

Observations and regional impact indicators

Background

At the Tampere informal meeting of the Ministers with responsibility for regional planning, a decision was taken to set up the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) as one of the twelve measures for implementing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The aim of the Observatory is to provide the necessary database to encourage the harmonious development of the entire Community, as laid down in Article 158 of the EC Treaty, and to clarify the concept of territorial cohesion referred to in Article 16 of the Treaty. ESPON activities rely on networking between the Member States (research institutes, public authorities).

The guidelines set out by the Commission for the period 2001-2006, adopted by the Committee for the Development and Conversion of the Regions in December 2000, call for thematic studies meeting the political objectives of the ESDP and a structure for sustainable urban development. They also recommend data bases, map-making tools and indicators for territorial development and methodologies to assess the territorial impact of Community and national sectoral policies.

This project will be able to make use of the results of the study programme on European regional planning which the Commission launched and co-financed between 1998 and 2000. As part of the programme, and in line with the political objectives of the ESDP, a set of indicators were developed with a view to classifying Europe into different types of areas according to their characteristics. Seven categories of territorial indicators were recorded: geographical position/accessibility, regional integration, economic situation (within the region), the natural heritage, the cultural heritage, pressure from land use and social integration.

Objective

"Starting in 2001, to establish a European observation network in order to define a series of indicators for the analysis of the regional impact of Community policies".

Implementation/follow-up

The ESPON activity programme will be co-financed by the European Commission under the "networks" item of the Community initiative *Interreg III*.

It will include a methodology to assess the regional implications of Community or national sectoral policies and major infrastructure projects. Special attention will be paid to the impact of new transport, energy or telecommunications infrastructures. Here, regional impact indicators will be very useful.

Timetable

Second half of 2001: transmission of the ESPON programme to the Commission for approval.
2001-2003: results of the work on methodologies to assess the regional impact of sectoral policies and various thematic studies.