

I. Foreword

The ESPON 2013 Programme continued pursuing the achievements attained by ESPON in supporting policy development with evidence in relation to territorial cohesion and the aim of a harmonious and balanced development of the European territory. Over the past seven years, an extended network of European researchers and experts continuously provided new and substantial evidence on Europe's territorial structures, trends, perspectives and policy impacts.

This new knowledge has been provided to enable policy makers and practitioners at all administrative levels to benchmark and position regions, cities and larger territories in their European context, and to include a territorial dimension and a European perspective in their policy considerations.

The ESPON Atlas "Mapping European Territorial Structures and Dynamics" gives a comprehensive overview of the multitude of themes that have been addressed by all applied research projects and targeted analyses of the ESPON 2013 Programme. It offers an overview of the state, trends and perspectives for the European territory. The Atlas also allows for comparisons with other European regions and cities, and it supports the understanding of Europe's territorial diversity of potentials and challenges.

The Atlas can therefore be particularly used by policy makers at European, national as well as regional/local level, to understand and define the most efficient investments for individual regions, cities and/or larger territories and to pursue tailor-made, place-based policies. At the same time it

can also be used by the private sector, students and the general public.

The ESPON Atlas is based on research and analyses undertaken during the economic crisis which started in 2008. As European data updates become available with some delay, some of the evidence presented in this Atlas had to include pre-crisis data. However, efforts have been made wherever possible to include the most recent data to be able to reflect appropriately the effects of the economic crisis on Europe's regions and cities.

Generally, the Atlas covers the territory of all countries participating in the ESPON 2013 Programme, i.e. all EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Croatia as the newest EU Member State is however not always covered.

As such, the ESPON Atlas offers an overview of European territorial dynamics. A web-based version of the Atlas will become available by the end of 2014 and will allow policy makers, the private sector, students and the general public to use the Atlas as an interactive source of information.

We hope you will enjoy the ESPON Atlas and if you would like to find out more about specific research topics, analyses and tools, please go to the website www.espon.eu.