

Summary of the Inception Report for the ESPON Project on European Territorial Co-operation as a Factor of Growth, Jobs and Quality of Life – “TERCO”

This project will be of particular interest to those involved in programmes like INTERREG and URBACT, including European Officers of local authorities. Among the research and policy questions that this report will tackle are:

What factors can explain the general and specific interrelationships between transnational territorial co-operation (TTC) and regional development (for example, location, level and structure of development, governance system and performance and types of TTC in which they are active)?

How successful is current TTC and what are the key driving forces that affect the success? More specifically, what roles are played by the inter-organisational or inter-personal relationships underlying TTC, and to what extent are high-quality or sustainable TTC relationships important for TCC success?

What lessons can be drawn on the effectiveness of different types of TTC for specific types of territories and their development paths?

What forms and structures of governance of TTC constitute “good practice”, in terms of their effectiveness in contributing to sustainable development in different types of territorial situation?

Types of co-operation to be researched

Five main types of TTC have been identified that will be studied:

- 1) Urban cooperation (i.e. Twin City type of cooperation),
- 2) Cross-border,
- 3) Regional,
- 4) Macro-regional, and
- 5) Transcontinental cooperation.

Methods and theories

The team will use a combination of statistical analysis, network analysis and case studies to go about their tasks. None of the case studies currently identified directly involve the UK.

Part of the theoretical background to the project is the literature on the “new regionalism”. The broad application of these concepts (which largely have developed in Western Europe) could be an interesting feature of this project.

The report also includes a full but concise summary of previous ESPON projects relevant to the theme of territorial co-operation.

Recommendations

We are promised recommendations on:

- the adequacy of existing territorial cooperation areas for meeting the current challenges for territorial development;
- the appropriate scales for different domains of transnational territorial cooperation;
- the most favourable framework conditions, driving forces and good governance models (at different scales) for territorial cooperation;
- the role of infrastructural investment in cooperation programmes. What kind of infrastructure is needed (and where) to enable fruitful cooperation arrangements?