

Summary of Inception report of the ESPON Project on Indicators of Territorial Cohesion – INTERCO

This is potentially an important project that could have wide ranging effects. In developing a set of territorial indicators, the team will, in effect, be writing a script for how future territorial cohesion policy is interpreted and measured. The indicators will be useable at NUTS 3 scale across the whole ESPON space, and if possible across the candidate countries also.

The report notes that the definitions of territorial cohesion have been contentious and that there is a significant political dimension to definitions and choice of indicators. However, choice of indicators also has to take account of data availability. Therefore the project will put some emphasis of consultation with stakeholder groups. These are identified as:

- policy makers in the ESPON MC;
- stakeholders beyond the ESPON Community (e.g. DG Regio, national ministries, INTERREG programmes or regional administrations);
- ESPON scientific community;
- selected ESPON Projects e.g. “ESPON Database 2013”, other Priority 1 and 2 projects as well as the forthcoming Monitoring Project.

The ESPON 2006 project “Feasibility study on monitoring territorial development based on ESPON key indicators” (4.1.3) developed a framework for the selection of a first set of appropriate territorial indicators. ESPON 2013 Database project has also designed and implemented a framework for the integration of the data (and metadata) needed to calculate and to map indicators.

The INTERCO project intends to build on these results by:

- inserting additional/new/more detailed indicators;
- developing additional metadata specifically designed for describing indicators;
- defining conceptual/logical links between the different sets of indicators;
- refining the tools and procedures for selecting / validating the relevant indicators.

The intention is that the indicators should enable not just intra-Europe comparisons but also global ones, but aligning with the kind of indicators used by the UN Environment Programme.

The end result will be the production of a set of indicators which “will range from classical (or simple) indicators, thematic indicators combining several types of raw data, to new composite cross-thematic indicators designed to assess different policy objectives. Eventually, a limited set of indicators will be developed.”