

which the first legal supports were applied, especially by the Council of Europe (Madrid Outline Convention, 1980) while cooperation initiatives were also extended towards Southern Europe. The last phase corresponds to 1990s and 2000s, at which financial support is added, mainly from European Union (Interreg and, more recently, European Territorial Cooperation programmes), while initiatives are also extended to Eastern Europe: both are key factors for a considerably quantitative increase. In this last stage it is made a special emphasis on recent developments, such as EU regulation for European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC, 2006), and CoE regulation for Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECG, 2009) that may lead to a new phase.

Gateway D

WHAT'S NEXT IN CLUSTER POLICY RESEARCH: CLUSTER GOVERNANCE FOR EFFECTIVE CLUSTER POLICY

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The theoretical and policy debate on cluster reinforcement has, so far, largely focused on the economic-geographical dimension, underplaying the complex administrative context in which policymaking is undertaken. I wish to bring to light the significance of policy leverage – the formation and effectiveness of cluster policy. Currently, cluster policy develops either unfounded as many policy officials exhibit a groundless faith in ‘replicating prescription-policies’ or by chance as policy officials act on a ‘fingerspitzengefühl’. Not surprisingly, application is not all roses as interventions are mismatched and effectiveness falls short. This research project assumes that one underlying deficiency is that the intelligence base of cluster policy is largely based on generic ideas and routines, and fails to take into account the more detailed insights and encountered needs of the cluster actors – these remain clouded due to a lack of (pre-) consultation and co-producing engagement of cluster actors in cluster policy development. To put it crudely: cluster policy development occurs in a vacuum. A stronger coupling between cluster policy development and so-called local strategic intelligence is desired and strategic action needs to be collectively undertaken. This research project therefore contends that a demand-initiated, bottom-up cluster policy is preferred with a key role played by local civic entrepreneurs. It proposes a cluster governance structure – nicknamed a dignitary get-together – that allows for an informal, flexible, continuous strategic dialogue on cluster actors’ needs. The attained strategic intelligence is ‘put to work’ in a collective determination of interventions embedded in a distinct implementation strategy. This paper will present the conceptual framework of the research project and explain how this will be applied to four case studies (Nijmegen, Enschede, Hengelo and Leeuwarden) through the employment of action research.

Gateway A

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND REGIONAL DIMENSION OF UNBALANCES

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The economic effects of the enlargement process in the EU are mainly approached from two points of view concerning, on one side, the consequences for EU former members and, on the other, those for entrants. The hypothesis that integration has to be considered for new comers as a “fast lane to prosperity” is assumed. Potential economic benefits can broadly be grouped in three main categories: opportunities linked to trade liberalization; increase in efficiency driven by competition and increasing specialization together with delocalization processes. Possibilities for less developed entrants to catch up seems linked to their capabilities to follow a path of transformation and specialization in production processes coupled by change in institutional and organizations’ assets and performance. Following this premise, in the paper concepts above resumed will be discussed. The analysis will be centered specifically on highlighting critical elements in the integration process of countries with different degree of development. It will be discussed the possibility that the change dynamics taking places inside some countries (CEECs in particular), even if coherent with long term catching up strategies, could cause widening of gaps internal to these countries. The approach that will be followed in the paper will emphasize the relevance of knowledge economy mechanisms which undoubtedly can support gap reduction but could as well emphasize process of polarization.