

## Editorial

The ESPON 2013 Programme has contributed with valuable research results upon territorial structures of the European Union and provided evidence-based support for territorial policymaking. The programme has significantly contributed to the co-creation of European knowledge base on territorial development and cohesion, but there have also emerged needs to more efficiently organize ESPON knowledge in order to increase its accessibility and local and regional applicability. The different projects and activities within the programme have produced numerous publications and presentations with data, indicators, typologies, models and maps, etc. The overarching objective of the *ESPON Detecting Territorial Potential and Challenges* (DeTeC) project was to develop a practical guidance on detecting territorial potentials and turn challenges into potentials deriving from larger territorial context using the analytical approaches and methods, tools and indicators developed within the different priority areas of the ESPON 2013 Programme.

In the first priority area Applied Research projects, for instance, the drivers, impacts and potential of territorial development are analysed, often with quantitative data, and then visualized in a number of advanced thematic maps. One underlying question concerns the extent to which the emerging pictures correspond to the normative concept of territorial cohesion, which, at least theoretically, underpins a number of strategies and policies that have emerged in the EU in recent years. The second priority area consisted of so-called Targeted Analysis projects that allowed policymakers to call for specific thematic and territorial analyses. In contrast to the former priority area in which applied research was conducted solely by transnational groups of researchers and experts, this priority area strived to integrate different kinds of stakeholders (policymakers and practitioners working at local, regional and national scales) in the projects. The stakeholders defined the thematic scope of projects provided by transnational group of researchers, and monitored the (interim) findings with respect to their applicability to their daily work. An overarching aim with these projects was to make ESPON knowledge more useful and applicable at the regional and local level.

The third priority area was Scientific Platform and Tools projects contributing to the accessibility and use of ESPON knowledge by providing new tools and evidence for other European programmes as well as for regional and local actors. As a scientific platform project the ESPON DeTeC has strived to meet the demand for analytical methods and approaches and to support local and regional practitioners and policymakers in their search for ways to identify territorial potential that include a European perspective. The objective of the ESPON DeTeC project has been to provide practical guidance on how to utilize ESPON knowledge (in particular from the above mentioned targeted analysis projects) to identify territorial potentials and to provide concrete and illustrative examples of good practices. The main output of the project is an interactive handbook providing practical guidance and concrete examples to practitioners and policy makers in an easy and understandable way.

The articles compiled in this publication are based on the results of the ESPON DeTeC project. Nordregio (Sweden) was the lead partner of the transnational project group included which also

encompassed OIR (Austria) and IGSO PAS (Poland). The first article covers the general information concerning regional policy in Europe, its role and significance (publication by M. Konopski). The paper presents the evolution and turning points of regional policy, its strengths, weaknesses, as well as critical arguments. The second article presents ESPON and its role as a tool of national and regional policy (J. Bański and M. Ferenc). Authors focused on ESPON priorities and examples of using ESPON knowledge in practice. Territorial approaches are the subject of the third article, in which authors address the question: how ESPON knowledge can become more tangible for detecting regional potentials and challenges (P. Schmitt and L. Smas). The article presents and discusses five territorial approaches developed within the DeTeC project in relation to the concept of territorial cohesion and how the approaches address exogenous challenges and endogenous potentials, conceptualize regional territories within relational spaces and direct attention towards issues of territorial governance. The closing article examines the manner in which ESPON methods could be applied in a local and regional context, including a description of the DeTeC project methodology (Ch. Dymén, S. Essig, M. Ferenc, M. Górczyńska, J. Kaucic, M. Konopski, S. Lange Scherbenske and B. Schuh). The paper presents selected ESPON methods and results of regional laboratory in six European regions.

For more information on the ESPON DeTeC project and the iBook: *Detecting Territorial Potential and Challenges: An interactive handbook for policy-makers and practitioners on how to use ESPON knowledge at local and regional level*, please visit [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu).

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