these indicators. In all cases, the distance to European targets has become greater. The report shows in particular that the territorial impact of the crisis differs across Europe. In general metropolitan areas are more resilient as are second tier cities in eastern Europe. The employment gains from before 2007 have mostly been lost, especially southern Europe.

The ESPON synthesis report agrees and states that the convergence seen before the crisis stalled and to some extent reversed. Regions in the core of Europe and the Nordic countries, already enjoying greater wealth before the crisis, have in general struggled less or recovered quicker. Similarly, in most countries major urban agglomerations are doing better than other regions which increases territorial imbalances.

This suggests that the objectives of TA 2020 are far from being reached and still need to be defended politically. More efforts are needed to strengthen the application and implementation of TA 2020 in Europe.

This calls for an in-depth discussion of the TA 2020 'delivery mechanisms' (tasks 2 and 3 of this study may serve as first inputs for this), and a reinforced relation to Europe 2020. The envisaged 're-launch' of Europe 2020 in early 2016 might offer a good opportunity for this.



## 2 Recent milestones in European territorial cohesion policy

Given territorial imbalances in Europe and the trends discussed above, European territorial development has been part of the European debate for decades. From the early 2000s the debates focused increasingly on territorial cohesion. This chapter presents recent milestones of the policy process with a focus on territorial cohesion and development of the TA.

Following a long process of intergovernmental cooperation in spatial planning and territorial development policies, territorial cohesion was included in the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. This made territorial cohesion officially a shared competence, which signifies the Commission's right of initiative, where Member States, represented in the Council, are the decision-makers and they need the agreement of the European Parliament. In other words, areas of shared competence are areas where the full vigour of EU legislative process can be brought into play, including a strong say by the Commission over the implementation of legislation.

Despite the being a shared competence, intergovernmental cooperation on territorial matters continued. In 2011, TA 2020 replaced the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (TAEU) from 2007.

The overview of developments is followed by an overview of players.

**Table 1 Key steps in cooperation on territorial cohesion**

Year	Ministerial meetings	Location	Topics addressed
<b>1989 - 2004</b>		ESDP <sup>4</sup> - process	From identification of spatial planning as a relevant issue in Nantes and the publication of the ESDP in 1997 in Leipzig
<b>2004</b>	□	Rotterdam	Dutch discussion document on the TA presented
<b>2005</b>	□	Luxembourg	TAEU Scoping document
<b>2005</b>		London	Decision to separate the Agenda from background document
<b>2006</b>		Amsterdam	Stakeholders conference
<b>2006</b>		Espoo	Draft TA
<b>2007</b>		Berlin	Draft TA
<b>2007</b>	□	Leipzig	Presentation of the final TA Presentation of Leipzig Charter (urban policy)
<b>2007</b>	□	Acores	Action plan programme on TA
<b>2008</b>		Bled	Follow-up on the implementation of the TA Action Plan
<b>2008</b>	□	Marseille	TA process and link to cohesion policy (also Paris conference on territorial cohesion)
<b>2009</b>	□	Lisbon	Integration of territorial cohesion in the Treaty
<b>2009</b>	□	Marianské Lazne	First review of consultation on the EU Commission Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion
<b>2009</b>		Stockholm & Kiruna	Assessment of TA actions and conference on territorial potential
<b>2010</b>		Seville	Discussion in preparation for revision of the TA - focus on urban areas
<b>2010</b>		Namur & Liege	Territorial impact of EU Transport Policy and governance mechanisms for policy coordination
<b>2011</b>	□	Gödöllő	Adoption of TA 2020

<sup>4</sup> European Spatial Development Perspective



Year	Ministerial meetings	Location	Topics addressed
2011	□	Poznań	Roadmap and report on the place-based approach and TA 2020
2012		Copenhagen	Roadmap and territorial impact assessment methodologies
2012		Nicosia	Future of Cohesion Policy and geographical specificities – focus on islands
2013		Dublin	Joint discussion territorial cohesion and urban development – focus on local planning and citizens
2013		Vilnius	Joint discussion territorial cohesion and urban development Territorial impact of migration
2014		Athens	Blue growth and urban poverty
2014		Milan	Linking urban and territorial cohesion policies, and the role of inner areas / General Affairs Council on Cohesion Policy
2015	□	Riga	Urban Agenda road map Role of small and medium sized urban areas in territorial development
2015	□	Luxembourg (scheduled)	Assessment of TC/TA 2020 implementation, territorial scenarios, facilitation of cross-border development, Polycentric crossborder Regions / General Affairs Council on Cohesion Policy

Source: Spatial Foresight, 2015

### Key players in territorial cohesion policy

Several actors are involved in territorial cohesion policy-making and discussing, reviewing and implementing the TA. These are European institutions as well as intergovernmental bodies. The most important (in alphabetical order) are:

**European Commission - DG REGIO** is the body responsible for territorial cohesion. The main issues are capitalising on the potential of each territory, managing concentration, connecting territories better, developing cooperation and fostering urban-rural links. This is largely done through ERDF and CF.

**Informal ministerial meeting on Territorial Cohesion / Directors general meeting on Territorial Cohesion, meeting of National Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP).** The latter was created during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU in 2007, to provide technical support for the cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial development during implementation of the TA. It is also the back-bone for communication among those directly concerned by the TA and its First Action programme. The NTCCP is made up of representatives of the Member States, the candidate countries and guest countries Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, European Union institutions and the relevant territorial stakeholders.

**European General Affairs Council** consists of the heads of government of the 28 EU Member States. It coordinates preparations for European Council meetings and is responsible for a number of cross-cutting policy fields, among others for cohesion policy.

**European Parliament - REGI Committee** is responsible for the EU's regional development and cohesion policy and works closely with the European Commission and Council as well as the CoR and local and regional authorities to shape the legislative framework.

**CoR** is the assembly of regional and local representatives in the EU and an advisory body for the European Commission. In relation to territorial cohesion policy it has a specific commission (COTER Commission) where representatives from local and regional authorities discuss the planning and implementation of regional and transport policy and ensures that their concerns are taken up by other European institutions.



**Structural Action Working Party (SAWP)** Committee responsible for the legislative part of the European Structural and Investment Structural Funds (ESIF) and the Cohesion Fund of the European Council.

**COESIF** is a standing committee of the European Commission. Its function is to discuss the application of regulations governing European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Cohesion Fund. Its meetings are usually monthly and are chaired by the European Commission and attended by officials from Member States.

**(EG)TCUM** is an expert group created by the Coordination Committee of the Funds (COCOF in the 2007-13 programming period, the current COESIF). The group consists of representatives of the EU Member States from national institutions involved in issues of territorial cohesion, urban development and spatial planning. TCUM is led by the European Commission (DG REGIO). TCUM advises the European Commission and COESIF on implementation of the territorial and urban aspects of the Regulations. Since 2015 EGTCUM is an independent expert group.

**ESPON** inspires policy making by providing territorial evidence, i.e. promoting and fostering a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy learning for public authorities.

## 2.1 Territorial Agenda for the EU (TAEU)

Following the processes linked to the ESDP, the Member States and the TAEU underlined that intergovernmental cooperation remains the way forward for European territorial policy. This means that the Commission should retain only limited competence highlighting the view that intergovernmental approaches are more appropriate for many aspects of the work.

In 2004 an informal meeting of ministers during the Dutch presidency started the process leading to preparation of the TAEU. A meeting in Rotterdam was set-up to report on the territorial state and perspectives of the EU, a synthesis of evidence from the ESPON programme and elsewhere. This proposal evolved into two documents, the 'state-of play'-document and a separate, more political, TAEU. A small drafting team, set-up under the trio presidency, led the preparation of the TAEU. Furthermore, a decision to integrate the TAEU into other policies was made. Ministers responsible for territorial cohesion agreed and reiterated in Rotterdam, Luxembourg, Leipzig and the Azores to focus on integration of the territorial dimension in EU policies instead of creating a separate EU territorial development framework. This notion breaks with the past as it emphasises territorial evidence, rather than EU spatial visions. On the other hand, it leaves open the role of territorial cohesion in cohesion policy and to what extent policy sectors allow territorial administrations to influence their policies.

Following the so-called 'Rotterdam process' the TAEU was adopted at the informal ministerial meeting in Leipzig in May 2007. Followed by an Action Plan under the Portuguese presidency in the second half of 2007.

## 2.2 Towards territorial cohesion as an objective of the EU

Acknowledgement of territorial cohesion gradually increased until its official recognition in the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 as a policy objective, alongside economic and social cohesion.

The term territorial cohesion was introduced at the EU-level in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997). In 2004 DG REGIO included territorial cohesion in an interim report and referred to the Treaty establishing the European Community by defining territorial cohesion as a balanced distribution of





human activities across the EU, complementing economic and social cohesion. Also the third Cohesion Report (2004) addresses territorial cohesion: 'The concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing this. In policy terms, the objective is to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, preventing territorial imbalances and by making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional more coherent. The concern is also to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions'. The fourth Cohesion Report (2007) went one step further and placed territorial cohesion next to economic and social cohesion, rather than supporting other objectives for EU policies.

October 2008 the European Commission published a Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion: Turning Territorial Diversity into Strength in anticipation of the Lisbon Treaty. This paper marks a shift from intergovernmental discussion on territorial cohesion to a more active role for the European Commission on territorial matters. The main message is that place and geography matters for EU policies. The Green Paper sets out numerous questions for consultation but was never really followed up and a White Paper on territorial cohesion was not elaborated.

Consequently, intergovernmental discussion on the TA got stronger, especially after the treaty in 2009.

## **2.3 Territorial Agenda 2020 (TA 2020)**

A milestone in the process towards TA 2020 was reached during the Swedish presidency in 2009. Conclusions were that the TAEU and its Action Plan remain necessary to re-create the initial momentum and to focus on using the work carried out. The question of what to do with the TA needed once more to be clearly answered and the answer supported by all Member States.

The conclusions were discussed in the following three EU presidencies of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, resulting in the revised TAEU and adoption of TA 2020 under the Hungarian presidency. Most of the preparatory work was under these presidencies. For instance territorial cohesion governance and visibility of the TAEU for outsiders were priorities of the Belgian presidency. A revision of the TAEU was finally agreed under the Hungarian presidency in 2011. The TAEU was replaced by TA 2020, which focuses more on Territorial Cohesion and refers to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

TA 2020 was agreed at an informal meeting of national ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development under the Hungarian Presidency in May 2011. TA 2020 provides the basis for Member State cooperation in spatial planning and asks for stronger integration of territorial concerns in sector policies. Like its predecessor, TA 2020 calls for strengthened territorial objectives in sector policies, which experience has proven is challenging.

## **2.4 Place-Based Approach**

Already during elaboration of TA 2020, the place-based approach became a leading idea in the territorial policy and cohesion debate in Europe. Influenced by the Barca report from 2009, cohesion policy gained a stronger territorial focus. The Barca report advocates a place-based approach and has



been the basis for the revision of Structural Funds after the 2007-2013 period. The assumption is that the place-based approach improves performance of development policies (by stimulating endogenous development potential and tailoring policy to local circumstances) and properly outlines the role of territorially bound assets (factors) such as settlement and accessibility infrastructure, in pursuing key development goals at EU and national levels. The place-based approach is the opposite of the sectorial approach that usually neglects synergies between different types of public intervention.

Place-based policy is a long-term strategy to tackle persistent underutilisation of potential and to reduce persistent social exclusion in specific places through external intervention and multi-level governance. It promotes the supply of tailored integrated goods and services and it triggers institutional change. This approach acknowledges the relevance of territory and relies on local knowledge, a notion which has also been emphasised in TAEU as territorial capital. It is believed that a place-based approach offers two main benefits as it:

- covers important elements and mechanisms for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.
- increases policy performance, by building synergies and coordination mechanisms as well as enhancing endogenous development forces including territorial capital.

This place-based discourse is reflected in the roadmap presented during the Polish presidency in 2011. The Polish presidency made major efforts to implement TA 2020. The roadmap serves to implement the priorities of TA 2020 and Europe 2020 objectives simultaneously, focusing on implementation of TA 2020 priorities by supporting the objectives of other sector policies.

A background report for the Polish presidency focuses on ways to strengthen the territorial dimension of Europe 2020 and the EU Cohesion Policy cross-sector policy coordination issue or the integration of policies and goes deeper into challenges for not having a territorial dimension in EU and national policies.

In 2013, a NTCCP report showed the results of a survey on the ways Member States integrate the place-based approach into their public policies at national, regional and local levels, in line with the ideas of the Polish presidency. The survey shows that territory is perceived as important for cross-governance dialogue. The main ingredients for a place-based approach for policies are present. However, the approach differs per Member State and region. Furthermore, some aspects could be strengthened including the provision of territorial evidence, multi-level governance and its instruments and the extension of a place-based approach to policies other than regional, urban, transport and environmental.

## **2.5 European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-20**

The ideas put forward under the Polish Presidency to increase the territorial dimension of Cohesion Policy have made their way into the regulatory framework for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2014-2020. Among those are the possibility of multi-fund programmes and more emphasis on tools for better synergies such as ITI and CLLD. In addition, these tools counterbalance the sector orientation of ESIF with its thematic concentration and the introduction of investment priorities.



Urban policy related instruments have been introduced in Cohesion Policy. This is characterised by three main elements in the Common Provisions Regulation and ERDF regulation on sustainable urban development.

- A minimum of 5% of ERDF resources at national level must be allocated to integrated actions for sustainable development.
- Innovative actions can be supported, including studies and pilot projects to identify or test new solutions which address issues that are related to sustainable urban development.
- The Urban Development Network (UDN) has been established to promote capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience at EU-level between urban authorities responsible for implementing sustainable urban development strategies and authorities responsible for the innovative actions.

The Common Provisions Regulation (1303/2013) includes, furthermore, the possibility of combining different funding sources in multi-fund programmes. This can enhance cross-sector coordination. Looking at ESIF programmes for the 2014-2020 programming period particularly in France, Greece, Portugal and Poland multi-fund programmes are widely used, whereas other countries and regions mainly use single fund programmes (see Table 2).

Besides the urban policy related instruments, the regulations for 2014-2020 ESIF include instruments offering a structured framework for place-based initiatives. The two most important are:

- ITI, introduced in the Common Provision Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, Article 36. This makes it easier to implement territorial strategies that need funding from different sources. In this sense, ITI is a tool to promote a place-based form of policy-making. It exploits the development potential of various territories (national, regional, rural, functional, etc.) through the integrated use of various funds.
- CLLD encourages local communities to develop integrated bottom-up approaches in responding to territorial and local challenges calling for structural change. CLLD strategies can then respond to growing diversity and complexity. The methodologies for CLLD should focus on specific sub-regional areas, be led by local action groups, carried out through integrated and multi-sector area-based local development strategies and take into consideration local needs and potential. CLLD is based on the LEADER approach to community-led local development, financed by the Structural and the Rural Development Funds and has proven to be an effective and efficient tool in the delivery of development policies. There is a single methodology regarding CLLD making it applicable to all ESI funds.





**Table 2 Number of single and multi-fund programmes per Member State – status June 2015**

	ERDF (& CF) OPs	ESF OPs	EAERD	EMFF	ESIF MULTI- FUND	TOTAL OPs
Austria	1	1	1	1		4
Belgium	3	2	2	1	2	10
Bulgaria	4	1	1	1	2	9
Croatia	1		1	1	1	4
Cyprus	1		1	1	1	4
Czech Rep.	5		1	1	3	10
Denmark	1	1	1	1		4
Estonia			1	1	1	3
Finland			2	1	2	5
France	7	5	30	1	31	74
Germany	15	16	15	1	1	48
Greece	1		1	1	16	19
Hungary	2		1	1	6	10
Ireland	2		1	1	1	5
Italy	21	20	23	1	9	74
Latvia			1	1	1	3
Lithuania			1	1	1	3
Luxembourg	1	1	1			3
Malta	2	1	1	1		5
Netherlands	4	1	1	1		7
Poland	5		1	1	17	24
Portugal	2	1	3	1	9	16
Romania	4	1	1	1	1	8
Slovakia	5	1	1	1	1	9
Slovenia			1	1	1	3
Spain	22	22	19	1	1	65
Sweden	9		1	1	2	13
UK	6	5	4	1	1	17
ETC	71				5	76

**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015**

In addition, stronger emphasis on partnership principles in ESIF, following the Code of Conduct, is seen as a way to strengthen place based approaches in Structural Funds with opportunities for local and regional stakeholders to play a stronger role.

In addition, Financial Instruments may provide resource-efficient ways of deploying Cohesion Policy resources by providing repayable support for investment through loans, guarantees, equity and other risk-bearing instruments. Financial instruments can recycle funds over the long term and mobilise additional public or private co-investment addressing market failures in line with Europe 2020 and cohesion policy priorities. In the 2014-2020 period financial instruments can be applied using ESI funds under any thematic objective.

Besides the formal ESIF system, EU macro-regional strategies are integrated frameworks endorsed by the European Council to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area within the EU and third countries in the same geographical area. These benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion. There are expectations or hopes



that EU macro-regional strategies may develop the potential to align or coordinate ESI Funding at macro-regional level and thus contribute to a better place-based use of funds.

## 2.6 Current debate

Despite all these improvements in the formal system of ESIF, overall challenges in non-coordination of sector policies and territorially blind sector policies persist.

Territorial cohesion, as well as a place-based approach, is a complex objective, which is not always understood by all policy makers. In 2015, the European Commission DG REGIO published a study 'TA 2020 put in practice' examining how the efficiency and effectiveness of Cohesion Policy is enhanced by a place-based approach. Results of this study show examples of the added value as well as the challenges posed by putting the place-based approach into action. The report contains 21 case studies of territories across Europe. The conclusions include common complexities of a place-based approach such as an integrated approach and multi-level dialogue, but highlight more the change of mind-set in decision-makers from a more administrative and compliance driven attitude to a more result-oriented approach.

This echoes a range of other ideas to strengthen the territorial dimension in policy making. As emphasised in a report by the German ministry for spatial planning, territorial cohesion policy and its implementation can benefit from dialogue among equals. TA 2020 refers to coordination, which is to be interpreted in the sense of dialogue across different governance levels and sector policy agencies. Several ideas of how to strengthen these aspects of territorial cohesion can be identified in current debates. Among these are:

- Regionalised Europe 2020 targets. Europe 2020 sets targets at Member State level. The current debate on revision of the strategy includes the idea of introducing targets at regional level.
- A specific EU Territorial Cohesion Council composed of ministers responsible for territorial cohesion, could address Territorial Cohesion issues and position the territorial dimension strongly in the EU. This would imply an institutionalisation of territorial cohesion at the European Council and increase the status of territorial cohesion, strengthening territorial issues in EU and national policies.
- An EU General Affairs Council Plus, could place territorial cohesion as a regular topic on the agenda of the EU General Affairs Council. This would build on existing Council structures and allow informal and open intergovernmental cooperation in territorial development to continue.
- EGESIF & COESIF Territorial Cohesion could be included as a regular topic on their agendas.
- EU White paper A White Paper on Territorial Cohesion could follow on the previous Green Paper and provide concrete proposals for Community action in territorial cohesion. Alternatively an action plan or other way of strategically addressing territorial cohesion could support that process.
- Better coordination between the Urban Agenda and the TA at European level.



In terms of content some aspects are currently more prominent in the discussion on territorial cohesion. Following the economic crisis, there is an increased focus on using the social dimension of territorial cohesion to decrease gaps across Europe. At the same time there are also discussions on the development of inner areas as stressed during the Italian Presidency in 2014 and the role of cities for territorial development addressed in the Latvian Presidency in 2015.

At the overarching strategic European policy level, the territorial dimension and long-term perspective of policies seems to get weaker. While the Energy Union echoes the ideas of balanced development and an integrated EU, this energy policy depends on interaction with other policies, which is not the case for the review of Europe 2020 or the Investment Plan for Europe, also known as the 'Juncker Plan'.

From what can be seen the expected revision of Europe 2020 is not likely to address the lack of a territorial dimension in the strategy. Also the new European flagship initiative, the Juncker Plan, has no territorial component to foster investments in Europe. Neither from the perspective of different development stages, paths and decision-making approaches across Europe, nor from the perspective of integrating sector policies. Single policies in relation to the single market are addressed.

In that sense increased (political) emphasis on the territorial dimension – related to territorial cohesion and the objective of TA 2020 – seems increasingly difficult to achieve.



### 3 Implementation of territorial cohesion and TA 2020

A review of the current state of play on achieving territorial cohesion showed that more needs to be done. The ESPON ETMS report states that recent developments in Europe go in the opposite direction of balanced development as promoted by the Territorial Cohesion objective in TA 2020 which triggers a discussion about delivery and implementation modes.

At the same time, evolution and development of the TA shows that working towards territorial cohesion is a longwinded process which takes time and frequent discussions are needed to keep the objectives in policy agendas at EU and national levels.

To assess the implementation of the Territorial Cohesion objective and the need to revise TA 2020 a survey was launched together with a series of interviews with key stakeholders. The survey focuses on the governance mechanisms and challenges for implementing the objective of Territorial Cohesion. This concerns governance tools for cooperation across policy sectors and levels of governance, as well as existing and new EU-level instruments for implementing territorial cohesion. Subsequently, the survey addresses experiences with TA 2020 and the continuing relevance of this document. This concerns the awareness of stakeholders in different sectors and levels of governance of TA 2020 and its objectives, as well as the relevance of territorial priorities and the success of the communication strategy. The survey serves, together with document analysis and interviews with key stakeholders, to present an up-to-date picture of how the objective of Territorial Cohesion is implemented, how the process can be improved, and whether TA 2020 needs to be revised, as presented in this report.

The survey ran from mid-December 2014 until 24 February 2015. It was sent to partners from the NTCCP, ESPON and other stakeholders with replies from 213 people. However, the response rate differs by question and declines towards the end of the survey. The answers reflect the respondents' own experience, knowledge of territorial cohesion and TA 2020, as well as their perception of implementation in various policy fields and at various levels of governance. The survey consisted of open and multiple-option questions.

Some general reflections from this are:

**Long-term strategies and spatial planning are in decline.** After the popularity peak in the 1990s it seems that spatial planning as well as long-term strategies are of declining (political) popularity in many Member States and at European level. Indications for this are the reduced manpower and political attention of national spatial planning in many countries, the metamorphosis of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (Interreg) from programmes supporting spatial planning and visioning to ESIF programmes with increasing focus on sector policies and investments. Also Europe 2020 as an overarching long-term strategy for the EU appears to be losing importance.

**Policy 'coordination' not high on agendas.** Both the Territorial Cohesion objective and TA 2020 put a strong emphasis on better coordination of sector policies and the place-based approach. Restrictive sector policy thinking remains, however, a key challenge at all levels of decision-making. Despite the on-going effort of key players and advocates of territorial policy-making in Europe, there are only minor



improvements in more efficient and effective territorial policies. Changing a system to more integrated thinking requires time and changed attitudes, which takes a lot of time. To really achieve policy coordination both education systems and the attitude of the public sector need to focus more on results and long-term solutions.

**Application of territorial objectives without reference to TA 2020.** Despite the difficulties of communicating and advocating TA 2020 objectives, a lot has been done over the past decade. Policy coordination and the place-based approach are frequent topics in the daily work of many policy-makers. These issues seem to remain distant and abstract at EU or national level, but they are often more concrete at regional or local level. At EU level (see introduction of ITI and CLLD) there is hardly any reference to TA 2020.

### 3.1 Implementing the Territorial Cohesion objective

It has been more than five years since Territorial Cohesion was recognised as a European Union objective in the Lisbon Treaty. For effective and efficient implementation of the objectives a common understanding of territorial cohesion by the actors is beneficial. Results from the survey illustrate the multi-dimensional character of the objective. The diversity and overlap between definitions inevitably leads to manifold interpretations for implementation and not least a perception of the concept's added value. At best this is a communication challenge, and at worst it becomes an obstacle to implementation.

Following the subsidiarity principles different governance levels address different aspects of Territorial Cohesion objectives. The tools for cross-sector coordination differ between the EU, national, local and regional levels and within ETC programmes.

- At EU-level formal consultations, territorial foresight projects, financial instruments, monitoring and the provision of territorial evidence are much used.
- At national level policy and planning documents are most prominent. Furthermore, environmental impact assessments and implementation bodies are used more at this level than at others.
- Regional and local authorities focus more on action plans in cooperation between policy sectors. This is followed by policy and planning documents, informal consultations and informal working groups.
- Within ETC programmes contractual relations and legal instruments are most used, including European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs).

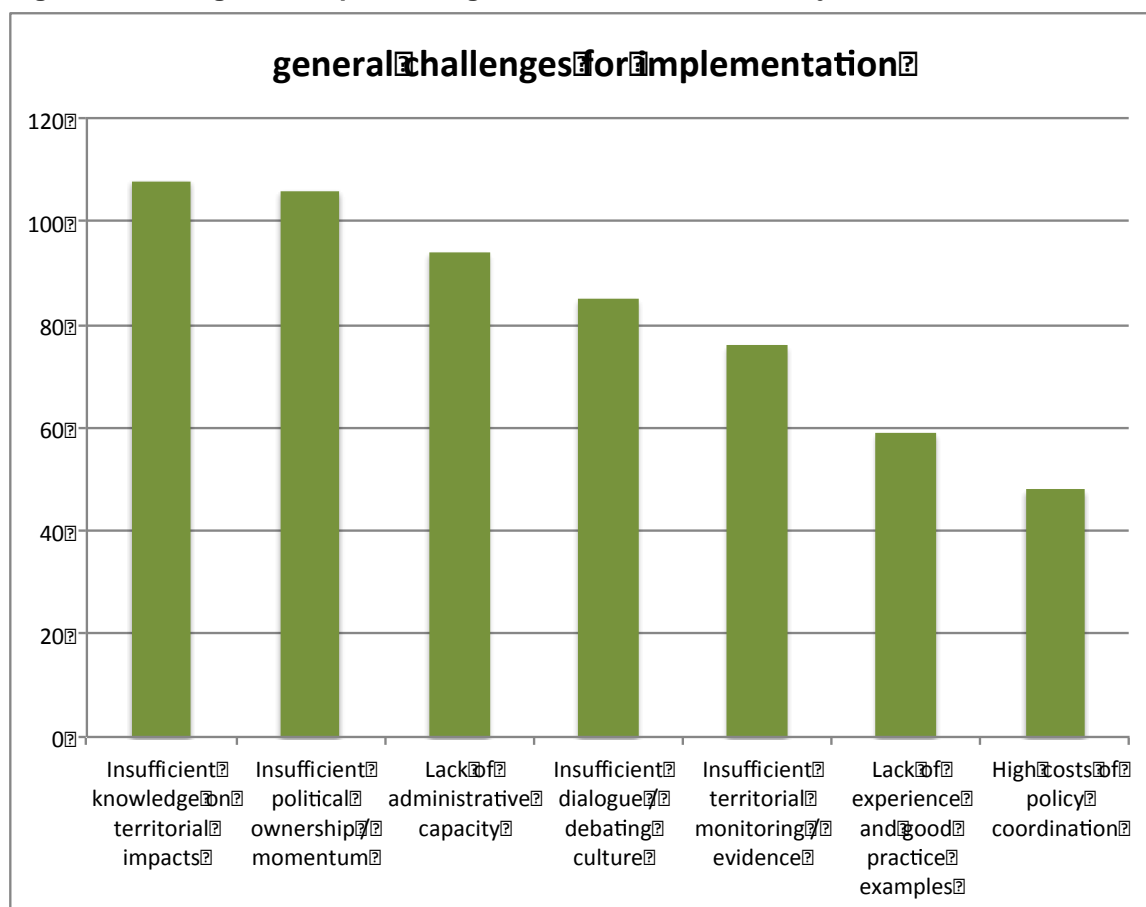
Despite these differences, there are a series of common implementation challenges. The challenges stressed most frequently in the survey are an insufficient knowledge of territorial impact and insufficient political ownership (see Figure 2). This is followed by issues such as a lack of administrative capacity, insufficient dialogue culture and insufficient territorial evidence.

Based on the general implementation challenges highlighted in the survey the following sections discuss implementation opportunities and challenges with Territorial Cohesion objectives for governance and involved players and for territorial evidence and impact.





**Figure 2 challenges for implementing the territorial cohesion objective**



**Source: Spatial Foresight, 2015 (online survey n=167)**

### 3.1.1 Governance for implementing territorial cohesion

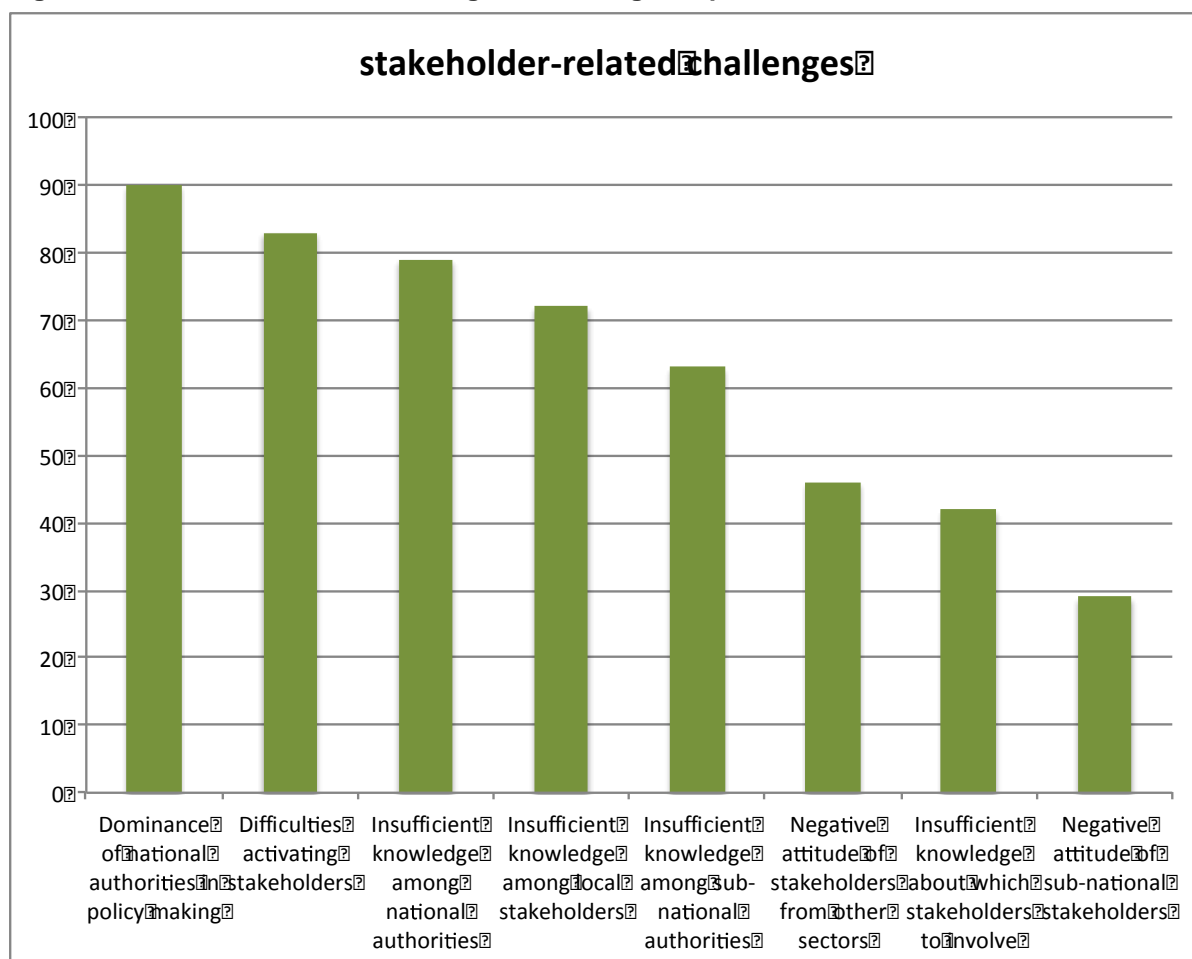
The survey highlights several governance related aspects concerning the implementation of Territorial Cohesion objectives. These include mechanisms or support tools for addressing Territorial Cohesion in the dialogue across levels of governance and sector policies.

**Key challenges: Dominance of national authorities & limited political ownership.** Territorial cohesion is often related to policy coordination and multi-level governance. In this respect, survey respondents indicate the dominance of national authorities in policy-making as the most important stakeholder-related challenge. This is followed by the difficulties of activating stakeholders and insufficient knowledge among national and local stakeholders (Figure 3). Taking these aspects together, a missing link seems to be activation of the right players – a challenge which is further accentuated by insufficient knowledge on territorial matters at different levels.

Indeed, it seems to be the lack of knowledge and awareness which pose the challenge, as the survey respondents do not perceive a strongly negative attitude among sub-national stakeholders.



**Figure 3 Stakeholder related challenges for stronger implementation of Territorial Cohesion**



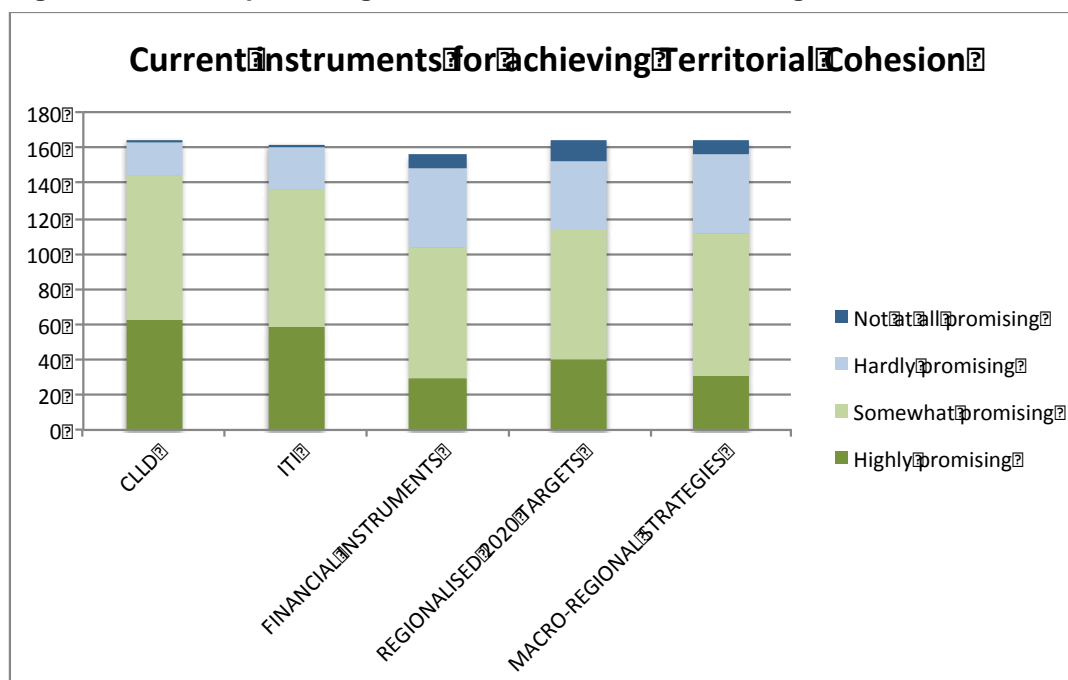
**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey n=161)**

Moving from challenges to solutions a series of future instruments can be discussed.

**Promising instruments: CLLD and ITI.** Among the instruments at EU level that could strengthen the implementation of territorial cohesion, these two appear to be the most promising. Whereas regionalised Europe 2020 targets and EU macro-regional strategies are seen as less promising, CLLD and ITI with their stronger local and regional focus could counterbalance the domination of national authorities and the challenges of activating stakeholders to implement territorial cohesion. CLLD focuses on the involvement of local players and exploiting their local knowledge (territorial capital) and ITI exploits the development potential of various territories through the integrated use of funds.



**Figure 4 The most promising current instruments for achieving territorial cohesion**



**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey n=166)**

**Possible future instruments: EC Guidance and ‘Comitology’.** In addition to the existing repertoire of instruments, new ones could further strengthen the dialogue between various players and limit the dominance of national authorities. Respondents say that an EU White Paper would be the most promising new EU-level instrument (as a follow-up to the Green Paper). This White Paper should include proposals for Community action in territorial cohesion. Secondly, territorial cohesion should be regularly on the agendas of COESIF and EGESIF. Furthermore, placing territorial cohesion as a regular topic on the agenda of the EU General Affairs Council was seen as a more promising approach than an independent EU Territorial Cohesion Council.

### Conclusions – governance aspects for achieving Territorial Cohesion

- ➔ The dominance of national authorities is seen as an obstacle to implementing territorial cohesion.
- ➔ CLLD and ITI can be promoted to address more governance levels.
- ➔ For the future EU-level activities are perceived as the most promising for territorial cohesion.

### 3.1.2 Evidence-base to support stronger implementation of Territorial Cohesion

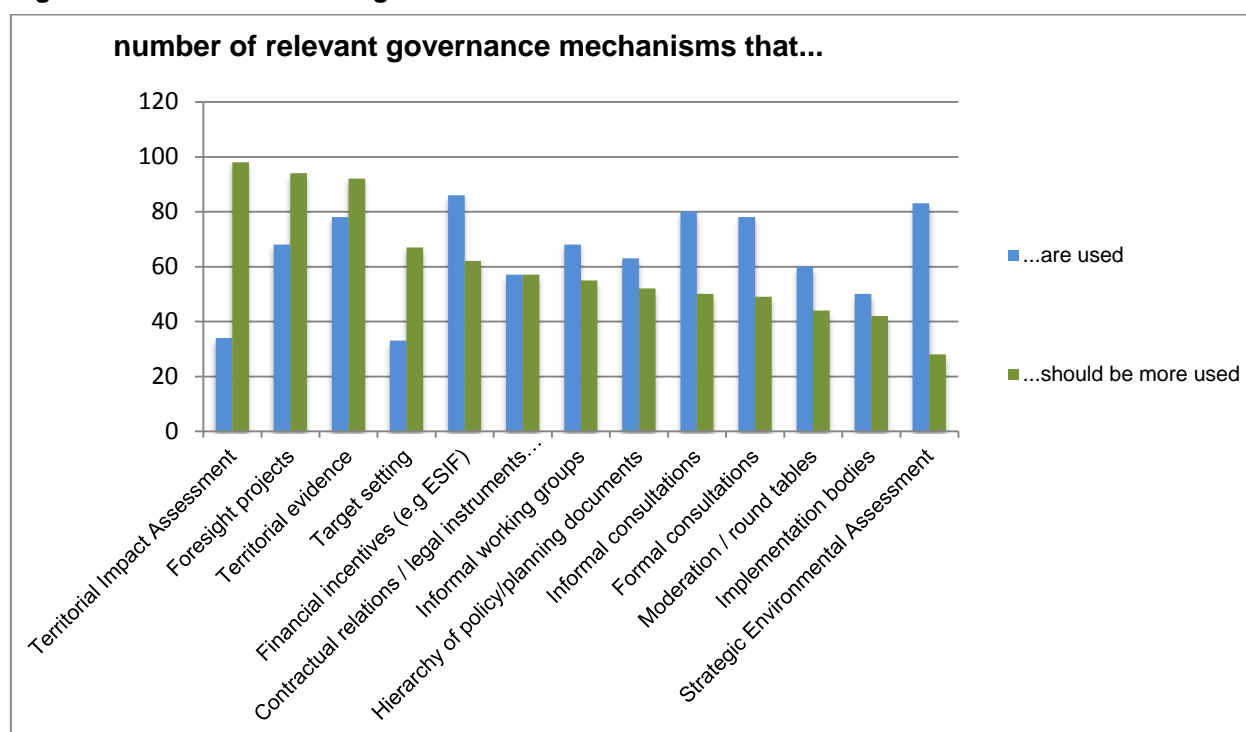
As illustrated in Figure 2 insufficient knowledge on territorial impacts is perceived as the biggest challenge for achieving territorial cohesion. ESPON has made a huge effort in providing territorial evidence since the launch of the first programme in 2006. However, there is increasingly demand for more information on areas affected by a policy, how and to what extent.



**Key challenge: Insufficient knowledge of territorial impact.** Most sector policies have territorial impact and can play an important role in the development of single territories. However, these impacts are often not considered by key players as they are first and foremost concerned about achieving their sector objectives. More knowledge of these territorial impacts among the key players of sector policies and at local and regional levels can facilitate a constructive dialogue across sectors and levels of governance.

**Promising instrument: Territorial impact assessments (TIAs)** can be a suitable tool for facilitating understanding of territorial implications by promoting dialogue across sector policies. Respondents indicate TIA, foresight projects and territorial evidence as key instruments which could be used more to further territorial cohesion (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 Number of relevant governance mechanisms in use and that should be used more.**



**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey, n=174)**

TIA also fits the place-based approach emphasising local development potential and acknowledging there is no one-size-fits-all approach. It helps local and regional players to better understand their exposure and sensitivity to various sector policies, as one region might be affected more than another. Assessing the territorial impact on a city or region can help anticipate effects of European or national policies. In general, policy-makers acknowledge a need for implementation review, monitoring and evaluation and TIAs are a tool to pursue this. European players have made huge efforts towards user-friendly methodologies and assessment tools such as the ESPON TIA.



Currently, Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments, financial incentives and formal as well as informal consultations are most often used. However, not all of these have been indicated as tools to be used more. Environmental Impact Assessments are perceived to be amply used.

Other tools that could be used more are foresight projects / strategic policy documents and the provision of territorial evidence. Formal consultations, monitoring and territorial evidence, as well as foresight projects and strategic policy documents are the tools most often used.

#### **Conclusions – evidence-base to support the implementation of Territorial Cohesion**

- ➔ There is a lack of information and knowledge of the territorial dimension which goes beyond a need for better communication – but concerns the development of new types of evidence.
- ➔ There is a request for more knowledge and evidence on the territorial impact of various policies. TIAs have a great potential to provide evidence.
- ➔ More generally, better territorial monitoring and evaluation of the territorial dimension might help to further implementation.

### **3.2 Reviewing TA 2020**

The necessity to review TA 2020 has also been assessed. The online survey assessed the relevance of the development challenges and priorities addressed in TA 2020, the awareness of TA 2020 and the success of implementation mechanisms and communication strategy.

**No need to revise TA 2020.** The challenges and potential as well as the priorities in TA 2020 are still perceived as applicable and relevant. All challenges, potential and priorities are indicated as relevant by more than 85% of the respondents. Territorially diverse demographic and social challenges and segregation of vulnerable regions are indicated most as challenges. Promoting polycentric and balanced territorial development and encouraging integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions are indicated most frequently as priorities.

#### **Conclusions – no revision of TA 2020**

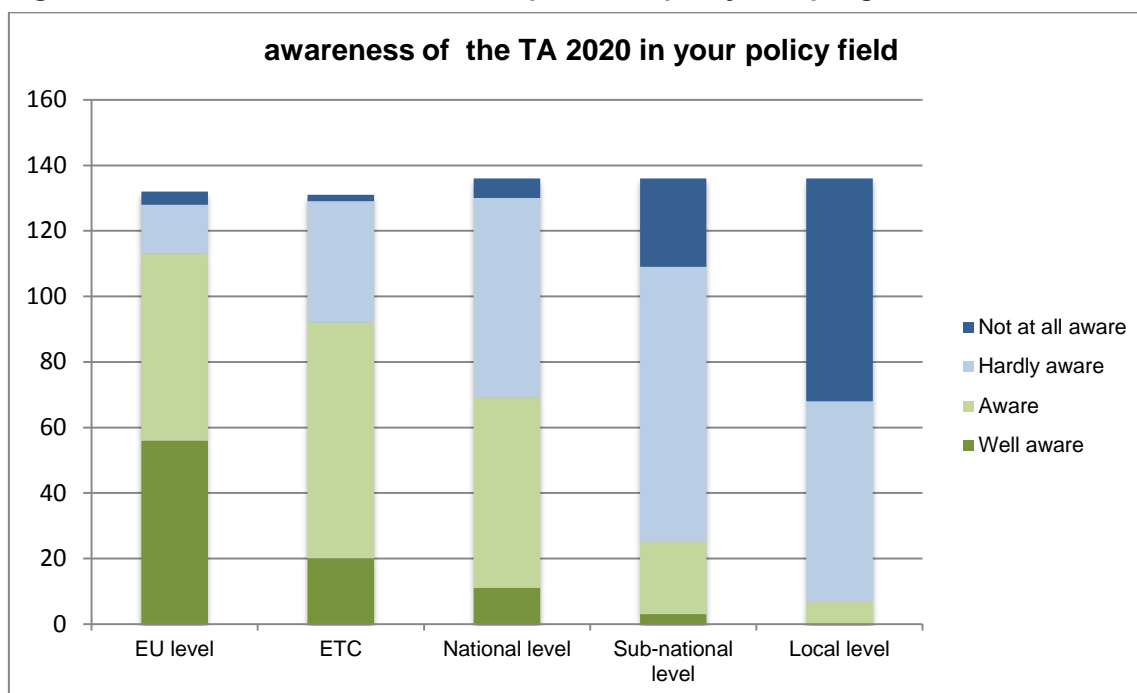
- ➔ There is no need to revise TA 2020 as the objectives are still relevant and not achieved, yet.
- ➔ It is good to keep the discussion going, as the objectives are long-term and therefore should remain on the policy agenda at all levels.

Other topics assessed in the online survey focus on the awareness and implementation mechanisms of TA 2020.





**Figure 6 Awareness of TA 2020 in the respondent's policy field per governance level**



Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey, n = 138)

### 3.2.1 Key player awareness of TA 2020

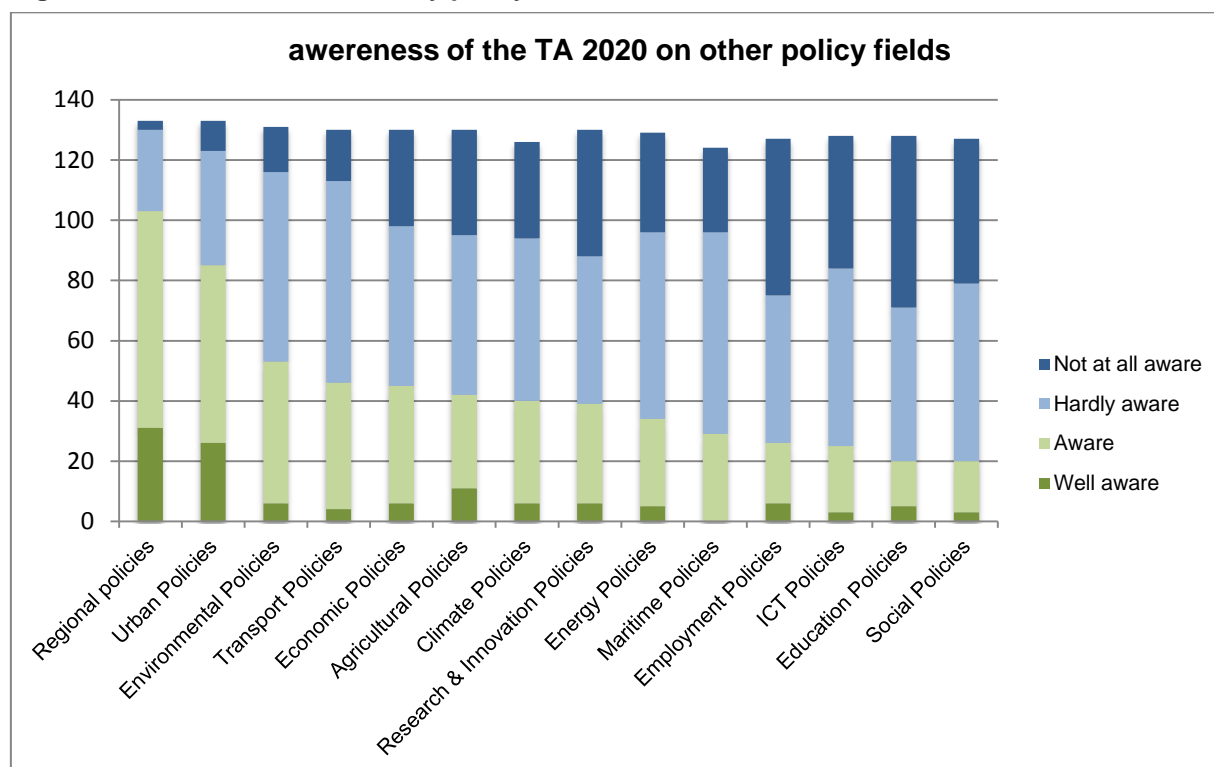
Similar to the discussion about territorial cohesion is TA 2020. Application of its priorities depends on the actions of key players at various levels of governance and in various policy fields. Much more than for territorial cohesion this is not only about how to approach these key players but also about their awareness of TA 2020 and its priorities.

**Key challenge: Awareness mainly at EU and ETC level only.** Respondents were asked to assess how aware key players in their policy field are about TA 2020 and its priorities. The results show clearly that respondents consider that colleagues at EU level and in the field of Interreg are aware of TA 2020 (see Figure 6). Colleagues at national level are thought to be less aware and colleagues at regional and local level appear to be hardly aware of TA 2020. This poses particular challenges to the application of TA 2020 at these levels.

**Key challenge: Awareness mainly in regional and urban policies.** Stressing importance of sector cooperation or coordination to implement the priorities of TA 2020, the respondents were also asked to indicate how aware they believe key players in other sector policies are. The result (Figure 7) shows that most respondents expect these players to be fairly aware of TA 2020, but are less optimistic when it comes to other policy fields. The expectations are lowest for players in maritime, employment, ICT, education and social policies. This poses particular challenges for players in other policy fields to contribute to TA 2020 objectives.



**Figure 7 Awareness of TA 2020 by policy field**



**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey, n = 133)**

### Conclusions – awareness of TA 2020

- ➔ Awareness of TA 2020 is particularly high at EU level and within the ETC community.
- ➔ TA 2020 is perceived to be well-known in regional and urban policies and less in policy fields with limited territorial dimension.

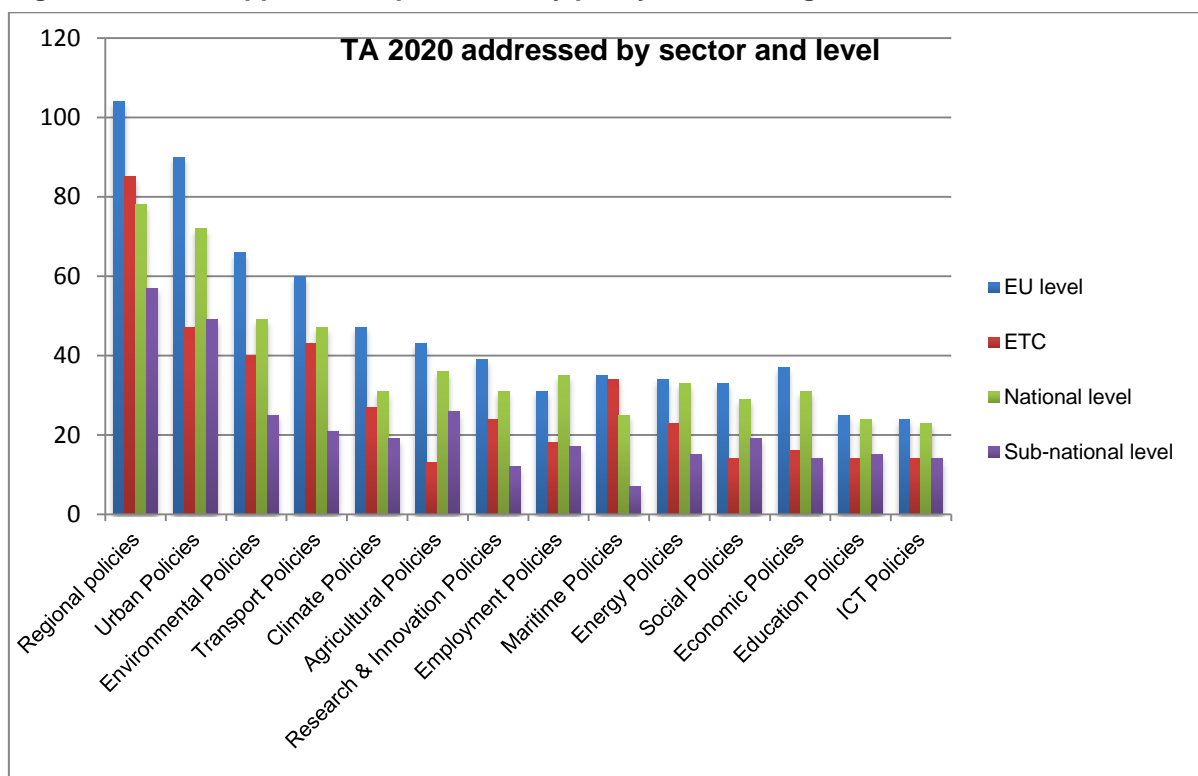
### 3.2.2 TA 2020 implementation mechanisms

Beyond the issue of mere awareness, there is also the question of how TA 2020 priorities can be put into action.

**Key challenge: Implementation mainly linked to EU-level.** The degree that TA 2020 is addressed in policy making provides first indications on the implementation of objectives. Respondents perceive that TA 2020 is mainly addressed by EU policies, followed by Interreg activities and national policies. The perception is that this concerns mainly urban and regional policies, followed by environmental, transport and climate policies. This picture corresponds largely to the awareness discussed above.



**Figure 8 TA 2020 applied or implemented by policy sector and governance level**



**Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey, n = 128)**

**Key challenge: Intergovernmental cooperation fragile.** The implementation or application of TA 2020 depends not only on awareness but also on the resources and priority settings of key players. A general perception is that implementation of TA 2020 is often hampered by a lack of staff and funding.

Possible steps forward need to consider the implementation mechanisms and communication strategy included in TA 2020 and their success.

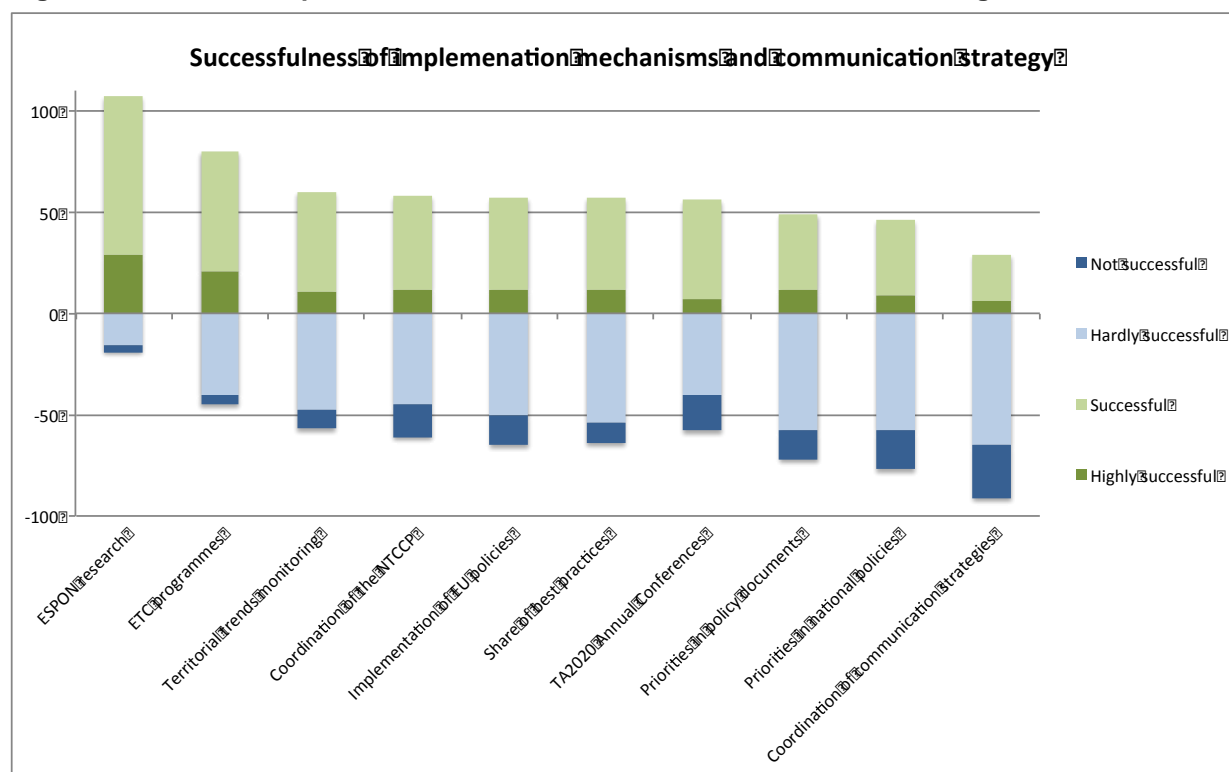
As presented in Chapter 2, current territorial and socio-economic developments in Europe go in the opposite direction to that envisaged in TA 2020. TA 2020 is a long-term oriented strategic document covering a wide spectrum of themes and a large geographical area with considerable territorial differences. Challenges arise in communicating these complex compromises making it difficult to clearly state what should be achieved.

**Promising instruments: ESPON & ETC programmes.** Since the beginning of the TA more and better policy and user-oriented territorial evidence has been needed. The great efforts of ESPON have led to important progress in describing Europe's territorial diversity and in developing tools for territorial impact. More and better analysis and tools are asked for. The main issue is that ESPON results are mainly shared within the club of 'believers' and remain somewhat academic and difficult to communicate to people in other sectors. The second most successful implementation mechanism is the consideration of TA 2020 priorities in ETC programmes. Other implementation mechanisms and



communication strategies are not considered a success, see figure 9. Taken together, this means that implementation is limited to the provision of territorial evidence and the territorial cooperation community. Very little is done in relation to other policies.

**Figure 9 Success of implementation mechanisms and communication strategies**



Source: Spatial Foresight 2015 (online survey n = 131)

### Conclusions – TA 2020 application

- ➔ Application of TA 2020 is mainly linked to the EU level and a limited number of policy fields.
- ➔ ESPON and ETC programmes have made major contributions to furthering the application of TA 2020 and its priorities.
- ➔ In general, it seems to be difficult to communicate TA 2020 as it is complex.



### 3.3 Key messages for the policy debate

Going beyond the survey results the following are key messages on implementation of Territorial Cohesion and TA 2020.

#### 3.3.1 Key messages concerning the implementation of Territorial Cohesion

- o The concept of territorial cohesion does not have a single definition; however, the definitions in the Treaty, TA 2020, the Green Paper, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report are considered almost equally relevant. The diversity of definitions and the overlap between them inevitably lead to manifold interpretations in terms of implementation and not least in perception of the concept's added value. At best this is a communication challenge, but at worst it is the first obstacle to successful implementation.
- o The main focus for implementing the Territorial Cohesion objective remains at the EU and national levels.
- o Insufficient knowledge of territorial impact appears to be the main obstacle for better implementation for example, triggered by sector policy measures, followed by insufficient political ownership.
- o The dominance of national authorities in policy-making and difficulties in activating stakeholders are key challenges when implementing the Territorial Cohesion objective.
- o The lack of knowledge of territorial cohesion and the territorial dimension of sector policies at different governance levels presents a serious challenge. Respondents indicate that national stakeholders from various policy domains dominate territorial policymaking, but seem to lack the relevant knowledge.
- o TIAs as a governance mechanism have great potential to boost cooperation between different policy sectors and understanding of the territorial dimension in policymaking. Responses show how frequently this tool is being used and whether it should be used more.
- o Currently, Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments, financial incentives and formal as well as informal consultations are the tools most often used. However, not all of these have been indicated as tools that should be used more. Environmental Impact Assessments are perceived to sometimes be over-used.
- o Formal consultations, monitoring and the provision of territorial evidence, as well as foresight projects and strategic policy documents are the most used tools.
- o From the instruments in place at the EU level, CLLD and ITI are seen as the most promising instruments for promoting territorial cohesion.
- o A new EU-level instrument to support implementation of the Territorial Cohesion objective could be an EU White Paper (as a follow-up to the Green Paper) with concrete proposals, alternatively a Community action plan.
- o Another promising approach is to place territorial cohesion as a regular topic on the agendas of COESIF and EGESIF.
- o Placing territorial cohesion as a regular topic on the agenda of the EU General Affairs Council was seen as a more promising approach than an independent EU Territorial Cohesion Council.





### 3.3.2 Tentative key messages concerning TA 2020

- o The challenges and potential as well as the priorities set out in TA 2020 are still seen to be applicable and relevant.
- o At the EU and national levels and within the Interreg community, awareness of TA 2020 is generally high. It is highest among stakeholders in regional and urban policies, followed by environmental and transport policies.
- o TA 2020 objectives are addressed in regional and urban policies, and to a lesser extent also in environmental and transport policies - at all levels but predominantly at the EU level.
- o The level of awareness of TA 2020 is low in other policy areas and at the sub-national governance levels.
- o Moving beyond the general level of awareness, it can be said that the TA 2020 is complex and remains abstract. This makes it difficult to communicate the aims and objectives.
- o Intergovernmental cooperation is not always suitable for implementation as it largely depends on the resources and priorities of key players in the Member States.
- o Looking at implementation of TA 2020 by policy field and governance level, the EU level is most prominent in almost all policy fields. However, respondents believe that the EU level applies or implements the objectives of the TA 2020 predominantly in regional and urban policies, followed by environmental, transport and climate policies.
- o There is a lot of work at the local and regional levels, but without reference to TA 2020. From a local and regional perspective, the focus is often not on implementing the objectives of TA 2020 but on doing the job and doing it well. In many cases this implies that policymakers move from administrative compliance to a more entrepreneurial approach.
- o From the beginning of the TA process, more territorial evidence has been requested, in particular more policy- and user-oriented territorial evidence. ESPON has undertaken great efforts to improve the situation and has achieved a great deal in describing Europe's territorial diversity and in developing tools for measuring territorial impact. And yet, there is a demand for more analysis and better tools. Taken together, this means that the pace of implementation is closely linked to the provision of territorial evidence.
- o Implementation of TA 2020 objectives is most successful in the core domains of territorial policy.
- o Involving more stakeholders from different policy fields and governance levels can address these challenges. Efforts are needed to reach beyond NTCCP, EGTCUM, the ESPON community and the fora of usual suspects.
- o The EU Urban Agenda, though running in parallel to TA 2020 and with a similar focus on cross-sector policy coordination and place-based policymaking, seems to take off in the next year and a direct link should be established.



## 4 As for the future

Territorial cohesion and the challenges and objectives in TA 2020 are still relevant. Recent territorial developments and trends maybe make them even more relevant than a decade ago.

At the same time, the objectives of TA 2020 are implemented sluggishly. They may even be implemented by coincidence rather than on purpose. Politicians no longer seem to value long-term strategies, the territorial dimension or the coordination of policy areas. This may imply that it would be best to give up and devote time and efforts to more promising endeavours or it may mean that it is more important than ever to increase efforts even if there are no short-term victories.

If the plan is to get the ideas and aims of TA 2020 back on track, there are a few concrete proposals. Most of these ideas focus on improvements at the level of European and national decision making which usually is at the forefront in the NTCCP debate. In addition there are discussion points which focus more on improvements at the local and regional levels.

### 4.1 Focus on EU and national policy making

More focus on implementation is needed at EU and national levels. This regards both the elaboration of future policy papers on territorial cohesion and the TA, as well as dialogue with other policy sectors and the elaboration of new territorial evidence.

**Open-result dialogue.** So far dialogue seems to focus on convincing other sectors that they need to take into consideration the territorial dimension or the territorial impacts of their policies. Maybe it is time to take a step back and engage in dialogue without predetermined conclusions. Territorial policy stakeholders may need to learn more about the reasoning and objectives of other sector policies and see how territorial policies can support or complement these. In that context a more concrete and systematic use of maps might help to get in touch with different stakeholders and sector interests, as they can help to not only discuss 'what to do', but also 'where to do what'. Focusing on 'open-result dialogues' can raise awareness about territorial matters and implications among stakeholders from various sector policies, and also provide new insights on the rationale of sector policies for territorial policy players which can be fed into the NTCCP and ESPON.

- ➔ **Member States** could strengthen their efforts concerning dialogue with various sectors on the territorial dimension and impact of their policies.
- ➔ **DG REGIO** could further strengthen coordination with other EU policies concerning the territorial dimension and impact of those policies.

**TIA and scenarios as eye-openers or invitations for dialogue.** Evidence is an important aspect for supporting the dialogue with others and for underpinning statements about the territorial dimension. More is needed than mere descriptions of what the European territory looks like. Territorial impact studies and territorial scenarios are suitable tools for getting the attention of decision makers. Evidence on territorial development needs is important (see ESPON Briefs) not least as an eye



opener. However evidence should be delivered with appropriate effect to the relevant decision makers (preferably at political level). To achieve this, more efforts are needed to provide just-in-time tailor-made-evidence for dialogue across policy sectors (including the further improvement of TIA tools), and at the same time increase insights into the specific rationales of sector policies and their territorial dimension. A first step in that direction was the inclusion of territorial impact in the Commission Impact Assessment Guideline in 2015.<sup>5</sup>

- **ESPON** could further strengthen its efforts for TIAs, while making them more user-friendly to serve as eye openers.
- **NTCCP** could help ESPON to deliver results with appropriate effect to national decision makers. To start with more content discussions at Director General Meetings could help.
- **EU General Affairs Council** could stress the need for dialogue between sector policies and advocate ministerial meetings bringing together different policy sectors.
- **DG REGIO** could help ESPON deliver the results with appropriate effect to line DGs, and set up suitable dialogue fora.
- **CoR** could help ESPON deliver the results with appropriate effect to decision makers.

**ESPON focus on implementation.** Overall the TA 2020 debate and papers need to move from agreeing on general principles to more result oriented implementation actions. This could be done by reconsidering the relation between NTCCP and ESPON.

- **ESPON needs to become (even) more user-oriented.** So far a lot of the results and tools produced by ESPON could be considered as ‘prototypes’. The next step might be to further test and fine-tune them and to get a stronger user-orientation. The applied research projects and territorial analysis tools developed by ESPON need additional efforts to become more directly policy relevant. The targeted analysis projects of ESPON could actually be further developed into targeted implementation projects, where the stakeholders not only receive analysis but also show that they implement and use it to improve their policy-making.
- **MC & NTCCP members need to engage with ESPON research.** They are key stakeholders to push ESPON towards stronger implementation focus. They can use their role to better articulate user and policy demand for ESPON studies. Indeed, researchers cannot be expected to deliver more policy-oriented and user-friendly results if policy-makers and potential users do not say what they need. Furthermore, ESPON MC and NTCCP members also need to strengthen their role and understanding as ambassadors of the territorial dimension and the results of ESPON. Only if they use their networks and contacts to advertise and ‘sell’ the territorial dimension, territorial analysis and ESPON tools, will the up-take be stronger.

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<sup>5</sup> See for the guidelines [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/ug\\_chap3\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/ug_chap3_en.htm) and for recommended tools on impact assessment [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/tool\\_29\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/tool_29_en.htm).



- **ESPON** could be more user and implementation oriented. This concerns the presentation of results but also an implementation focus for their analysis. This may also include increased focus on short-term efforts to support specific events.
- **NTCCP, EGTCUM, DG REGIO and CoR** could help ESPON to make research more policy relevant by engaging with the ESPON research community and discussing policy implications of the research and what research would improve policy making.

**More concrete policy papers.** Despite the main message of better coordination, the specific themes of TA 2020 can be interpreted differently at different times. Even if there is no need to redraft the TA 2020, short and more concrete papers providing a territorial policy contribution to on-going larger policy debates could give new life to TA 2020 objectives. Focusing on one specific aspect or theme, such a paper can link TA 2020 more tightly to policy debates and keep it in the discussion. For instance there could be a paper every year for high-level or even informal ministerial meetings.

It would be necessary to keep the balance between (a) jobs and growth policies, and (b) legitimate sustainable spatial development.

- **NTCCP in cooperation with EU Council Presidencies** could identify and develop short and thematically focused annual papers addressing the territorial dimension of current policy debates. Such a paper could be discussed at Director General meetings or even at informal ministerial meetings.
- **DG REGIO** could assist the NTCCP in identifying topics and preparing the document.

**Role of the European Commission.** For a long time the territorial dimension of policy making has been pushed by intergovernmental co-operation between Member States. They have also asked the Commission to approach territorial cohesion and, with the inclusion of territorial cohesion in the Treaty, Member States have given a mandate to the Commission – although this needs to reflect subsidiarity and proportionality. In general there are various – partly divergent – views on the relationship between intergovernmental cooperation and the Commission. A stronger involvement of the Commission would ensure more continuity than intergovernmental cooperation has managed so far. However, it would also require that Member States give a mandate to the Commission. Possible points for the discussion of a stronger Commission role might be:

- **Stronger advocacy of the territorial dimension** and tools like TIA among other policy sectors at the EU level and in Member States, regions and cities.
- **Better coordination** of EU policies and presentation of these and their results to Member States and EU citizens in general. This includes the identification of territorial aspects in EU and national policies and also the identification of key players who can influence territorial matters in relevant policies. This needs to acknowledge the complexity and overarching political priority settings within the Commission, which shape the framework within which DG REGIO can act.
- **Better communication on territorial matters** at EU level, in the Member States, regions and cities. This may involve regular publications on the issues or (annual) conferences where the



territorial sector meets other policy sectors. The study 'Territorial Agenda 2020 put in practice' is a valuable first step in that direction.<sup>6</sup>

- o **Bringing territorial cohesion and the territorial dimension to the EU General Affairs Council.** Having regular reports on territorial matters for the EU General Affairs Council and some discussion at that level would give a stronger political emphasis to territorial cohesion.

- **Member States** - via the NTCCP and EGTCUM - could formulate a clear demand or suggestion giving DG REGIO a mandate to become more active.
- **DG REGIO** could increase efforts to improve dialogue with other DGs on territorial matters and inform the NTCCP about their activities and progress in this field.
- **COESIF and EGESIF** could regularly discuss the territorial dimension and impact of ESI Funds and remind the Operational Programmes to consider their impacts on territorial cohesion within the programme areas and at EU level.
- **DG REGIO** could make territorial cohesion a regular topic on the agenda of the EU General Affairs Council.

**Improved links to Urban Policies.** In particular urban policies and the Urban Agenda are close to TA 2020 and more successful in persuading policy communities. It might be worthwhile to intensify dialogue with the urban policy field. Topics like small and medium-sized towns and the interplay between cities and their surrounding regions offer suitable starting points for discussion. As the content of both policy fields are closely related, they could be joined.

- **NTCCP** could join forces with the Urban Agenda either for targeted actions or for merging both policy fields.
- **UDG and EGTCUM** could envisage joint sessions to explore cooperation between the two policy agendas.
- **DG REGIO** could more generally see whether the various fora for territorial and urban policies can be streamlined.

**Preparing for future policy debates.** Making a strong impact on policy development needs preparation. If the territorial dimension is to be strengthened in future European policies, two upcoming discussions might be of particular interest:

- o **Europe 2020 Review.** A review of Europe 2020 will be launched in late 2015. If Europe 2020 remains the overarching strategy for European policy making, efforts should be undertaken to strengthen the territorial dimension in this review process.

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<sup>6</sup> EC (2015) Territorial Agenda 2020 put in practice. Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of Cohesion Policy by a place-based approach.





- ◉ **Preparing for ESIF 2020+.** In 2016 discussions about the ESI Funds post 2020 will slowly but surely start. If ESI Funds and Interreg are to get a stronger territorial dimension, this should be continuously advocated in the relevant European and national fora.
- ◉ **Further develop the work on territorial scenarios and perspectives.** A long-term vision for the European territory can serve a reference for European policies and investments. Linking to the renewed Europe 2020 strategy a territorial vision for Europe can support efforts to bring confidence to investors as well as coherence to fragmentation which is inherent in the actual administrative and sector-oriented structure of Europe.

- ➔ **NTCCP** could already start preparing short and focussed discussion papers concerning the review of Europe 2020 and ESIF 2020+ ready to deliver targeted input at the right moment.
- ➔ **DG REGIO** could assist the NTCCP in these efforts.
- ➔ **CoR** could further strengthen its efforts and communication concerning the territorial dimension of Europe 2020 and ESIF 2020+.
- ➔ **ESPON** could further develop territorial visions, scenarios and perspectives and promote these at European institutions and intergovernmental bodies.

**Review of TA 2020.** Summing-up, although there is no need to revise TA 2020, further development and review of the policy document and debate can help. This concerns communication, visualisation (including territorial scenarios), the elaboration of concrete measures and development of support tools such as cross-border legal provisions, improved links to the Urban Agenda and urban policy initiatives and at an appropriate moment input to the discussion of ESIF post 2020 – starting in 2016.

## 4.2 Focus on regional and local policy making

The implementation of territorial cohesion and TA 2020 depends in the end on a myriad of actions at local and regional level. This might deserve more attention in the policy debate including ideas of how to further stimulate action.

**Pay more attention to what is going on.** The principles of TA 2020 are often applied at local and regional level. However, people do not refer to TA 2020 but to result-oriented and innovative governance arrangements. To promote TA 2020 principles, including territorial cohesion and the place-based approach, more efforts could be made to show what is done at local and regional levels. For instance in each country, the NTCCP member could provide more case studies. In addition to national studies, there are European studies, such as the Polish Ministry study<sup>7</sup>, or the study on the on

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Regional Development of Poland (2013) The Place-based: Territorially Sensitive and Integrated Approach.



the TA 2020 commissioned by DG REGIO<sup>8</sup>, as well as the study on multi-level governance in support of Europe 2020 commissioned by DG REGIO<sup>9</sup>.

**Support a change of attitude and ownership at local and regional level.** From a local and regional perspective the focus it is often not on implementing TA 2020 but on doing the job and doing it well. In many cases this implies that public servants change their attitude from administrative compliance to more entrepreneurial approaches. Finding new solutions to solve a problem and being pro-active are key in this context. If the TA 2020 principles are to be implemented, more work needs to be done to advocate this shift of attitude at local and regional levels. For this, the NTCCP members play an important role in their countries.

- **NTCCP members** could collect and disseminate good practice within their countries to encourage wider use of place based policy making at local and regional levels.
- **DG REGIO and CoR** could promote European-wide implementation actions and demonstrate the benefits deriving from them.
- **DG REGIO, COESIF and EGESIF and SAWP** could promote the use of ESI Funds to increase administrative capacity and governance procedures at local and regional levels, beyond the need for attitudinal change.

**Subsidiarity principle.** A change of attitude and ownership at local and regional levels is closely connected to the subsidiarity principle. Actions should be taken as close to citizen level as possible. The appropriate level of decision-making varies depending on the policy fields and the division of decision-making powers in a Member State or region. Furthermore, in some cases this might imply the need to delegate decision-making powers to regional or local stakeholders. In general, the involvement of local communities and citizens may be needed. Stakeholders from different levels of governance and different sectors, as well as public, private and civil society stakeholders, often need to cooperate to apply the principles of TA 2020.

**Implementation partnerships.** In Austria, the national spatial planning sector is currently testing implementation partnerships in order to stress implementation despite a lack of formal instruments. In short the focus is on voluntary partnerships that commit themselves to implement specific aspects of the national strategy. The partnerships consist of members of the national committee for spatial planning and other stakeholders. Maybe this could inspire actions for the implementation of TA 2020. Instead of yet another roadmap, the NTCCP could focus on developing implementation partnerships with interested parties from any governance level.

- **NTCCP members** could test whether partnerships for single and concrete actions (maybe just for specific territories) could be an efficient way to improve implementation of TA 2020.

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<sup>8</sup> EC (2015) Territorial Agenda 2020 put in practice. Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of Cohesion Policy by a place-based approach.

<sup>9</sup> EC (2015) Local and regional partners contributing to Europe 2020: Multi-level governance in support of Europe 2020.



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- Maria José Festas (former Directorate General of Territorial Planning and Urban Development, Portugal) – 02.02.2015
- Merja Haapakka DG Regio (Policy Officer - Competence Centre Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development) – 15.04.2015
- Bert Kuby (Horizontal Policies and Networks) CoR – 13.02.2015
- Sverker Lindblad– (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development) Sweden – 09.02.2015
- Didier Michael – (French General Commission for Territorial Equality - CGET) France – 10.02.2015
- Władysław Piskorz DG Regio (Head of Unit - Bulgaria, Accession Negotiations, former Head of Unit Competence Centre Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development) – 12.02.2015
- Ilona Raugze– (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development) Latvian Presidency – 03.02.2015
- Rosella Rusca– (Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU) Italian Presidency – 06.03.2015
- Patrick Salez (consultant - former DG Regio official) – 23.02.2015
- Peter Schön (German Federal Institute for Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Planning) – 13.02.2015



- ◉ Silvia Vignetti (CSIL, Italy) – 17.02.2015
- ◉ Jacek Zaucha (University of Gdansk, Faculty of Economics, Poland) – 02.02.2015