

ESPON research outputs and policy advice on functional areas

15 years of ESPON Cooperation programme

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Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



Territorial scales of research

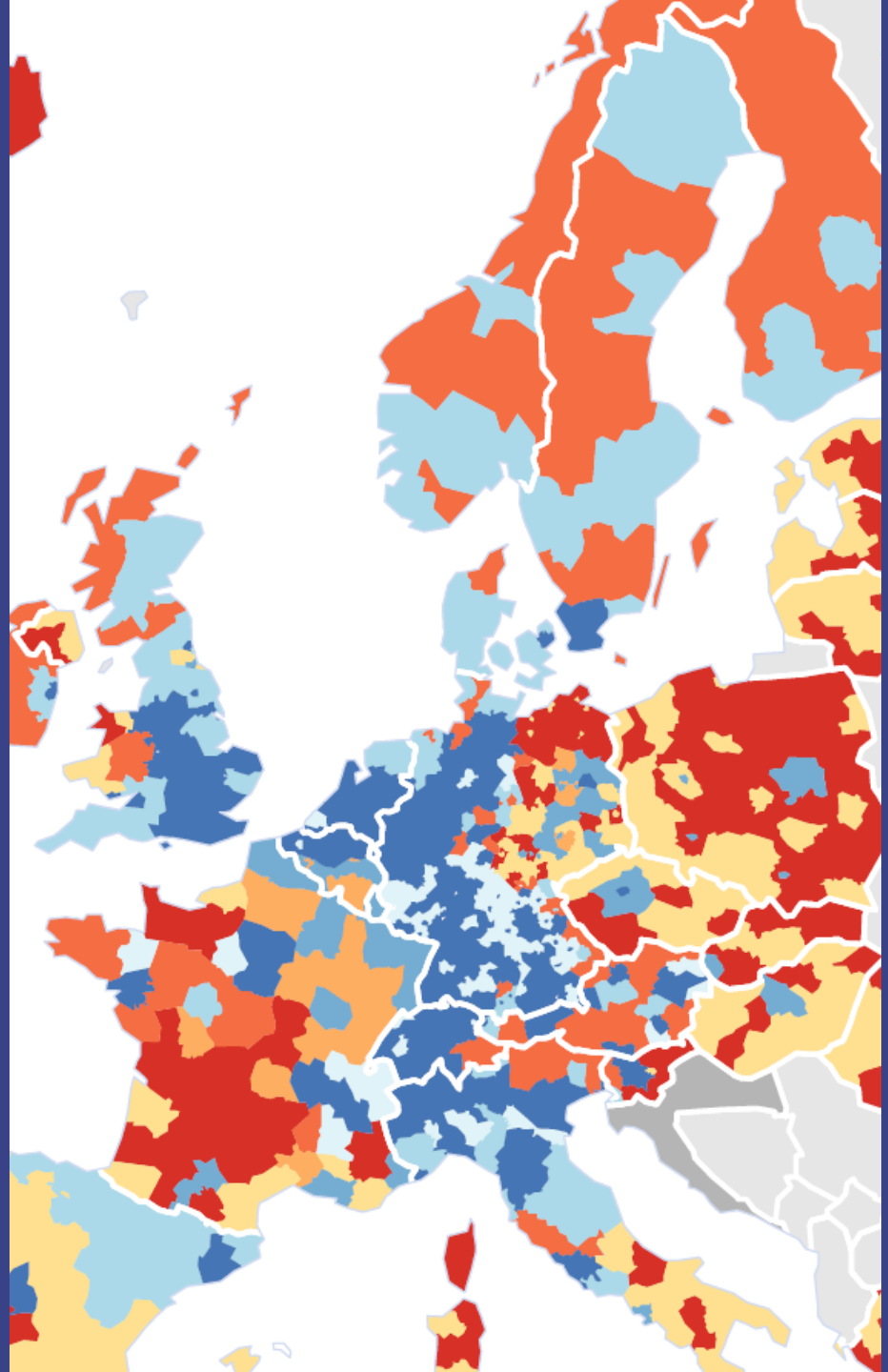
- **Pan-European** (polycentric territorial structures and territorial cooperation)
- **Functional urban areas** (including metropolitan areas)
- **Cross-border areas**
- **Macro-regions**

Research outputs

- Typologies and classifications of urban networks (FUAs, MEGAs)
- Analysis of development patterns and perspectives in functional areas (focus on functional flows and cooperation practices among and within them)
- Case studies
- Policy recommendations

Pan-European level:









*Polycentric territorial
structures and
territorial cooperation*








European settlement structure

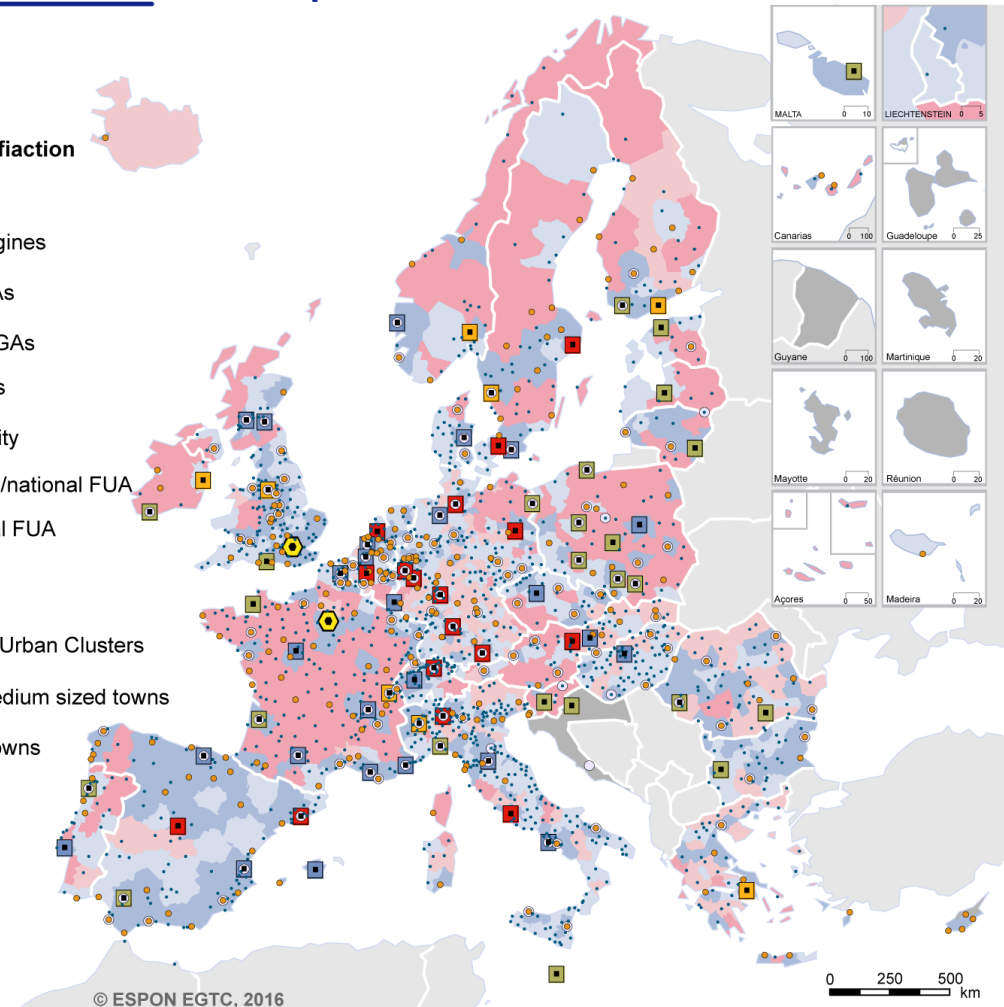
Settlement structures in Europe

FUA & MEGA classification

-  Global nodes
-  European engines
-  Strong MEGAs
-  Potential MEGAs
-  Weak MEGAs
-  Second-tier city
-  Transnational/national FUA
-  Regional/local FUA

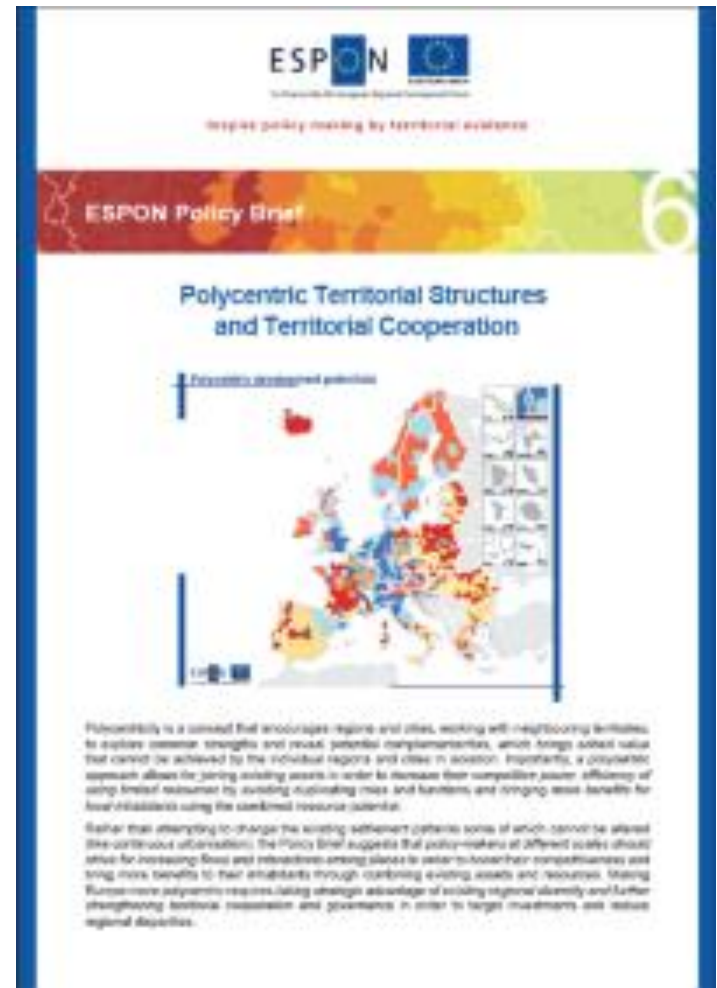
Settlement types

-  High Density Urban Clusters
-  Small and Medium sized towns
-  Very Small Towns
-  Other
-  no data



ESPON policy brief 2016

- **Why** does polycentric territorial cooperation matter?
- **Where** is the potential for more polycentric development?
- **How** should policymakers engage ?
- **What** are some examples of good practices?



A polycentric approach is about

*taking strategic advantage of **existing regional diversity** and further **strengthening territorial cooperation** rather than trying to change existing settlement patterns*

*encouraging regions and cities to **work with neighbouring territories** to explore common strengths and reveal potential complementarities*

Main benefits of polycentric approach from a relational perspective

- Creating **critical economic mass** (“borrowing” size and quality) to increase individual and joint competitiveness
- Ensuring **efficiency of using limited resources** by avoiding duplicating roles and functions (through specialisation)
- Bringing **more benefits for local inhabitants** using the combined resource potential (affording more by working together)

Key outcomes of polycentric development

- Delivering **more balanced** development between regions and **more co-operative and functional** urban-rural relations
- Offering a **more diversified** labour force, infrastructure, knowledge base and innovative potential
- Providing **more high quality** jobs and services through increased interactions among places and smart specialisation

Mapping polycentricity in Europe

Combining three criteria on territorial structures:

- **density of urban structure** that shows different size and functions of urban nodes
- **accessibility patterns** which reveal the possibility for people to connect within the region, country and within the EU
- existing **territorial cooperation structures** and practices

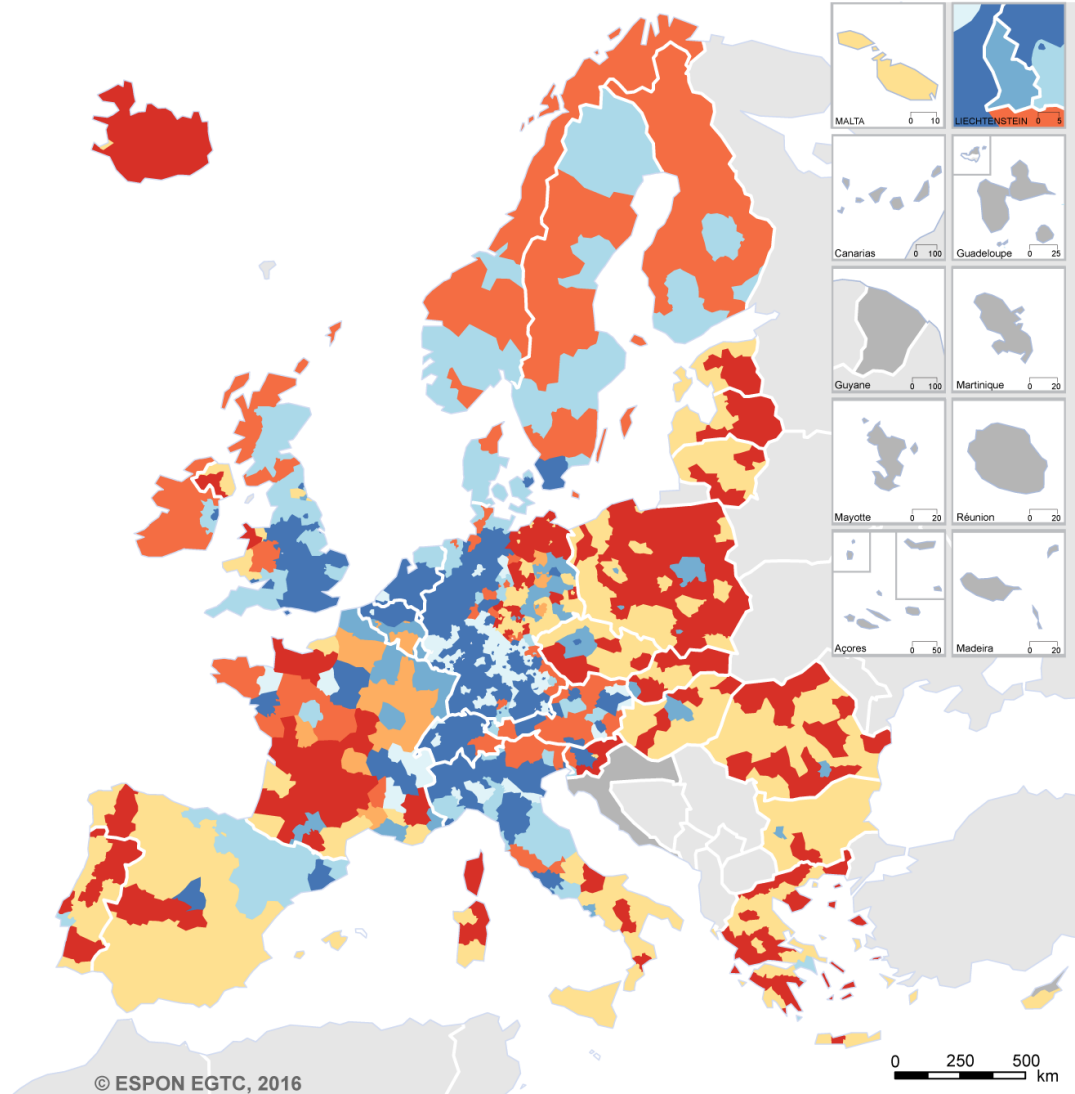
Polycentric development potentials

Polycentric development



+	+	+
+	+	-
+	-	+
-	+	+
+	-	-
-	-	+
-	+	-
-	-	-
Urban structure	Accessibility	Territorial cooperation

+ High
- Low

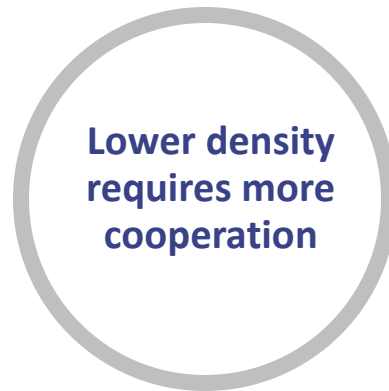


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Recommendations for European and national policies



- Strengthening existing urban nodes
- Promoting more flows and interactions among them

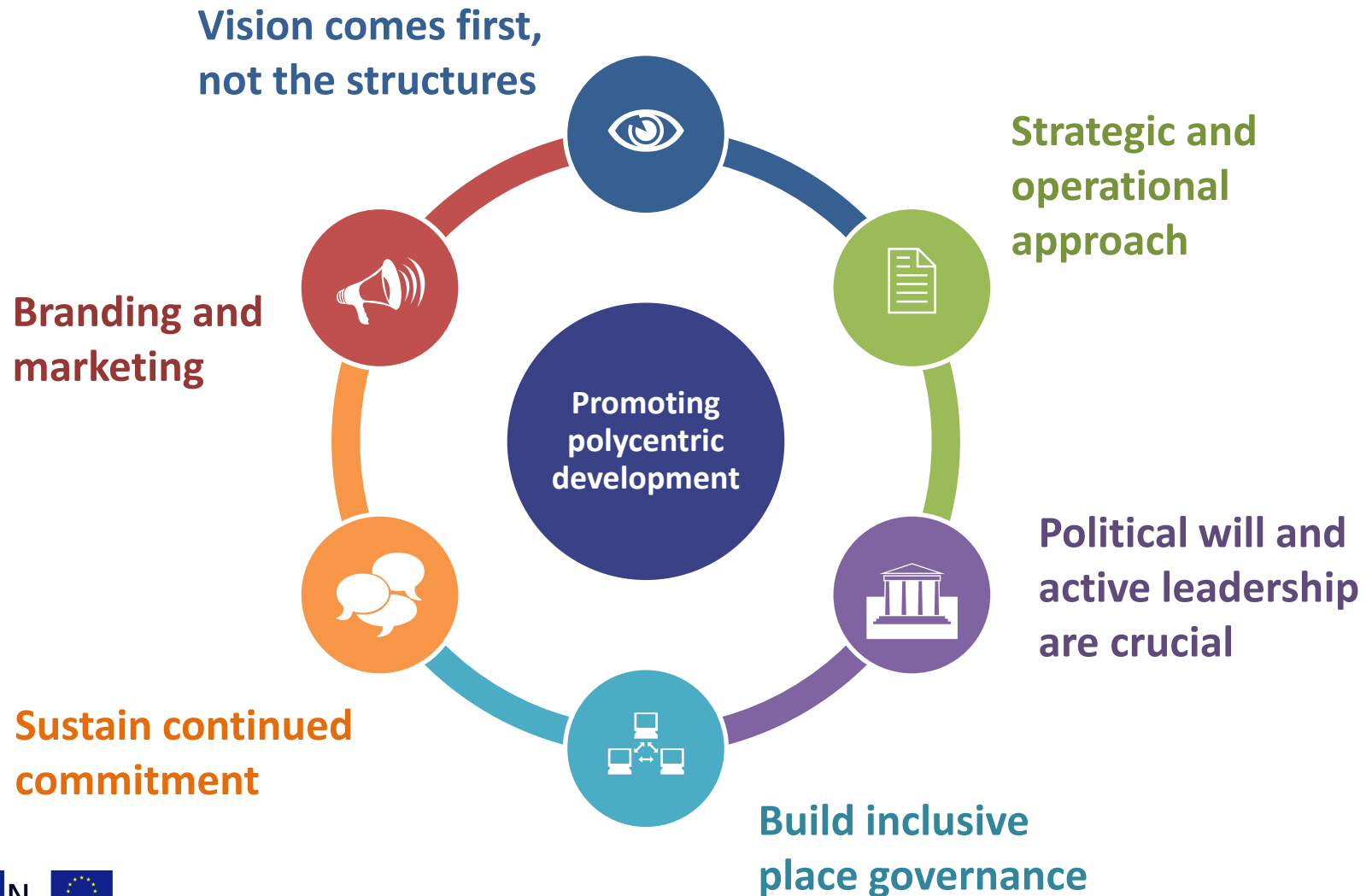


- Develop links among small and medium-sized urban areas and larger metropolitan areas: business clusters, knowledge transfer, connectivity etc.



- Support collaborative practices/ bottom-up initiatives
- Territorial cooperation as a precondition to receiving financial support
- Offer relevant capacity-building and specific advantageous regulations

...and for regional and local scales

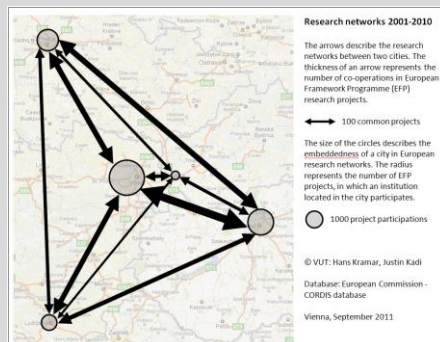


Collaborative practices in functional areas

Case study 1

A transnational polycentric network of metropolitan areas

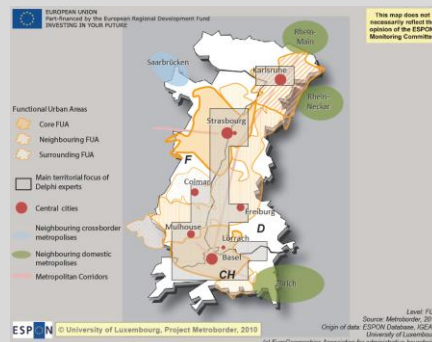
Danube Region: Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Prague and Vienna



Case study 2

Functional integration in cross-border polycentric metropolitan regions

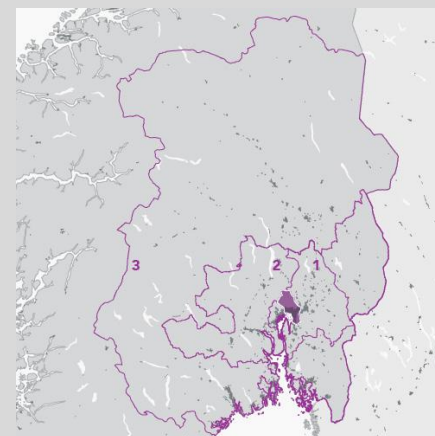
Metropolitan Upper Rhine Region crossing the borders between Switzerland, France and Germany



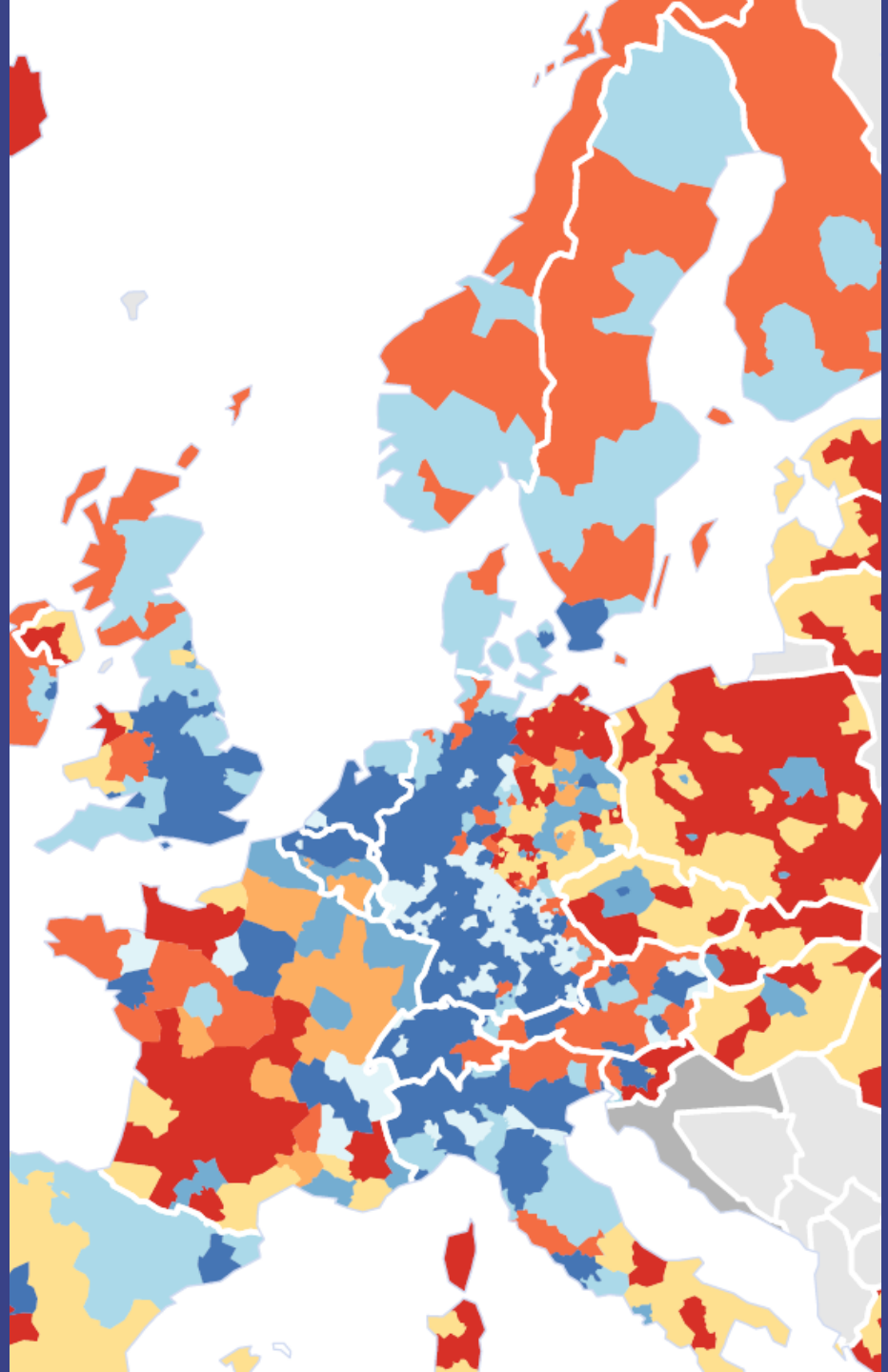
Case study 3

Towards a Functional Urban Region

Oslo's three arenas for regional collaboration: Akershus County, Oslo Region Alliance & Eastern Norway County Network



Key observations
and
Policy messages
from
case-studies



Factors hindering joint action

- Heterogeneity and limits of **competences**
- Absence of a clear **added value** of the cooperation
- Limitations in **financial resources** of the respective administrative levels of the partnership
- **Competition** between partners of similar weight
- Imbalance between and **mistrust** of small vs. bigger partners
- Inadequacy between **city links** and **firm links**
- Absence of good **trade-off mechanisms and instruments**, making it difficult to set aside local interests for the greater regional good
- Lack of **coherence between interests of partnership** and interests at higher hierarchical levels, or between interests among various partnerships

Factors promoting joint action

- Identification of **concrete and reasonable objectives** that are attractive for all partners
- Identification of objectives requiring **joint intervention** of all partners, one example is the acquisition of higher-level (including EU) funding
- Particularly **strong incoherencies across borders**, in fields such as transport, infrastructure provision, etc.
- Others: small **distance**, a common **history** or **tradition**, educational systems, etc.

Plans and formal structures can be useful, but they do not guarantee success!

- **Shared understanding** that working together would make it possible to respond to a common set of challenges and opportunities more effectively
- **Shared understanding** of the purpose of cooperation and objectives is sufficient for the implementation of successful cooperation
- Cooperation dynamics only develop when involved actors see a **clear benefit** from and **need** for cooperation
- Still, an **external stimulus** and incentive and/ or the high commitment of single (trusted and respected) **personalities** is often needed to get the cooperation starting

Plans and formal structures can be useful, but they do not guarantee success!

- Cooperation is an **iterative** and **evolving** process
- **Pre-defining the strategic ambitions** to be pursued through cooperation generates a risk that actors will **fail** to see the added-value
- Set up cooperation frameworks that could trigger a '**cooperation spiral**'
- **Flexibility and adaptability** of cooperation practices is important

Plans and formal structures can be useful, but they do not guarantee success!

- **Good quality of dialogue** between involved stakeholders may be more important than an elaborate strategy document
- **Practical activities** (compared to developing plans and formal governance structures) show the most added value
- Cooperation can be effective **without formal structures**
- **Desired results define** the most appropriate **structures**, not vice versa
- Limited group of **dedicated coordinators** with a clear mandate is essential
- **Stability in the commitment** and **political will** is required especially for cooperation across different political-administrative systems

Upcoming research outputs

- EU Territorial Review: places, flows, cooperation (October 2017)
- Targeted analyses on territorial governance (2017):
 - SPIMA – functional urban areas
 - ACTAREA/ TCA – soft territorial cooperation
- Macro-regional monitoring tools linked to ETMS (2018)
- Functional urban areas and regions in Europe (2018)



Thank you for
your attention!

Inspire policy making by territorial evidence