



## ***Interreg III C SOUTH PROGRESDEC/ESDP STEPS and the Territorial Agenda: a regional point of view***

***Assessment of the territorial planning policies promoted by the European Union by creating a dialogue between regions on priorities, policies, planning and management tools.***

### ***Territorial Agenda as development of a common spatial vision of European Union.***

The Territorial Agenda of the EU, is a document aimed at the territorial cohesion, structured as a short policy paper. The recommendations for an integrated spatial development policy is a result of a process begun in 1988 with the basic document of territorial perspective (ESDP) approved in Potsdam by Informal Council of Ministers for territorial planning Development Programme (ESDP, SDEC in French) Programme.

The Territorial cohesion concept was developed in these last years with ESPON observatory results and policy strategies and documents for competitiveness and regional cohesion Such as Lisbon Strategy, Gothenburg document.

### ***Introducing territorial cohesion principles at regional level.***

One of the main limits of the ESDP implementation process, when looking at it from a local point of view, seems to be deriving from the loose communication links this tool has established with lower national administrative bodies.

In this view, the question of territorial cohesion should be treated also as a matter of institutional learning. In order to produce effects, the Territorial Agenda has to interface with the issues and the framings coming from lower institutional levels, to give birth to a communication process aiming at producing institutional learning, and institutional change.

For this reason the Territorial Agenda can also be considered as a process, with various assessment phases and a constant dialogue with relevant stakeholders at the different scales.

In particular this means:

- to establish feedbacks between different territorial levels (from local to "global" and the other way round);
- to establish assessment procedures for the *in itinere* evaluation of the Agenda implementing process;
- to involve permanently a large number of stakeholders (from local authorities to social actors, from professionals to private investors) into the Agenda implementing process, as to guarantee that its goals and actions are both addressing and deriving from concrete territorial dynamics and social needs.

In all those fields, Regions can play a considerable role, both for their institutional position and for the experience accumulated in territorial cooperation projects.

### ***Territorial cohesion as a matter of governance and policies integration***

Concerning the analysis of effects produced by the ESDP at the local scale, two research fields appear to be crucial:

- the question of governance, and the relations among all the actors of territorial transformations. The occasions in which the ESDP principles have generated visible effects on local planning activities seem to be those where the different involved actors have created *ad hoc* policy networks, overcoming the usual sectorial and hierarchical approaches. The challenge for territorial policies is to move from a competence-centred approach to a problem-centred one. In this regards the Territorial Agenda should aim at promoting institutional change, at supporting new forms of governance and of public-public and public-private partnerships;
- the question of policy integration, strictly linked to the previous one. At an European scale, this issue implies that the Territorial has to fully (and explicitly) integrate with other EU policies, and in particular with the Structural Funds and the Objective 3 Territorial Cooperation. The projects financed under this Objective can also easily become one of the most relevant analytical tools for assessing the cohesion policies implementing process.

### ***PROGRESDEC as a laboratory for horizontal and vertical cooperation in territorial cohesion***

Progresdec is a Regional Framework Operation financed under the Interreg IIIC initiative, whose aim is verify whether the policies under the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) have been implemented at regional and local level and/or how the local authorities have construed and translated into practical tools the guidelines set out in the European document.

The general aim of the Operation is to develop exchanges of experience and to test common methods and instruments for territorial management purposes, thus enhancing the effectiveness of local policies.

The project is focused on the relation between the general strategic options and policy addresses coming from the European level and the planning activities carried out by local administrations at regional and sub-regional levels. In this respect, Progresdec experience can offer a significant contribution to the Territorial Agenda designing process; moreover, it can constitute an example of how links can be established among the different territorial levels that characterise the EU.

With regard to the territorial policies developed by the EU, the need has arisen to establish a dialogue on the most effective guideline implementation methods,.

### ***Cooperation between local institutions on territorial planning.***

PROGRESDEC/ESDP STEPS is a project organised according to an innovative formula, the Regional Framework Operation. This formula provides for the Regions to carry out the planning function, while local authorities are the active players implementing the cooperation by means of experimentation. The procedure provides for a tender call to local authorities for the implementation of transnational territorial projects.

The Regional Framework Operation (RFO) INTERREG IIIC PROGRESDEC/ ESDP STEPS, with a budget of approximately € 5,700,000, is born out of these considerations and deals with the following issues:

- a) how and to what extent are the ESDP strategies taken into consideration within the normal territorial planning and management procedures in national and regional contexts?
- b) how and in what way can regional territorial management policies more accurately define and identify more effective directions in the context of implementing and developing the ESDP?

### ***The Partnership***

The partnership consists of nine Regions:

Region of Latium – Italy (Lead partner),

Region of Piedmont – Italy,

Region of Sicily – Italy,

State of Brandenburg - Germany, which has named the IRS (Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung) as the implementing party.

Region of Western Macedonia - Greece,

Region of Central Macedonia - Greece,

Government of Navarre, Spain,

Region of Madrid – Spain,

Province of Utrecht – Holland, which has named the DLG (Dienst Landelijk Gebied) as the implementing party.

## ***The Sub-projects***

At the end of a selection procedure (expression of interest and call for proposals), in July 2006 the Steering Committee of PROGRESDEC approved 14 sub-projects presented by transnational partnerships. They involve dialogue on various specific matters and town planning work relating to sustainable development in rural areas, innovative management of protected areas, strategic planning.

The results of the Operation will have a dual purpose: on the one hand to contribute to the development of the relevant European Spatial Development Programme (vertical co-operation) and on the other hand to engage in direct dialogue between regional administrations on the tools and procedures considered to be effective (horizontal co-operation).

Lead partner Region of Latium:

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