

## TeDi Inception Report – Quick comments

This is a Priority 2 project that focuses on geographically disadvantaged regions. The stakeholders behind the project are North Calotte (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark counties (Norway), Norrbottens län (Sweden) and Lapin lääni (Finland)), the cantons of Valais and Jura in Switzerland, Alba and Suceava counties in Romania and Malta (including Gozo), North Iceland, and the Marathasa valley and Tylliria coastal area of Cyprus. Though there are no UK partners (and few UK mountain areas) in principle the project is of interest to parts of the UK, particularly islands. In addition it is potentially a complementary project to PURR, as it aims to focus on the soft factors that can drive regional development in predominantly rural and rather inaccessible regions. “Territorial Diversity regions generally have an extensive rural component, even if rural areas often are not home to the majority of the population (e.g. northern sparsely populated areas). The identification of agricultural and forestry activities, as well as of fisheries and fish-farming present in these areas, and of their evolution over time, will therefore be an important component of the analysis. The objective is partly to identify the dynamism of these activities, and their potential as a basis for economically sustainable development, and partly to further explore the specificities of their development considering the geographic specificities of each case study area.” (p.13).

The outline of the work (this is just the Inception Report) makes linkages with the Lisbon Strategy and the Territorial Cohesion Green Paper and so will clearly feed ideas into the discussions on the future of Cohesion policy. However, the authors note that competitiveness may not be at the top of the agenda for these regions, and that sustainable development is likely to be prized more highly. There are some interesting questions about the relation of the regions to cohesion policy. The Swiss regions for example are within the Pentagon and of course GDP/head in many of the partners is probably above EU average. Malta is rather unique with a relatively high and dense population but on the periphery. The stated intent is to effect a north-Mediterranean comparison so as to produce “a more nuanced discourse on the social and economic implications of European peripherality” (p.12). Hmmm...

There is a considerable emphasis on the intent to identify policy actions that will improve economic and social conditions in the partner regions. An interesting (and for ESPON unusual) feature is that the researchers recognize the significance of gender as an aspect of regional development. Employment and leadership in most of these regions has been male-oriented, but the hope is that the growth of services can create a better balance.