ESPON 2020 COOPERATION PROGRAM IN ROMANIA

CSOKA Gabriela Elena
Department of Economics and Business, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania.
gabi.csoka@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The ESPON program aims to promote and stimulate the European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy delivery to public authorities and other public policy actors at all levels. The objective of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Program is to support the strengthening of the effectiveness of EU cohesion policy and other sectoral policies and programs under the European Structural Funds and European Investment Funds (ESI funds) as well as national and regional territorial development policies through the production, dissemination and promotion of territorial data covering the entire territory of the 28 Member States and the four partner countries - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Romania as a member country of the program, will benefit from the results of ESPON 2020, consisting of territorial analyzes and studies on European trends in various topical areas: labor market or investment developments, commuting models, demographic change, climate change impacts on European territory, etc.*

Keywords: *cross-border; cooperation; financing; Romania; funds.*

JEL Classification: *F26.*

1. Territorial Cooperation Programs 2014-2020

European Territorial Cooperation is the instrument of cohesion policy which aims to resolve cross-border issues and jointly develop the potential of different territories. Co-operation actions are supported by the European Regional Development Fund through three key components: cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation.

Cross-border cooperation programs are those programs that fund accessibility, environmental and risk prevention projects, economic and social development and 'people to people' at the EU's internal and external borders'.

Specific priority areas include: promoting sustainable and quality jobs and supporting professional mobility by integrating cross-border labor markets, promoting social inclusion and cross-border integration of communities, developing and implementing joint programs on education, training and training, etc.

Transnational cooperation programs have as main objective the financing of actions and the development of networks leading to integrated territorial development in areas such as environment, urban development, innovation and accessibility.

Specific priority areas include: strengthening the institutional capacities of public authorities and stakeholders and the efficiency of public administration by developing and coordinating macro-regional and maritime strategies.

Interregional cooperation programs support cooperation between public authorities on issues of common interest, through the transfer of experience and best practices between the regions of the European Union through networking between EU cities as well as between EU researchers (Badulescu at all., 2014).
Specific priority areas include: strengthening the institutional capacities of public authorities and stakeholders and the efficiency of public administration by disseminating good practices and expertise and promoting exchanges of experience (Camagni., 2006).
Romania participates in 2014-2020 for 12 European Territorial Cooperation Programs to be implemented both at the internal borders and at the external borders of the European Union.
The 12 European Territorial Cooperation Programs benefit from European co-financing through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), as follows:

- ERDF:

1. Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Program;
2. Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Program;
3. The Danube Transnational Program;
4. Interreg regional cooperation program INTERREG EUROPE;
5. The URBACT III cooperation program;
6. The INTERACT III cooperation program;
7. ESPON 2020 cooperation program.

- IPA II:

8. INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program Romania - Serbia.

- ENI:

9. Joint Operational Program Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020;
10. Joint Operational Program Romania-Moldova 2014-2020;
11. Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Program 2014-2020;
12. Cross-border cooperation program ENI Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020.

In order to support the beneficiaries of the financing, a maximum of 13% of the eligible expenditures for the projects financed by the ERDF and IPA and up to 8% for the programs financed by the ENI is ensured from the state budget.

2. Presentation of the ESPON program

ESPON is an applied research program designed to support the development of territorial development policies in Europe. To this end, the program provides various systematic data on territorial trends related to different economic, social and environmental aspects in order to identify the potential of larger regions, cities and territories as well as the economic challenges they face. ESPON activities target all EU Member States, as well as Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Over 130 organizations across the continent are involved in this program. They

carry out different types of studies (thematic, intertematic, on policy impact, research networking or capacity building) and provide data on territorial trends in the form of statistics, analysis and maps. Therefore, one of the major challenges for ESPON is to put this material at the disposal of local policy makers. At EU level, the results of the research activities carried out under ESPON are a source of comparable information that can be used to improve the Union's competitiveness and sustainable development. During the 2014-2020 programming period, ESPON will operate as a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). It will focus mainly on the thematic objective no. 11: Strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration.

2.1. The objectives of the ESPON program

To achieve the *objectives of the program*, two priority axes were set: *Priority Axis 1* - Focused on the production of territorial information, their transfer, observation, tools and dissemination, *Priority Axis 2* - Technical Assistance.

Priority Axis 1 will finance a Single Beneficiary Operation (EGTC ESPON 2020 EGTC), which will contract services to research institutions through public procurement procedures. The funds allocated to *Priority Axis 1* will finance research projects that will contribute to: providing territorial information through applied research, increasing knowledge transfer / territorial intelligence, improving territorial observation capacity and tools for territorial analysis, better dissemination and exploitation of the results of territorial research by interested users. *Priority Axis 2* responds to a clear request from policy makers and practitioners, expressed in the final phase of the ESPON 2006 Program, for user-oriented and on-demand actions under ESPON 2013 Program. The targeted analyzes developed under ESPON 2013 aim to respond to this applications and provide a truly European dimension to the database at regional / local, national, cross-border and transnational levels. Using ESPON results in practice will help to make informed policy decisions. By calling for an analytical process where ESPON results are integrated with more detailed information and practical know-how, a new understanding of the potential and future development challenges that may be turned into policy decisions on projects and actions may emerge.

2.2. The total budget of the ESPON 2020 program

The total budget of ESPON 2020 is EUR 48.6 million, of which EUR 41.3 million represents the allocation from the European Regional Development Fund for the period 2014-2020.

As a member country of the program, Romania will benefit from the results of ESPON 2020, consisting of territorial analyzes and studies on European trends in various topical areas: labor market or investment developments, commuting models, demographic change, climate change impacts on the European territory, etc.

2.3. Financing priorities

ESPON focuses on the thematic objective no. 11 "Strengthening institutional capacity". However, all 22 thematic objectives have a territorial dimension or impact. Therefore, all are considered relevant and can be supported by European territorial data produced, generated and disseminated by ESPON 2020.

2.4. Formation of partnerships

The partnership is one of the conditions for participation in ESPON projects. In the sections below, find out about partner partners and sources of partner identification. For example, some statistical data on the structure of the partnerships of the 13 ongoing research projects were presented. The section on partnership proposals will soon be complemented by the proposals made by the Romanian institutions and by the institutions from the participating countries (EU / partner countries). ESPON projects are generally formulated and implemented in partnerships consisting of eligible institutions from at least three different countries participating in the ESPON 2013 Program. They are eligible for ESPON funding: public bodies; bodies governed by public law; private bodies.

As far as the partner's country of origin is concerned, only institutions from the EU Member States and the four partner countries Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein can participate as partners in a transnational project group. There is also an exception to the general rule for projects with a budget value of up to 200,000 euros for which the fulfillment of the partnership formation condition is not necessary, and the project proposals can be formulated and implemented by a single eligible body. The project proposal has to be developed in close cooperation with the project partners, this being a condition of the projects funded under the "European Territorial Cooperation Objective". That is why preparing a successful proposal involves more than fulfilling some of the requirements of the program, based on the principle of "joint training" and "joint implementation", the term "common" referring to the whole partnership. It is very important for the partners to have experience of cooperating in transnational projects and of carrying out research projects at a transnational level.

The following section presents information on the purpose, key outcomes and image of Romania in 12 ESTON studies, finalized or in the advanced stage of implementation - the list of these projects is presented below:

1. DEMIFER - Demographic and migration flows affecting European regions and cities.
2. EDORA - Opportunities for development of different types of rural areas.
3. ESPON CLIMATE - Climate change and territorial effects on regional and local economies in Europe.
4. FOCI - Future guidelines for city development.
5. ReRISK - Effects of rising energy prices on regional competitiveness.
6. TIPTAP - Assessing the Territorial Impact of Transport and Agriculture Policies.
7. CAEE - Agglomeration savings in Europe.

8. ESPON TeDi .- Territorial Diversity in Europe.
9. METROBORDER. - Polycentric cross-border metropolitan regions.
10. SS-LR - Spatial Scenarios: New tools for knowledge of the territory.
11. SURE - Success of Convergence Region Savings.
12. ESPON DATABASE 2013 - ESPON database (scientific platform).

There is also an ESPON study whose interim results have been published - EUROISLANDS, which analyzes the island regions of Europe.

2.5. Statistics on the structure of partnerships

2.5.1. Statistical data refers to the 13 ESPON research projects that have been running since 2010

Table 1: Applied Research (Priority 1)

Project name	DEMIFER	EDORA	ESPON CLIMATE	FOCI	ReRISK	TIPTAP
No. of partners	**7**	**15**	**13**	**7**	**3**	**3**
The structure of the partnerships	Netherlands (2) Austria Poland UK Sweden Italy	United Kingdom (4) Sweden Spain Greece Ireland Germany (2) Austria Poland (2) Hungary Portugal	Germany (2) Finland Norway UK Finland Hungary (2) **Romania** Slovakia Spain Netherlands Switzerland	Belgium Spain Poland Greece Switzerland France (2)	Spain Sweden Greece	Italy UK Netherlands

Source: http://www.mdrap.gov.ro

Table 2: Focus analyzes (Priority 2)

Project name	CAEE	ESPON TEDI	EUROISLAND	METROBORDERS	SS-LR	SURE
No. of partners	**4**	**4**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**2**
The structure of the partnerships	**UK** Ireland Spain France	**Sweden** Greece **Romania** Switzerland	**Greece** Denmark Malta	**Luxembourg (2)** Switzerland Belgium	**Italy** Spain	**Italy** Switzerland

Source: http://www.mdrap.gov.ro

Table 3: ESPON Database (Priority 3)

Project name	ESPON DATABASE
No. of partners	**7**
The structure of the partnerships	**France (2)** Spain Belgium **Romania** France Luxembourg

Source: http://www.mdrap.gov.ro

The studies conducted under the ESPON 2013 Program are a valuable source of policy-making based on existing scientific expertise at European level.

2.5.2. The ESPON DATABASE 2013 project

The goal of the ESPON DATABASE 2013 project is to continue and improve a spatial database that was developed under the ESPON 2006 Project. The first ESPON database contains relevant indicators for the analysis of NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 spatial units from a perspective - territorial competitiveness and economic convergence capacity (underlying the concept of territorial cohesion).

The ESPON Database 2013 project focuses on obtaining variables and indicators with impact and relevance in the decision making process at different scales of territorial analysis. The final products obtained in the implementation of this program are spatial data bases and map funds, tools to which models and methodologies are used to visualize information at the territorial level. The coverage area of the study is represented by the countries participating in the ESPON 2013 Program and some countries located in the South-Eastern neighborhood of the European Union (Balkan states). The level of analysis starts with obtaining data and indicators for classical administrative levels (NUTS0, NUTS1, NUTS2 and NUTS3) with local size query capabilities (LAU1 and LAU2) for selected selected states. Efforts under the ESPON Database 2013 project have a twofold goal: to streamline decision-making through easy and fast access to relevant databases and indicators and to complement major actors in the diffusion of spatial and spatial analysis tools through a body has as its main mission the integrated monitoring of the active geographic trends at the European continent (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002).

The ESPON DATABASE 2013 project results, taking into account the complexity of geographic objects that require data processing and their inclusion in the database, the ESPON Database 2013 Project is divided into a set of "challenges" that decline according to different issues. Another issue it was to redefine the Functional Urban Areas on the basis of a set of criteria that allow a better trace of the boundaries of these entities (challenge to the working team working within the Free University of Brussels), which makes some scientific approaches encountered in the implementation of the project have a horizontal character that mobilizes common forms of know-how, centered on the issue of local or regional databases. Some data analysis methods, such as the decomposition of information from a hierarchically

superior level (NUTS3) to a lower geographic level (a 1km x 1km grid), allow viewing of spatial information on stairs for which the set of indicators is not available normally. Continuing this approach could provide interested public stakeholders with a number of useful tools for identifying key territorial processes active, independent of administrative-territorial divisions.

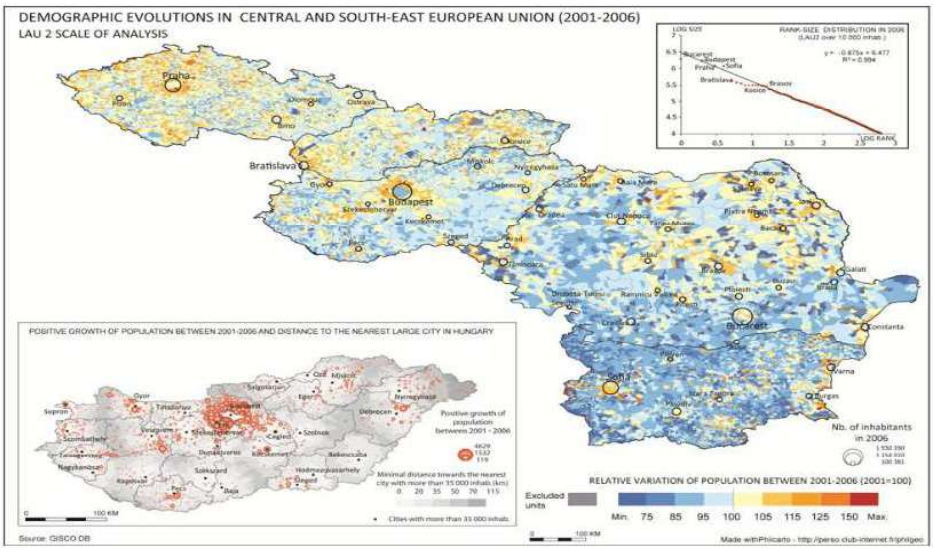

Figure 1: Evolution of the population (2001-2006) in EU Member States in Central and Southeast at LAU 2 level
Source: http://mdrap.ro

2.6. Proposals for partnership within the ESPON program

On May 13, 2010, 21 institutions in Romania were registered in the database (increasing from January to 13) - the most potential partners registered in the database against the other participating countries - www. espon.eu - Projects section - Transnational Project Groups http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_ESPONPartnerCafe/index.html
On 24th January 2011, the Regional Development Agency of the Czech Republic was interested in collaborating to formulate project proposals for the following themes under Priority 1 - Applied Research in the Field of Territorial Development, Competitiveness and Territorial Cohesion:

- European Regions: Potential Contribution to the EU 2020 Strategy;
- Territorial Scenarios and Visions for Europe;
- Territorial Governance – Best Practices for New Perspectives.

The Regional Development Agency was established in Ostrava in May 1993 by the regional bodies and the former Ministry of Economy of the Czech Republic as pilot project of the EU Phare program. The Agency played a key role in strategic

planning,and they did prepared all the Moravian-Silesian regional development programs, the Ostrava-Mošnov Airport Development Strategy, the Regional Operational Program for EU Planning for 2007-2013 and they did as well prepared many projects and strategic plans for the municipalities (Bański and Ferenc, 2014).

3. Conclusions

ESPON methodology in the field of spatial analysis and the results of this type of study can be useful for local and regional decision-makers to visualize and interpret risks and trends at specific spatial scales: development regions, counties, metropolitan areas, intra-community development associations, cities, development poles, urbanized axes and areas, etc.
The ESPON 2013 Program contributes to its debates at the European level on: the implementation of the new European Territorial Cohesion objective introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, the contribution of cohesion policy to the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives and the future of the post-2013 European Cohesion Policy.
The year of 2010 marks the completion of a large number of territorial research projects funded under the ESPON 2013 Program and the launching of new research projects in which the exploitation of research results is one of the challenges of implementing the program and an important objective at both program level as well as at national level.
European territorial cooperation for the period 2014-2020 provides for the strengthening of the effectiveness of the Cohesion Policy by promoting "developmental analyzes and the links between cohesion of territorial cohesion, including territorial aspects of economic and social cohesion, as well as the harmonious development of European territory through studies, collection of data and other measures ".

References

1. Bański J., Ferenc M., (2014), ESPON as a tool of a national and regional policy, EUROPA XXI Vol. 25, 2014, pp. 23-35.
2. Badulescu A., Badulescu D., Borma A., (2014) *Enhancing cross-border cooperation through local actors' involvement. The case of tourism cooperation in Bihor (Romania) – Hajdú-Bihar (Hungary) Euroregion,* în revista Lex Localis - Journal of Local Self-government, 12(3), 2014, pp. 349-371, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alina_Badulescu/publication/273773721_Enhancing_Cross-Border_Cooperation_through_Local_Actors%27_Involvement_The_Case_of_Tourism_Cooperation_in_Bihor_Romania_-_Hajdu-Bihar_Hungary_Euroregion/links/59ad9bc20f7e9bdd115c5097/Enhancing-Cross-Border-Cooperation-through-Local-Actors-Involvement-The-Case-of-Tourism-Cooperation-in-Bihor-Romania-Hajdu-Bihar-Hungary-Euroregion.pdf
3. Camagni R., (2006), Tequila Sip: un modello operativo di Valutazione di Impatto Territoriale per le province dell'Unione Europea, Rivista di Economia e Statistica del Territori, F. Angeli, Milano, pp. 37-62.

4. Espon 2013 Program: Interco, Indicators for the territorial cohesion, Final Report Part A, ESPON and University of Geneva (2012) and Draft Final Report (DFR, version 2011).
5. European Commission: The Programming Period 2014-2020, Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy, Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation (2013a).
6. Faludi A., Waterhout B., (2002), *The Making of the European Spatial Development Perspective: No Masterplan*, Routledge, The RTPI Library Series, London, New York, pp. 224.
7. *Regional Use of ESPON Knowledge*, (2010), Working Paper from the internal ESPON Seminar 3-4 December 2009 in Malmö. http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/SeminarsReports/Malmoe_Seminar_Report.pdf [22/02/2019].
8. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ro/atlas/programmes?countryCode=RO, accessed on 20.02.2019.
9. http://www.bursa.ro/programul-espon-2020-aprobat-de-comisia-europeana-03572625 , accessed on 20.02.2019.
10. http://www.mdrap.gov.ro/conditii-privind-numarul-de-parteneri , accesssed on 20.02.2019.
11. http://www.mdrap.gov.ro/userfiles/espon/propunere_parteneriat_cehia1.pdf , accessed on 22.02.2019.
12. http://www.msid.cz/ , accessed on 22.02.3019.
13. https://www.proiecteue.ro/reglementari.php?r=19 , accessed on 22.02.2019.
14. https://www.espon.eu, accessed on 20.02.2019.
15. http://www.questp.ro/programe-de-cooperare-transfrontaliera/13/, accesssed on 20.02.2019.