

## MEASURING TERRITORIAL COHESION

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### Abstract

The notion of Territorial Cohesion is still very much misunderstood within the EU bodies, despite being mentioned regularly, since 2001, in the European Commission Cohesion Reports, and included the Lisbon Treaty, in 2009, alongside the goals of social and economic cohesion. Indeed, in the last couple of decades, few attempts were made to produce a widely accepted methodology which can effectively measure changes on territorial cohesion in a given territory. Under this context, this article summarizes not only existent proposals to define territorial cohesion, but also some efforts to measure it. More particularly, we start by shedding light on the notion of territory/territorial, and the related analytic dimension, which go beyond the commonly EU triangle of policy development: economy, society, and environment. In sum, we suggest the inclusion of two additional dimensions, one related with territorial governance/cooperation, and another associated with spatial planning: polycentricity. Next, we elaborate on the notion of cohesion, and its relation to the territorial dimension of policies, which can be found in several domains/policies: urban, rural, border areas, transports, environment, etc. Also, a concrete proposal for the defining the notion of Territorial Cohesion is provided in order to make it more comprehensive to the political bodies and the scientific community. More concretely, along the text, territorial cohesion is viewed as the process of promoting a more cohesive and balanced territory, by: (i) supporting the reduction of socioeconomic territorial imbalances; (ii) promoting environmental sustainability; (iii) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation/governance processes; and (iv) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric

urban system. Finally, we explore the ways in which it is possible to measure territorial cohesion. More pointedly, a significant number of statistical indicators are proposed build an aggregated statistical index (territorial cohesion index) which can measure the changes of the territorial cohesion in a given territory. Here concrete examples are provided where this proposed methodology was applied: the Iberian case (NUTS2) and the Portuguese case (NUTS3), from 1990 to 2010.

**Keywords:** Territorial Cohesion, Territorial Development, Territorial Impact Assessment, Territorial Governance, Territorial Cooperation.