

Setting the Course for the future of Territorial and Urban Policies at European level

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TABLE OF CONTENT

PART 1 – POLICY CONTEXT: WHY GOVERNANCE IS A KEY FOR TERRITORIAL COHESION

	Page
PART 1: POLICY CONTEXT – WHY GOVERNANCE IS A KEY FOR TERRITORIAL COHESION	3
1 Territorial policies matter more than ever	4
2 Territorial policies at the European level rely on soft policies approaches	5
3 Soft policy systems need innovative approaches to achieve different targets for different places.....	7
4 Place based approaches require tailor made governance mechanisms – Form follows function	10
PART 2: EXPLORING TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE MODELS AT EU-LEVEL.....	11
5 The topic of the seminar: Strengthening the soft territorial policy approaches under the post 2020 European framework for the Territorial Agenda and the Urban Agenda	12
6 Focus 1 of the DG Seminar: Learning from experiences of implementation partnerships of the Urban Agenda and the macro-regional strategies.....	13
7 Focus 2 of the Seminar: Outlining post-2020 perspectives for the governance of territorial policies at the european level – exploring future governance models for the Territorial and Urban Agenda	19
7.1 Territorial Agenda.....	20
7.2 Urban Agenda	23
7.3 Closing the gap between Territorial Agenda and Urban Agenda.....	24
7.4 Critical questions on the pathway to post 2020.....	26
8 Sources.....	27

PART 1: POLICY CONTEXT – WHY GOVERNANCE IS A KEY FOR TERRITORIAL COHESION

1 TERRITORIAL POLICIES MATTER MORE THAN EVER

Territories matter a lot in policy making all over Europe! Due to an increasing gap between spatial interdependencies and mismatching geographies of governments, the effectiveness of policy-making is at risk on all levels.

Despite the integration of Territorial Cohesion into the EU Contract as main policy objective, and despite the existence of cohesion policies, regional disparities have begun to grow again in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis. Migration flows within the European Union are high. A market driven regional specialisation favours well-equipped agglomerations which benefit from the extension of network-oriented infrastructures (airport hubs, high speed railway nodes, nodes of high capacity communication networks, universities and innovative milieus). In contrast, it is often the areas in the national and European peripheries, which have to rely on their natural resources, but the innovative capacity for “smart specialisation” is lacking. We are moving towards “a winner takes it all” society, in which some regions gain the positive externalities while others stay behind.

With the extension of infrastructures, spatial expansion of action areas transforms into an expansion of impact areas. Social and economic decisions and developments have major positive or negative impacts on places and vice versa. Within those functional areas, regions which face the negative externalities are often excluded from the decision-making process.

Another serious reason for the need of a place-based approach lies in the challenges, which only can be faced by intersectoral policies like climate change, demographic change, digitalisation, provision of basic services, development of sustainable energy system or promoting a knowledge driven economy. In order to deal with the different levels of affectedness, spaces need tailor-made and integrated implementation strategies.

Growing regional disparities, often accompanied by social disparities and the triggered migration flows, the unequal distribution of positive and negative external effects, and the unequal access to decision-making processes have started to trigger a strong desire to return to “national container” protected by borders of all sorts, putting the fundamental objectives of cohesion policies at risk.

It can be expected that the foreseeable future trends will intensify the challenges for European territorial policy making. Against this background, place-based policies matter more than ever, and European Territorial Cohesion Policies need to respond effectively!

2 TERRITORIAL POLICIES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL RELY ON SOFT POLICIES APPROACHES

The European territorial policy system does not contain legal power for spatial and urban policy making, however spatial and urban policies are made at the European level through three main tools:

- sectoral European policies with an important and strong impact on territorial development,
- “hard policy” instruments represented by funds that trigger diverse spatial and territorial developments,
- “soft policy” instruments in the form of cooperation and coordination of national and regional policies to support common goals.

This system of European territorial policy is very complex. The chart in figure 1 is an attempt to illustrate the “landscape” of European territorial policies in a comprehensive way. When describing this complex system it shows, that the soft policy elements (green cloud) like

- the Urban Agenda (UA),
- the Territorial Agenda (TA),
- the Macro-regional strategies (MRS)

have a twofold function:

They are

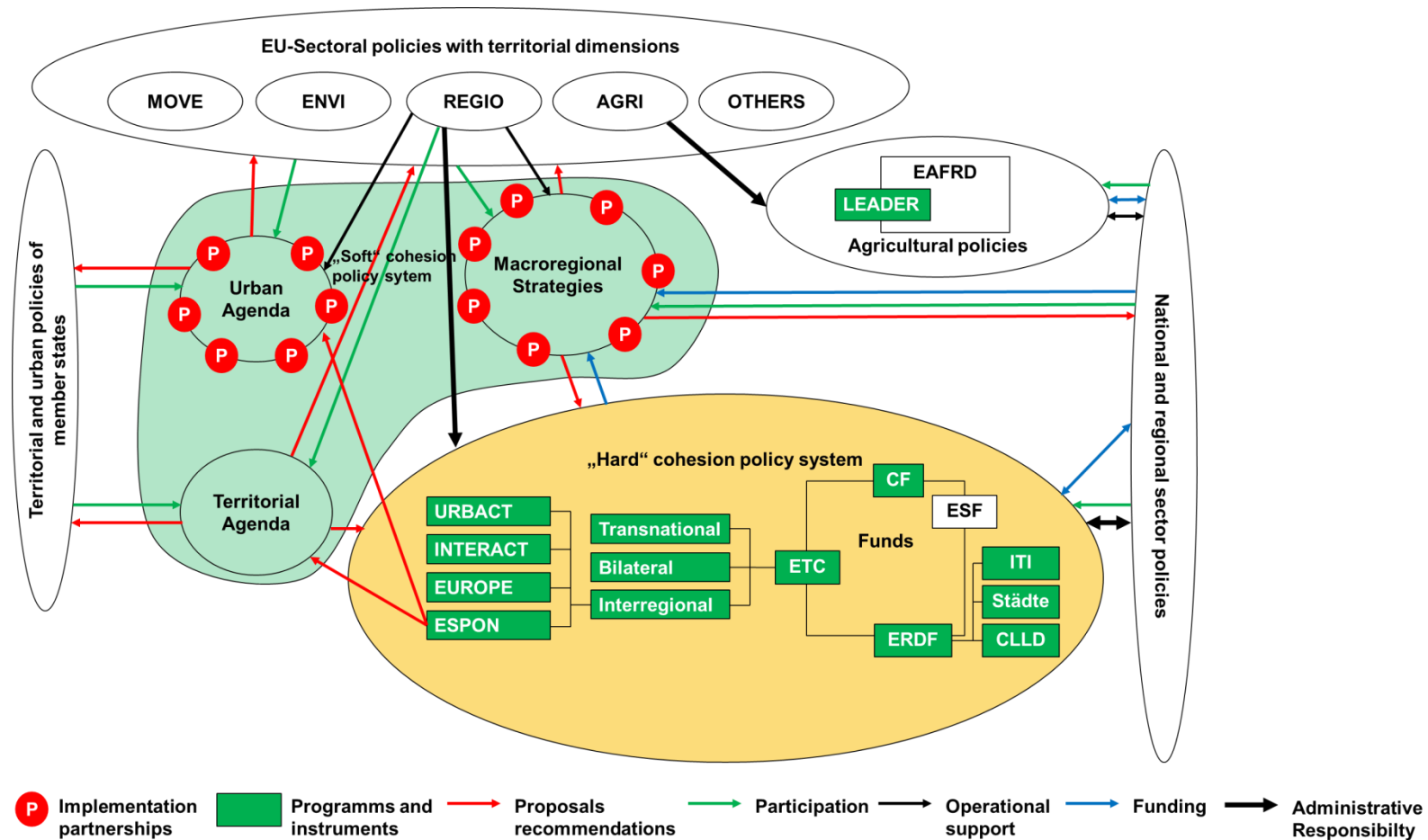
- links between sectoral policies and different funds with explicit or implicit territorial impacts (European Structural and Investment (ESI-) funds),
- links between the European, national and regional level of decision making and administration

The soft policy layer acts as a catalyst between policies and instruments and helps translating sectoral policies from different levels into territorial impacts, by means of the “hard” implementation tools.

Other territorial instruments at EU-level, like the ESPON-programmes, Territorial Impact Assessment activities, etc. provide additional access points for enhancing territorial policies.

Within this system ESPON supports all stakeholders and institutions dealing with territorial matters with scientific basics, relevant data demanded expertise for sound programming, planning and decision making processes. This task is more and more combined with informal steering and coordination services without explicit institutional anchoring. The approach of targeted analysis further strengthens the policy demand orientation of ESPON activities.

Figure 1: "Landscape" of European territorial policies.



Source: own presentation

3 SOFT POLICY SYSTEMS NEED INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT TARGETS FOR DIFFERENT PLACES

If the role of EU territorial soft policy systems is to have link between territorial and sectoral policies and integrating the different vertical institutional levels of decision making (see Figure 1), this requires complex multi-level governance systems which are able to address the challenges to efficient coordination and cooperation. The handling of multi-level governance is not part of the routines of administrative systems. Multi-level governance at the European level still is a learning process for many. The experience shows, that each system needs tailor-made solutions, while a set of general principles should be taken into account.

The European territorial soft policy systems (Territorial Agenda, Urban Agenda, Macro-regional strategies) have different characteristics and levels of intensity. A promising element seems to be the so-called “Implementation Partnerships” which are meant to trigger a more inclusive and faster implementation of objectives and actions of the agendas and strategies. Such implementation partnerships have inter alia been developed in the Urban Agenda (temporarily) and for the Macro-regional strategies (permanently). These innovative approaches can improve the effectiveness of soft policies in a remarkable way (COM (2014) 284 final, COM (2016) 850 final, DG Regio 2017, ESPON (2018) COMPASS), although these are still under development.

Figure 2: Dimensions of the current territorial policy system at European level

Competences	Territorial dimension of ESI-funds	Soft policy systems		
		Territorial dimension	Urban dimension	Macro-regional dimension
decision	Council, Parliament Commission	Ministers	Ministers	Council, Parliament Commission
legislative	Regulation 1303 / 2013	-	-	-
Agenda	EU 2020	Territorial Agenda	Urban Agenda	Strategies
Programming framework	DG Region	Trio presidency	Member States, Commission	Member States, Commission
Coordination of implementation	Member States Joint Secretariats	Member States Trio presidency NTCCP	implementation partnerships member states, cities sectoral DGs, Commission, interest groups	implementation partnerships Member States, DGs, regions, Commission, interest groups
evaluation	DG Regio, member states	Trio presidency	DG Regio	DG Regio
controlling	DG Regio, member states			

A comparison of the relevant soft policy systems as well as the territorial tools of the ESI funds in respect to their governance mechanism and the implementation quality shows quite significant differences (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Assessment of territorial governance systems of European territorial policies (ESI funds: tools with territorial dimensions)

Criteria	ESI funds	Territorial Agenda	Urban Agenda	MRS
Ownership	strong, clear	unsettled	strong, clear	strong, clear
Leadership	strong, clear	unsettled	strong, clear	strong, clear
Commission involvement	strong, clear	unsettled	strong, clear	unsettled
Involvement of states	strong, clear	strong, clear	unsettled	strong, clear
Involvement of regions	strong, clear	weak, unclear	weak, unclear	unsettled
Involvement of cities	unsettled	weak, unclear	strong, clear	unsettled
Involvement of interest groups	unsettled	weak, unclear	strong, clear	strong, clear
Implementation focus	strong, clear	weak, unclear	strong, clear	strong, clear
Well defined implementation areas	strong, clear	weak, unclear	strong, clear	strong, clear
Organisational capacity	strong, clear	weak, unclear	strong, clear	unsettled
Continuity	strong, clear	weak, unclear	unsettled	strong, clear
Cooperation intensity	unsettled	weak, unclear	unsettled	unsettled

■ strong, clear
 ■ unsettled
 ■ weak, unclear

Source: own assessment

Even if some findings leave room for different interpretation, it seems obvious that the Territorial Agenda has a weak performance as compared to the other applied examples of Territorial Implementation Partnerships. This is due to a lack of multilevel governance mechanism of the Territorial Agenda (see also: BÖHME K. et al 2015):

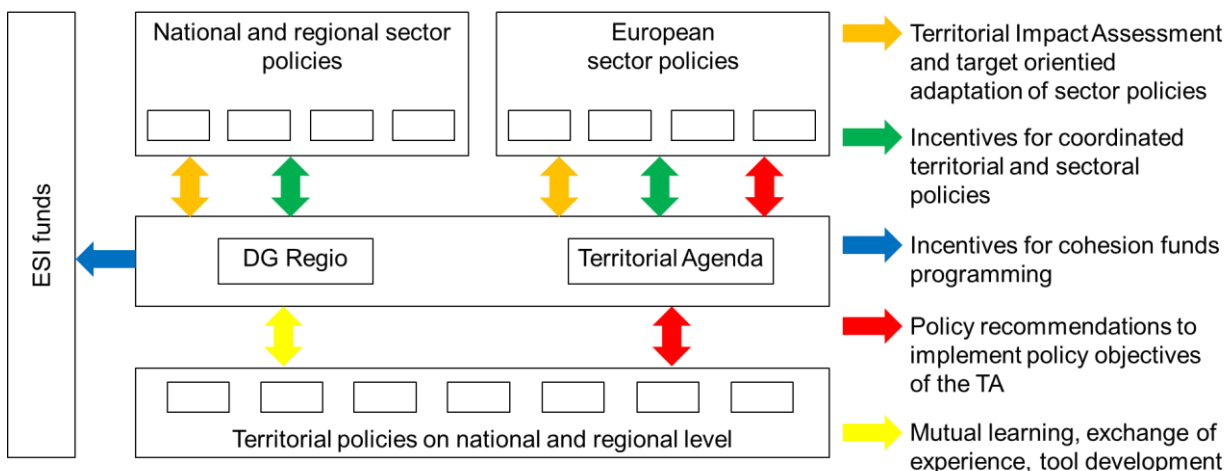
- insufficient ownership and leadership,
- insufficient implementation in sectoral and territorial policies,
- little awareness of the Territorial Agenda at sectoral and subnational governance level,
- the abstract character and missing activities to facilitate concrete implementation actions,
- insufficient organisational capacities, missing continuity and weak cooperation intensity.

Innovative governance mechanisms, such as the implementation partnerships in the Urban Agenda, the Macro-regional strategies or the territorial tools of cohesion funds seems to influence the governance systems capacity to act.

4 PLACE BASED APPROACHES REQUIRE TAILOR MADE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS – FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

For an efficient implementation of territorial policies and place-based approaches governance mechanism seem to be the key. However territorial governance mechanisms have to integrate the purpose and the function of different policies in the specific territorial context. It is necessary to define the topics, the functions and the tasks properly before designing governance mechanisms. A model to integrate topics, functions and tasks of territorial policies at the European level in general and the Territorial Agenda in particular can look as follows:

Figure 4: Topics, functions and tasks of territorial European policies (additional stakeholders like specific interest groups or NGOs can be integrated from case to case)



Source: own illustration

The tasks (right side of the figure) are put in relation to the relevant institutions and the figure shows the necessary involvement of and the possible results / benefits for the different policy levels.

The next step is to deal with the question on the governance mechanism itself.

PART 2: EXPLORING TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE MODELS AT EU-LEVEL

5 THE TOPIC OF THE SEMINAR: STRENGTHENING THE SOFT TERRITORIAL POLICY APPROACHES UNDER THE POST 2020 EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR THE TERRITORIAL AGENDA AND THE URBAN AGENDA

The ongoing debate around the Territorial Agenda 2020+ shows that the challenges as well as the aims and priorities set out in the Territorial Agenda 2030 are widely considered still to be applicable and relevant. There is less need for a fundamental revision than a slight adaptation. The assumption is that the development of the governance mechanism of the Territorial Agenda 2020+ is a key for more effective implementation. Important is the “how” rather than the “what”. However, the debate around governance mechanisms of the Territorial Agenda is not new. Already the 2015 Luxembourg conclusion “Towards a better use of the European Territory – Pathways for strengthening territorial cohesion in the European Union” puts a focus on implementation and governance, however with limited success, due to weak ownership and leadership, missing continuity and organisational capacity to manage coordination and cooperation in the long run.

In the on-going debate around the governance of territorial policies, in particular the Territorial Agenda, different options are for discussion:

- **Business as usual but better**
This would mean to put into practise the Luxembourg proposals, which has not been done yet.
- **Leadership by the Commission – white book of territorial cohesion**
This would be a paradigmatic change because leadership would shift from member states to the Commission.
- **Elaborate a remake of the European Spatial Development Perspective**
A new concept would focus on the debate around the content rather than on governance.
- **Strengthening territorial policies through innovative governance mechanisms**
This proposal refers to the positive experiences with the implementation partnerships of the Urban Agenda and the Macro-regional strategies.

In addition, the Urban Agenda process is facing the challenge to keep momentum and to establish a sustained governance system building on the experiences and results of the first stage of implementation partnerships.

6 FOCUS 1 OF THE DG SEMINAR: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCES OF IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS OF THE URBAN AGENDA AND THE MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

As mentioned before, there are already good experiences in some parts of the policy systems with implementation partnerships as a core component of a governance system for territorial policy. The Macro-regional strategies and the Urban Agenda represent two different types of innovative and tailor-made governance systems. Both implementation partnership types have been developed within the last five to ten years and are to a certain extent used in different ways. There are however both, similarities and differences, which may inspire the development of a similar arrangement for the Territorial Agenda.

The implementation partnerships of the Urban Agenda are time-limited and the thematic areas have been established at the European level. Although the Urban Agenda had been prepared with a rather detailed governance-mechanism, experience shows that its integration into the comprehensive institutional system is challenging. This opens up the following questions:

- Who is able to contribute organisational, personal and financial resources for the implementation of the results?
- How many partnerships can be managed at one time?
- What happens with the results of partnerships after termination of the partnership? Who takes care of further implementation steps?
- Who is responsible for the dissemination of the gained knowledge and results?

One of the learnings from the on-going Urban Agenda is that it is vital to take into account these questions at the beginning to avoid wrong expectations and disappointments.

Apart from tailor-made designs of governance-mechanisms to provide and manage cooperation, some general conclusions can be drawn from the practical experiences so far:

- (1) The process must be institutionalized and anchored within the existing governmental and governance system
- (2) A clear design of the cooperation process and the implementation partnerships at the beginning helps to avoid conflicts and disappointments at a later stage of the process.

The implementation partnerships of the Macro-regional strategies (MRS) are not time-limited and established for a long-term policy cooperation between national and regional governments (depending on the strategy). Furthermore, the MRS include third countries in the partnerships. The MRS have a clear territorial dimension – namely the macro-region. The themes of the

MRS are decided by the macro-regional players and are adopted to the changes of a particular region. Criticism about the implementation partnerships of the MRS are mainly:

- An overly complex governance structure;
- A lack of performance against objectives (which were not always tailored to the region);
- Asymmetries of leadership and support for the implementation.

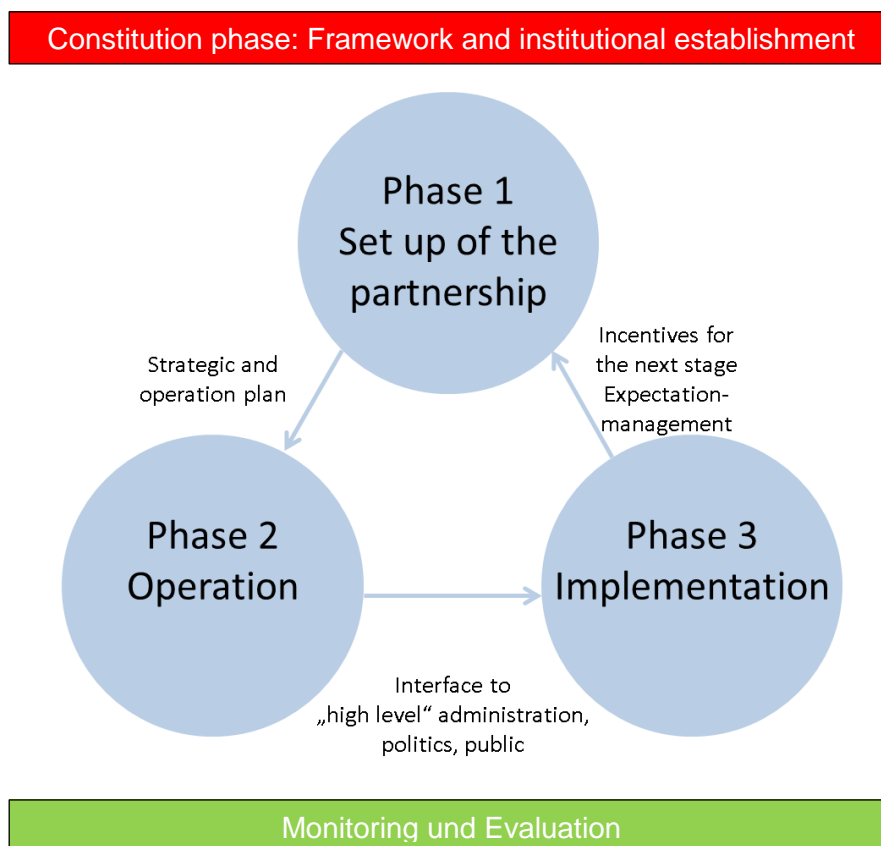
A recent study (IHS, m&e factory, COWI (2017 on behalf of DG REGIO) has however shown that much more is being achieved than can be measured by high-level objectives and the governance systems bring substantial value added in terms of inter alia:

- cooperation adds legitimacy to the themes;
- working transnationally increases awareness and attention to the themes (also at national level);
- synergies across sectors are facilitated;
- cooperation with third countries is increased;
- a better support of funding is gained.

This study also showed that implementation partnerships follow a common development pattern of a set up phase, an operational phase and a maturity phase.

Although different, the implementation partnerships share a common development feature and go through development phases. These phases apply in particular to temporary partnerships. For macro-regional strategies, which currently have no time limit, some activities of the constitution phase as well as the monitoring and the evaluation are part of the ongoing partnership.

Figure 5: Phases of implementation partnerships



Source: own illustration

In the different phases, the following aspects are crucial:

1) Constitution phase: Framework for and institutional establishment of partnerships

In this phase the ownership for the system of partnerships has to be clarified and the framework for the governance has to be set up. This includes a government dimension as well (see figure 6). The experience shows, that besides ownership somebody has to take leadership to finally establish partnerships as governance system within a certain soft policy system.

2) Phase 1: Setting up the partnership (see figure 7)

The setting up of the partnership is an important precondition for a successful cooperation.

3) Phase 2: Operational phase (see figure 7)

The operational phase differs between temporal and permanent partnerships, but some similarities exist.

4) Phase 3: Implementation of results (see figure 7)

An important lesson learned from the on-going partnerships is that it is crucial to set the course for the implementation of results/actions at the beginning of the process.

5) Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is needed to justify the input of resources, to guide the own work and to learn to improve. Important are the following aspects:

- Development of criteria and indicators for the monitoring and the evaluation of single partnerships as well as for the system of partnerships as a whole
- Agreement on the responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation

Tentative list of questions relevant for further discussion:

- Is the governance model of Territorial Implementation Partnerships in principle a promising way forward for territorial and urban policy making at the European level?
- What are the most important learnings from the different types of implementation partnerships so far?
- What are the most important elements for functioning governance mechanisms?
- What are the most important bottlenecks: ownership, leadership, finance and provision of technical assistance, others?
- Which factors are important to ensure the take-up of results and the implementation of actions?
- Would you support a stronger use of cooperative governance elements for territorial policies at European level?

Figure 6: Relevant tasks in the constitution phase of partnerships at European level

- Ensuring political commitment;
- Agreement on objectives, which allow monitoring, evaluation and management of a joint learning procedure;
- Provision of sufficient financial, personal and organizational resources for technical assistance and the contribution of the partners;
- Agreement on the procedure of the selection of the themes;
- Determining the time frame for the partnerships and the option for extensions;
- Agreement on the organisational structure: coordination, interface to political decision makers;
- Development of mechanisms for dealing with the results (recommendations, action plans) after termination of the partnership: preparation of decisions, transfer to administrative partners, organisation of implementation, financing, etc.;
- Establishment of a reporting, monitoring and evaluation system and mechanisms for the further development of the partnership system.

Figure 7: Steering the partnerships in different phases



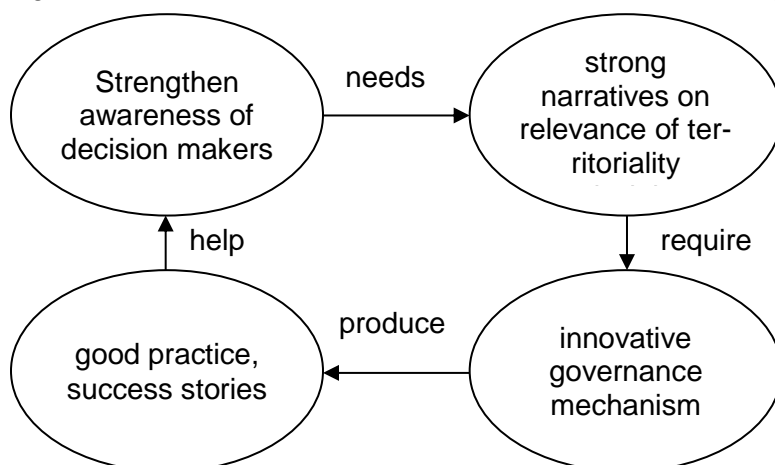
7 FOCUS 2 OF THE SEMINAR: OUTLINING POST-2020 PERSPECTIVES FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF TERRITORIAL POLICIES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL – EXPLORING FUTURE GOVERNANCE MODELS FOR THE TERRITORIAL AND URBAN AGENDA

Based on the insights of the current debate on territorial policies at the European level in general and governance in particular, there seems to be less need for new or alternative contents or new instruments but rather the necessity to:

- strengthen the awareness about the relevance of territorial policies,
- develop a strong narrative for decision makers,
- elaborate innovative governance mechanisms to implement policies and actions,
- evaluate impacts, disseminate good practise and success stories.

The following elements are interlinked within a positive feedback loop:

Figure 8: Preconditions for the advancement of territorial policies 2020+



Source: own illustration

Considering this feedback loop, governance is a key element for the advancement of territorial policies on the European level. 2020 will be a “magic” year for the Cohesion policy, the Territorial Agenda and the Urban Agenda (including the renewal of the Leipzig Charter). This opens a window of opportunity to develop diverse options and to put them up for discussion. The following chapters aim to offer an input to the debate on the further development of the governance of the Territorial and the Urban Agenda post-2020 – taking into account that working groups, task forces and other relevant institutions are dealing with these questions already.

7.1 TERRITORIAL AGENDA

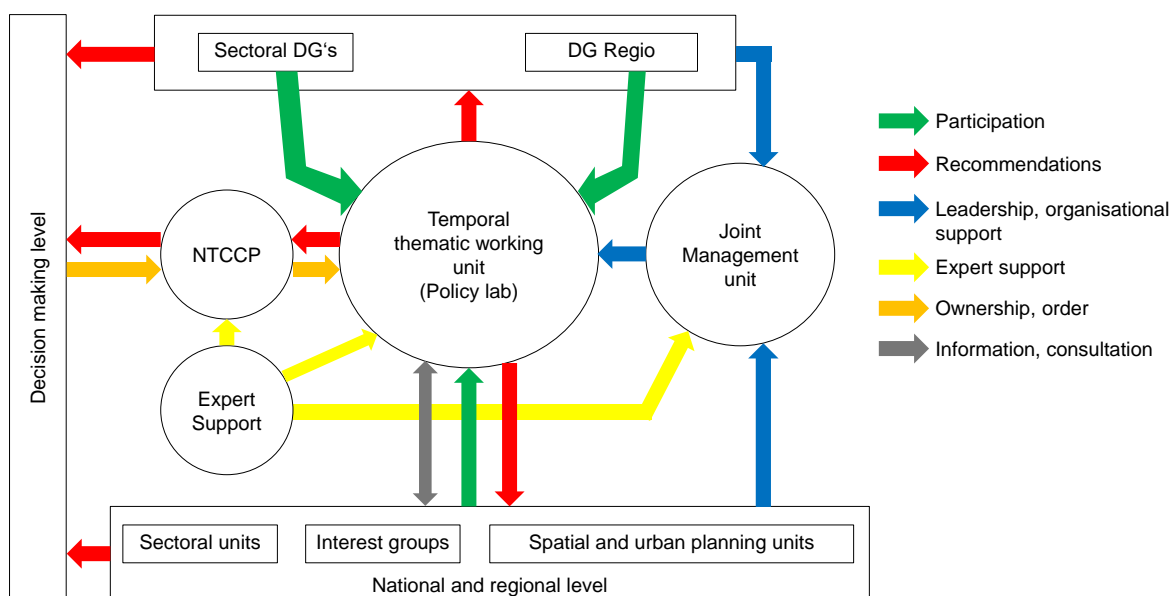
The Territorial Agenda is considered as a key element of territorial policies at the European level and taking into account the insights of diverse assessments regarding the implementation side, a need for strengthening the governance mechanism can be stated.

The assessment of the implementation of the Territorial Agenda so far and the learnings from implementation partnerships in the Urban Agenda and the Macro-regional strategies lead to the following findings:

- implementation partnerships might be an adequate governance mechanism for the Territorial Agenda as well;
- possible synergies with Urban Agenda partnerships should be explored;
- implementation partnerships need a clear and strong ownership and leadership from the participating partners/institutions;
- the participation of the Commission and its support for the leadership and as partner on the content side is crucial as well (sectoral DGs);
- partnerships need a management unit which conjoins thematic expertise with project management skills and is operating in full transparency and jointly governed by the main stakeholders;
- options for technical and financial support at EU-level has to be further explored (MRS governance could currently be co-financed under Interreg);
- the number of participants should be limited to ensure effective working climate or an organisation of the partnership is needed, which guarantee effective working;
- the number of topics treated at once should be limited, the number of implementation partnerships, which could be launched at the beginning should be considered carefully;
- accompanying communication and cooperation formats need to be established in order to inform and consult interested stakeholders who are not members of the partnership;
- integration of the partnership in the administrative and political framework on European and national level is required;
- uptake of results and recommended actions in the administrative routines and the political decision making process need to be ensured.

The figure below offers the establishment of temporal “policy labs” for the possible topics, functions and tasks considered for the Territorial Agenda in Figure 9 as one option among others.

Figure 9: Policy labs as governance mechanism for the Territorial Agenda post 2020



Source: own illustration

In contrast to the Urban Agenda a slow start with just two or three such policy labs is recommended, in order not to stress the limited personal, organisational and financial resources.

ESPON could play a key role by taking over the tasks of a management unit which can offer and organise spatial and thematic know-how as well.

Another approach to address better implementation would be a specific offer for pilot regions which are willing to implement contents of the Territorial Agenda in their regions. The pilot region approach might be fruitful in order to reach diverse functional regions with specific problems and to develop innovative and experimental solutions. In this case, the pilot regions would have the function of regional policy labs. The combination of both forms of policy labs might produce an added value.

Tentative list of questions relevant for further discussion:

- Are partnerships appropriate for a better implementation of the Territorial Agenda post 2020? If yes
 - Temporary or permanent partnerships
 - Not more than five at the same time or more if there is more request
 - Thematic partnerships (for example policy labs) or regional labs or both
 - Other options
- What should be the content of implementation partnerships
 - Incentives for coordinated sectoral and territorial policies
 - Elaborated actions to trigger the implementation of the Territorial Agenda
 - Incentives for the programming of the ESI-funds with territorial dimensions
 - Pilot projects, mutual learning, exchange of experience, development of tools
- What is needed to be able to make decisions on the pathway to a post 2020 governance system for the Territorial Agenda?
 - Thematic proposals for cooperative partnerships
 - Budget needed
 - Technical assistance needed
 - Proposal for the organisational structure
 - A detailed concept like in the Urban Agenda
- Who should do the next steps to prepare decisions?
 - Task force for the renewal of the Territorial Agenda post 2020
 - Trio presidency
 - One country taking the leadership
- Who should facilitate cooperative governance mechanisms in the future?
 - “intergovernmental” secretariat
 - ESPON
 - Commission
 - others
- Who should contribute to the personal and financial support of an implementation oriented governance system?
 - Member States
 - Commission
 - Existing funds

7.2 URBAN AGENDA

The Urban Agenda has established implementation partnerships as a governance mechanism and launched twelve partnerships addressing various topics within only 1,5 years. The course of the Urban Agenda is in a critical stage: The first partnerships are finishing their work on action plans. At this stage it becomes crucial to get some of the actions in the pipeline to real implementation. This is the precondition to create success stories, which would justify the continuation of the Urban Agenda. For the time being, the Commission has announced that the technical support is limited to only two more partnerships. At the same time, the European Parliament as well as the Committee of the Regions demand better integration of cities in the development process of legislation.

Against this background, the Urban Agenda has to cope with the following challenges:

- closure of the twelve partnerships within very short time,
- transfer of the results and recommended actions into the relevant administrative and political implementation pipelines,
- create and communicate success stories as a basis for a continuation,
- identify, select and prioritize topics for the next operational phase,
- slow down the pace of the process to a manageable extent and develop a future system of technical and financial support.

Before starting into a next stage, a proper evaluation of the experiences with this experimental and innovative governance system is deemed useful. This should not be limited to the outputs, outcomes and impacts but also comprise the governance mechanism in the sense of being a learning system. A Technical Preparatory Group, which could handle these challenges has been established already.

Tentative list of questions relevant for further discussion:

- How can we transfer the results of the partnerships into concrete actions?
- What will happen next, when all partnerships will be completed?
- Who is willing to take ownership and leadership for the next stage of the Urban Agenda?
- Who is willing to facilitate the partnerships technically and financially after the engagement of the Commission will be terminated?
- How to improve synergies and build bridges between the Urban Agenda and the Territorial Agenda in order to enhance place-based policy approaches for territorial challenges?

7.3 CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN TERRITORIAL AGENDA AND URBAN AGENDA

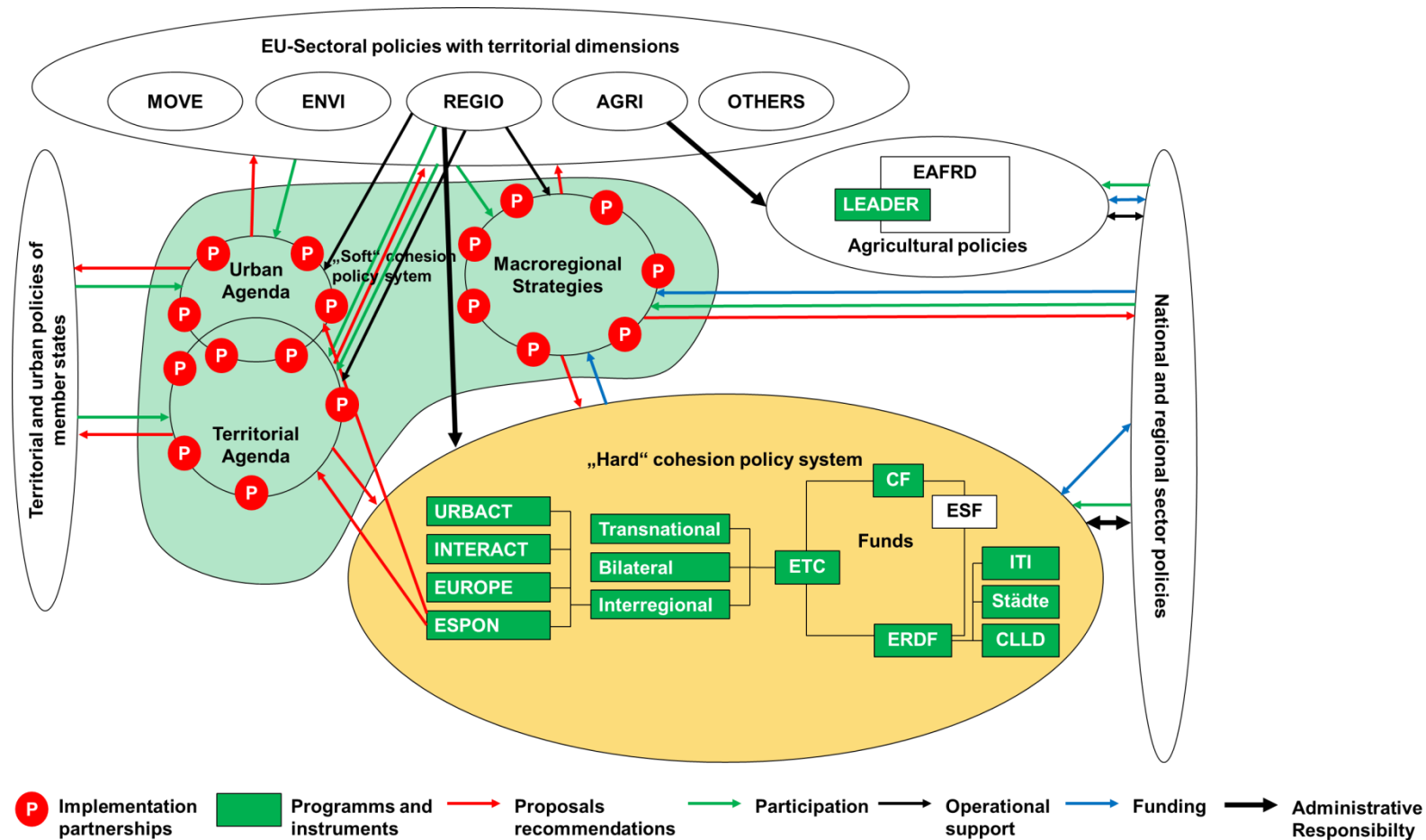
At the current stage, the link between the Territorial Agenda and the Urban Agenda is weak. One reason is the different level of elaboration of the governance mechanisms. An advancement of the Territorial Agenda towards implementation or cooperation partnerships and the continuation of the partnership principle in the Urban Agenda would facilitate the launch of overlapping partnerships or policy labs. This might be a fruitful option as a lot of topics concern all kinds of regions and spaces including cities and agglomerations. Planning and policy making in functional regions without the input of cities does not make sense.

Therefore, a stronger coordination in the selection of topics and priorities, overlapping partnerships or even joint partnerships / policy labs would be an interesting new option. In a possible future “landscape” the Territorial Agenda is enhanced by the governance mechanism of cooperation / implementation partnerships and with a close collaboration with an on-going Urban Agenda (see figure 8).

Tentative list of questions relevant for further discussion:

- How to improve synergies and build bridges between Territorial Agenda and Urban Agenda?
- Who is willing to take ownership and leadership to improve synergies and build bridges between Territorial Agenda and Urban Agenda?

Figure 8: "Landscape" of European territorial policy systems – future adaption proposal



Source: own presentation

7.4 CRITICAL QUESTIONS ON THE PATHWAY TO POST 2020

The previous experiences with implementation / cooperation partnerships indicate that some crucial questions should be clarified in the constitutional phase of such governance mechanisms:

- Who is willing to take ownership and leadership for the governance system as a whole?
- Who is willing to take ownership and leadership of a specific partnership?
- How are these governance elements embedded in the institutional administrative and political framework?
- Who is willing to contribute to the facilitation of the governance-mechanisms (technical assistance, management units and thematic expertise)?
- Who is willing to take ownership and leadership in the initial / constitutive phase?
- Is there sufficient support and commitment of the potential partners (Commission, member states, committee of the regions, parliament)?
- How to define and identify the potential added value?

These and other questions should be subject to the established taskforces for the preparation of the Territorial Agenda and Urban Agenda 2020+.

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