

## **RT02 | TAKING STOCK: DOES THE PLACE-BASED APPROACH MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR EU REGIONAL POLICY?**

### **Chairs**

- Estelle Evrard, University of Luxembourg;
- Franziska Sielker, University of Cambridge/University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

### **Speakers**

- Prof. Dr. Tobias Chilla, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg;
- Ilona Raugze, ESPON EGTC;
- Prof. Dr. Peter Schmitt, University of Stockholm;
- Nathalie Vershelde, European Commission, DG Regio.

### **Description**

The place-based approach promoted by the Barca report (2009) represents a turning point in the 2014- 2020 cohesion policy. It initiates a shift from a policy compensating location disadvantages through subsidies to a policy aiming at “tapping into underutilised potential in all regions” (OECD, 2009). Barca highlights a number of characteristics and aims, such as the reduction of social exclusion and regional inequality, as strong motivations for policies aiming at cohesion. Another important narrative is the territorialisation of the social agenda, and, vice-versa, the socialization of the Territorial Agenda, the decentralisation of decision-making, and the subsidiarity principle. Whilst this understanding of a place-based approach is not particularly focused on territorial cohesion, European Cohesion policies however is particularly based on territorial differentiation. Since then, a threshold rule around GDP per capita is mobilized to reflect upon the cohesion policy and to implement programmes. In addition, this place-based approach materializes itself through specific measures to 1) reorient the multi-level governance towards a more fluid and strategic actor constellation, 2) to address functional dynamics thus “breaking down the barriers” of the “administrative fix” and 3) to facilitate the design of cross- sectoral strategies at sub-national level. The implications of the introduction of the place-based for cohesion policies, and ultimately, the translation of territorial evidence into policy development remain subject to investigation.

The AESOP conference 2017 takes place while this ETC programming period stands mid-way of its implementation. Beyond the buzzword, the cohesion policy has not yet identified a place-based narrative for the ETC programmes. The overall ambition of this panel is to discuss the significance of the place-based approach in the EU regional policy. In our understanding, a place-based approach needs to build on territorial evidence, thus providing input to policy making. Importantly, this however questions which territorial evidence is needed in the specific context of EU regional policy.

With the support of 4 speakers, the roundtable conveyors intend to address three

overarching questions. First, we aim at taking stock of both policy initiatives that are evidence-based and of existing “evidence” available at the EU level. Second, we intend to examine which policies could benefit from further territorial evidence. Third, our ambition is to identify how knowledge can be transferred in the complex multi-level governance setting that underlie policy-making processes. Thereby, the roundtable contributes to the overall debate of what a place-based approach in regional policies means and what difference it could make.

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