
Project:	ESPON Territorial Reference Framework
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ESPON Futures Workshop – back-to-back to Directors General Meeting

This workshop was held the day before the Directors General Meeting and attracted about 20 participants from ministries of various Member States plus DG REGIO.

The discussion addressed both the framing of the European Territorial Reference Framework and the topics to address.

As for the framing the issues were, where to plant ideas (target groups) and how to trigger interest among the target groups. Key features of the discussion were:

- **Present facts.** Generally there was a fear that the project might target results too much to policy agendas; and it was outlined that there is a desire that ESPON simply should present plain facts.
- **Inspire target groups – local to European.** The facts presented shall inspire various target groups and there was no general agreement on specific target groups being more relevant than others. This might be a communication challenge, as different target groups will require different language/style/wording.
 - **At EU level – going beyond the usual suspects.** A lot of the discussion centered on Cohesion Policy. However, there was a strong support that also other policies affecting territorial cohesion need to be addressed. This shall also include non-funding policies such as competition or taxation.
 - **Address also local and regional planners.** Various discussion points underlined that also local and regional planners shall be addressed and inspired by the study.



- **Go beyond the usual socio-economic 'features'**. In particular quality of life was considered as a key important feature that needs to become much more prominent as current socio-economic debates and indicators. Other features to be strengthened are sustainability (SDG) and governance.
- **Merits of territorial diversity**. Cohesion may not mean the end of territorial diversity as diversity has its merits (united in diversity). Maybe one needs to think of defining a corridor of minimum and maximum territorial diversity.
- **Focus on questions where the European level is needed**. Supporting the Territorial Agenda there is a need to identify the areas (in particular policy gaps) where action or cooperation at European level is required.
- **Do not overemphasize negative messages**. The current papers of the project focus on challenges and very much on negative messages. To inspire maybe a shift to more positive and inspiring wording is needed.

The discussion on trends and scenarios highlighted a number of points:

- **Focus on 2050 and 2030**. There was some discussion on how to deal with the 2 time horizons of the study. 2030 is relevant for policy making, but 2050 in terms of trends and development probably to short a time horizon.
- **Territorial structures change rather slowly**. Territorial structures change very slowly. Therefore the question is how much focus shall be given to them and how much to aspects which change much more rapidly. Considering also the Paris Agreement and the objectives of 0 hectare land take by 2050, basically that would imply that the territorial structures will hardly change any more after 2050 but the way in which we use the territorial structures will change.
- **Functional changes move more quickly and affect the way we live and work**. Many important trends for the future concern rather functional changes and probably more emphasis should be given to the territorial implications of such changes, than to straightforward changes of territorial structures.
- **Scenarios building on the territorial impacts of sector trends**. There was a general agreement that territorial scenarios should actually be built on the basis of different sector scenarios and their territorial dimension, i.e. bringing together the territorial dimension of various sector developments. Among the relevant sectors mentioned in the discussion are energy, climate change, trade, next economy, governance.
- **Consider intra-regional disparities**. When building scenarios not only disparities between regions but also within regions should be considered.
- **Territorial scenarios will build on & talk to non-territorial drivers**. The scenario results shall allow to approach players in different sectors for a dialogue and thus have a clear link to the scenarios for their sectors.
- **Avoid normative scenarios**. Prescriptive and normative scenarios should be avoided. As mentioned earlier, the focus should be on presenting facts.

The day after the workshop, the results were presented at the Directors General Meeting. A few points from this meeting (not just covering the discussion on the European Territorial Reference Framework):



- **Polycentricity** is one of our biggest assets in Europe. We need to build a strong narrative for polycentric development, as it is the DNA of the EU. It offers opportunities to overcome access to services of general interest and depopulation challenges.
- **EC reflection paper** 'towards a sustainable Europe by 2030' is expected in autumn 2018.
- **ITI, CLLD, SUD** also linked to functional areas will probably become more integrated strategies in Cohesion Policy post 2020, but they should be monitored and show what they achieve.
- **Geographical specificities** will not be forgotten in Cohesion Policy post 2020.
- **SDG indicators.** How can SDG indicators be used at regional level? DG REGIO works on including SDG indicators into their indicators systems.
- **Territorial Monitoring needs** are stressed by the German Delegation (also mentioning their pilot action – to which also Christian contributes along the German-Danish border).
- **Scoping paper on task force** for the next Territorial Agenda (1 physical meeting per Presidency – rest electronic communication). Proposed members: 6 Member States (rolling presidencies last, current, four next presidencies) plus EC, ESPON, CoR. (Not all Member States were happy with the selection of Member States to participate in the task force.) The task force will focus on developing the next Territorial Agenda (incl. review of TAEU2020) and an Action Plan. The task force also needs to structure an approach on how to bridge from the ESPON study to policy choices and a Territorial Agenda (what is the purposes, how should it be served, what is the objective?). Other discussion points where, the link to the CBC resolution and the process if the EC follows up on the position presented by the DGs earlier. There is a also a question of linking the task force to the expert working group on 'climate change / sustainability'. The coordination between territorial and urban matters is another important matter.
- **Interest in our discussion paper.** The box on parallel worlds of Territorial Agenda and Cohesion Policy is interesting for policy makers and also the table Kai made on scenarios for Cohesion Policy caught a lot of interest.
- **Take political scenarios** (e.g. Brexit) into account for the scenario work. We need to think about what other big political events could emerge over the next decades.
- **Austrian Presidency priorities** include integration of urban and territorial agenda & integration of territorial and urban dimension into Cohesion Policy. Aim to contribute to improving the territorial governance framework and look at future priority issues for territorial and urban policies.