

What kind of territorial cooperation in the Western Balkans and why?

Marko Peterlin, Institute for spatial policies

Why cooperation? - 1

- Sharing the experience between the candidates for EU membership and the MS that entered the EU in 2004 and later to avoid repeating the same mistakes, in particular with regard to spatial development
- What kind of mistakes?
 - The negotiation process and the way EU functions strengthens sectoral thinking and doing in general
 - EU “carrots” and “sticks” in terms of territorial development will probably end up in different sectors, making any kind of territorial development policy very difficult to conduct

Why cooperation? - 2

- Creating the conditions for effective territorial coordination:
 - effective management of interdependencies, resolution of potential conflicts, and construction of collective knowledge
- A step towards territorial governance:
 - the capacity of public and private actors to build an organisational consensus involving different actors in order to define common objectives and tasks, to agree on the contribution by each partner to attain the objectives previously defined, and to agree on a common vision for the future of their territory

What kind of cooperation - 1

- It is tempting to start with elaborating common visions for the area
- Why may this not be the most effective way to start with?
 - rather formal, relying strongly on the accountability of the stakeholders involved in the elaboration of the vision, and stability of the institutional structure
 - formal and regulatory approaches to coordination are not very useful in contexts characterised by diversity of institutional frameworks and governance cultures

What kind of cooperation - 2

- Coordination without formalised common goals and objectives
 - collective agreement could emerge through a continuous process of interaction, adaptation and learning
 - agreement would be an informal result of a continuous process of coordination, involving cooperation, learning and change
 - territorial governance in the area would emerge out of coordination processes

What kind of cooperation - 3

- Functional issues should come to the foreground
- This include obvious transnational planning problems, such as:
 - cross-border functional regions,
 - management of trans-border protected areas,
 - development of efficient sustainable transport networks connecting the urban system in the area,
 - energy infrastructure etc.

Themes for cooperation - 1

1. Area-wide platforms for exchanging information and knowledge as well as sharing experiences
2. Partnerships addressing specific planning issues in the area
 - should have clear and rather concrete objectives, consistent with the competences and responsibilities of the partners

Themes for cooperation - 2

1. Proposals for area-wide platforms

- a network for exchange of knowledge and experience on spatial and urban planning issues
- common spatial data platform
- open forum for sharing experience about coordination issues
- working group for raising awareness about coordinated spatial development
- ...

Themes for cooperation - 3

- A few notes, arising from the lessons learned within other contexts
 - platforms and partnerships should be territorially based,
 - they should cover the whole Western Balkan cooperation area as early as possible, and particular platforms could include also wider area or external actors,
 - it is crucial that they ensure continuity, so that they can facilitate processes of learning and change,
 - it might turn out that there some existing institutional settings present a valuable starting point for addressing some of the themes mentioned above.

Themes for cooperation - 4

- Financing
 - coordination takes time and also money,
 - nevertheless, the availability of EU funding for these types of coordination activities should not represent a starting point for establishing any of the tools for coordination
 - on the contrary, the will to contribute own financing for these activities typically means much stronger dedication of partners for their cause
 - this of course does not mean that any external funding opportunities have to be rejected if they arise, but they should definitely be handled with care..

Thanks for your attention!

marko.peterlin@ipop.si

Inštitut za politike prostora / Institute for spatial policies

Tržaška 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana

T: +386 (0)5 90 63 683