

The background of the cover is a photograph of a network diagram. It consists of numerous small, dark blue spheres connected by thin, light blue lines, creating a complex web of connections. The spheres are arranged in a way that suggests a hierarchical or interconnected structure. A large, semi-transparent light blue circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

# PULLING THINGS TOGETHER – WHAT WORKS IN REGIONAL POLICY COORDINATION?

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*Martin Ferry*

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European Policies Research Centre  
School of Government and Public Policy  
University of Strathclyde  
40 George Street  
Glasgow G1 1QE

T +44(0) 141 548 4898  
E [eprc@strath.ac.uk](mailto:eprc@strath.ac.uk)  
W <http://www.eprc-strath.eu/>



Operating address:  
Stichting EPRC Delft  
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment  
Technische Universiteit Delft  
Julianalaan 134  
2628 Delft

T +31(0) 15 27 86093  
E [info@eprcdelft.eu](mailto:info@eprcdelft.eu)  
W <http://www.eprc-strath.eu/>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Policy coordination is a perennial regional development challenge. Policymakers need to address asymmetries of information between and across levels of government; 'silo' approaches in government ministries, departments and agencies; unstable, insufficient regional policy budgets; contrasting policy objectives and targets; and, mismatches between functional areas targeted by regional policy and administrative boundaries.

Across Europe, governments have introduced various initiatives to strengthen regional policy coordination. These range from basic cooperation with limited, informal exchange of information towards integration, involving joint, participative decision making and the pooling of budgets and resources to achieve collective goals. Coordination efforts can take place at every stage of the policy process from agenda-setting to implementation.

A range of coordination mechanisms can be identified in regional policy systems, each with their own strengths and challenges. Constitutional, legislative or regulatory provisions can be used to facilitate coordination. These are important for coherence, particularly alongside more 'active' approaches such as coordination through organisational mechanisms to

foster joint working, horizontally or vertically. Ministries, dedicated committees or agencies can act as boundary-spanning structures but it is important that they have sufficient legal competences, political status and capacity to perform this coordinating role. Strategic frameworks strengthen coordination through setting joint objectives, specifying the aims of shared policies and determining which objectives take priority in the event of incompatibility. In this case, a key challenge lies in developing consensus and securing commitment from relevant sectoral and territorial stakeholders.

Coordination of policy instruments is being pursued through the pooling of funding streams, dedicated budgets for coordinated actions, the implementation of action plans with a mix of instruments, and the creation of agreements or contracts that commit actors from different sectors or administrative levels to joint working. This type of coordination involves transaction costs and requires finding a balance between a range of factors: territorial and thematic scope and focus; budgetary contributions and policy competences; the use of incentives; and conditions to ensure joint working.

The choice of appropriate coordination mechanism depends on the specific characteristics of regional policy systems.

However, successful approaches employ combinations of regulatory, structural, strategic and operational tools. Success also depends on finding the optimal combination of functional territorial focus (e.g. city-region, metropolitan area, etc.), administrative jurisdiction (national, regional, urban, local), thematic scope (a wide range of policy areas or more targeted focus), and instrument mix (tax

breaks, budget envelopes, grants, contracts etc.). Finally, a key factor in the success of policy coordination is trust-building. The creation of stable coordination arrangements that create scope for regular interaction, including through 'face to face' meetings, is important in ensuring that stakeholders have the will and capacity to fulfil their commitments.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

***“Co-ordination is necessary to identify investment opportunities and bottlenecks, to manage joint policy competencies, to minimise the potential for investments to work at cross purposes, to ensure adequate resources and capacity to undertake investment, and to create trust among actors at different levels of government.”***

Recommendation on  
Effective Public Investment  
Across Levels of Government,  
OECD Council, March 12  
2014.

Policy coordination is a perennial regional development challenge. Regional development issues cut across the boundaries of established jurisdictions, governance levels, and policy domains. The tasks for policymakers are how to ensure that regional policy goals are coordinated with sectoral policies, to structure relations between different levels of government and to manage integrated development strategies. More specifically, regional policy coordination mechanisms overcome a series of problems or gaps:<sup>1</sup>

- There are often problems in **accessing sufficient information** to develop policy initiatives tailored to specific regional challenges.
- Regional policy design and delivery is sometimes impeded by the **operation of policy ‘siloes’** i.e. the compartmentalisation or fragmentation of policy-making along sectoral or administrative lines. Related to this is the scope for incoherent strategic objectives, competing issue attention and inconsistent instrument mixes.<sup>2</sup>
- Particularly in recent years, **budgetary constraints** have placed greater emphasis on coordination in order to share policy financing mechanisms. The budget for regional development policy is often small compared to those of sectoral policies. It is sometimes seen as a ‘residual’ policy which gains resources after the allocation has been made to other policy areas.<sup>3</sup> In these circumstances, cross-sectoral coordination of resources is vital to the achievement of regional growth policy objectives.<sup>4</sup>
- Strengthened coordination is often required to overcome **administrative and functional mismatches** in the development of tailored regional policy responses to address specific issues or territories. Such mismatches can relate to the area where the activity takes place and/or the perimeter of the policy maker’s jurisdiction. In the case of regional policy, the relationship between the territorial and sectoral dimensions of development issues, between State and sub-national scales, and, in some cases between domestic and EU regional policy systems introduces complexity and tensions that demand coordination.

Across Europe, governments have introduced various initiatives to address these challenges and strengthen regional policy coordination. A range of tools are available including: co-financing arrangements; contracts between levels of government; formal consultation processes; national agencies or representatives working across government sectors or



administrative tiers; or other forms of regular inter-governmental dialogue. The form these mechanisms take varies across countries based on a range of factors such as their territorial and thematic scope, horizontal or vertical orientation, and the degree of formality and detail.

**Table 1: Regional policy challenges and coordination responses**

Challenge	Summary definition	Coordination response
<b>Information shortages</b>	Asymmetries of information between and across levels of government	Instruments for revealing and sharing information
<b>Policy silos</b>	Silo approaches by sectoral ministries and agencies	Mechanisms to create multidimensional/systemic approaches
<b>Funding constraints</b>	Unstable, insufficient revenues undermining effective regional policy	Shared financing mechanisms
<b>Competing objectives</b>	Different, contrasting objectives create obstacles for convergent targets	Incentives to align objectives
<b>Administrative gaps</b>	Mismatch between functional areas and administrative boundaries	Instruments to reach the appropriate scale

Source: adapted from Charbit and Romano (2017) *op. cit.*

The aim of this paper is briefly to review these mechanisms, using case study examples drawn from selected European countries, and to assess their value or 'what works'. The paper is structured into three further sections. Section 2 briefly sets out some definitional and conceptual parameters to help frame the analysis of regional policy coordination. Section 3 uses this framework to explore in more detail various approaches to regional policy coordination in Europe, drawing on examples from selected European countries. The final section provides some conclusions and discussion of what works across these different approaches.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 CONCEPTUALISING POLICY COORDINATION

Before reviewing specific regional policy coordination mechanisms, it is important to set out definitional and conceptual parameters. For the purposes of this paper, regional policy coordination concerns the management of cross-cutting issues in regional policy-making that transcend the margins of established policy fields and which often do not correspond to the institutional responsibilities of individual departments or the boundaries of public administration.<sup>6</sup> 'Negative coordination' is coordination that occurs when decisions made in one programme or organisation consider those made in others and attempt to avoid conflict. 'Positive coordination', however, goes further and requires organisations to go beyond simply avoiding conflicts to find ways to cooperate on solutions that benefit all the organisations involved.<sup>7</sup>



Different conceptual categories and dimensions are used to define and analyse policy coordination. These aim, for example, to assess:

- **The intensity of coordination.** A continuum can be set out to assess or compare the extent of policy coordination arrangements. At one extreme is basic cooperation with limited, informal exchange of information among completely autonomous organisations. At the other is integration, involving joint, participative decision making, and the pooling of budgets and other resources to achieve collective goals. (see Table 2).<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2: Intensities of coordination**

Term	Summary definition
<b>Coordination as basic cooperation to avoid overlap or incoherence</b>	Work done within existing, autonomous structures. Informal agreements and information exchanges. Policies covering cross-sectoral issues are not developed.
<b>Coordination as resource exchange to achieve individual goals</b>	Work done through hierarchical coordinating structures. Formalised agreements. Semi-autonomous arrangements for cross-sectoral issues.
<b>Coordination as integrated policy-making</b>	Shared power arrangements. Use of Informal and formal agreements. Policies developed jointly by participants. Frequent formal/informal communications. Resources pooled in support of collective goals.

**Source:** Based on McNamara *op. cit.* p392

- **Coordination at different stages of the policy process.** Coordination requirements and potential conflicts can be assessed through a focus on the organisational dimension of the relations between policy sectors or how they affect each policy phase, starting with the agenda-setting process and ending with policy implementation.<sup>9</sup> Distinguishing between basic components of policy systems, therefore, is important as coordination challenges and opportunities will vary (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Coordination in different components of policy systems**

Term	Indicator of coordination
<b>Policy frame</b>	Recognition that the problem is cross-cutting. Problem defined in multi-sectoral terms.
<b>Subsystem<sup>10</sup> involvement</b>	All relevant policy subsystems have role in governance of the problem, rather than one dominant subsystem which governs the issue independently.
<b>Policy goals</b>	Concerns about the cross-cutting policy problem embedded within all potentially relevant policy goals. Shared policy goals embedded within overarching strategic framework.
<b>Policy instruments</b>	Coordination of diverse instruments addressing the problem across subsystems' policies. Mix of instruments to meet coherent goals.

**Source:** Candel, J.J.L and Biesbroek, R. (2016) *op. cit.*

The following analysis draws on these frameworks to review the characteristics of regional policy coordination approaches in European countries.

### 3 REGIONAL POLICY COORDINATION APPROACHES IN EUROPE

A variety of approaches are available to coordinate regional policy actions in Europe. Based on the definitional and conceptual frameworks summarised in Section 2, these are organised under specific headings (see Table 4). Different combinations of policy coordination approaches are found across countries and the features of these are explored below with reference to examples drawn from selected European countries.

**Table 4: Regional policy coordination types and examples**

Category	Mechanism	Examples
<b>Laws, regulations, rules</b>	Constitutional, legislative or regulatory provisions to facilitate coordination.	DE FI (Regional 'proofing') NO (Public sector job relocation)
<b>Structural arrangements</b>	Coordination through organisational mechanisms to foster joint working, horizontally or vertically.	PL (Min. Investment and Development) CH (ROK) FI (AUNE) FR (Min. Territorial Cohesion, Commission for Territorial Equity, Committees) SE (Forum for Regional Growth) DE (minister conferences) PT (Territorial Coordination Council) IT (Cabina di Regia, TO11-TO2 Comm. Min. for South) DK (DBA) NL (ROMs, regional ambassadors)
<b>Strategic frameworks</b>	Setting joint objectives of shared policies, determining which take priority in the event of incompatibility.	NL ('Mission orientation') CH (NRP Pillar 3) PL (NSRD)
<b>Policy instruments</b>	Pooling resources for coordinated actions, action plans with mix of instruments, contracts.	FR (territorial cohesion budget, CPER) NL (Regio Envelop) PL (Programme for Silesia, territorial contracts) BE (SALK) IT (Pacts for Development) UK (Growth, City, Devolution Deals)

Before assessing these approaches, it is important to note two caveats. First, this report does not aim to present a comprehensive account of regional policy coordination mechanisms across Europe. Rather, the aim is to identify illustrative examples of different approaches. Second, the absence of dedicated coordination structures or systems does not mean the absence of coordination *per se*. In some countries, coordination is an intrinsic part of a

consensus-based institutional culture and is a basic feature of policy-making that is not necessarily marked in explicit structural or procedural arrangements.

### 3.1 Laws & regulations

Constitutional, legislative or regulatory provisions can facilitate or impede coordination. On the one hand, **diverse legal or regulatory frameworks often create divisions between policies** (e.g. in terms of different rules on eligibility for support), impeding coordination between domestic policies relevant to regional development or between domestic and EU regional policies. The varied regulations attached to specific EU funds often create complex implementation arrangements for different programmes or instruments within Member States. In some countries, the effectiveness of domestic coordination arrangements is constrained by EU regulatory requirements due to differing rules applicable to individual EU and domestic funds.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, coordination is strengthened by **giving instruments or mechanisms constitutional status or legal force**. Efforts to harmonise regulatory settings between policies and funding streams also strengthen coordination

Legislative standards or regulations ensuring common practices in the design and implementation of policies and instruments establish procedural mechanisms that strengthen regional policy coordination in an indirect way. This can take place, for example, through mandatory consultations, impact assessments or 'region-proofing' or the introduction of territorial criteria in the relocation of public sector jobs. These regulative instruments play an important role in the coordination of different sectors and subsystems, while stopping short of more active or positive coordination approaches. It should also be noted that 'softer' legal provisions also have a role to play in policy coordination. This encompasses nonbinding or voluntary resolutions, recommendations or practices that facilitate joint working through 'soft coordination'.

- **'Hard' and 'soft' coordination in Germany.** The German constitution allocates primary responsibility for regional policy to the Laender – but also allows for the Regional 'Joint Task', which means that there is a firm constitutional and legal basis for the federal government to intervene in regional policy, as long as it does so jointly with the Laender. The federal level is not hierarchically superior to the local and Land levels; rather, the responsibilities and tasks of each governmental level are defined in the constitution. The Regional Joint Task then involves two committees, one at political level and one at civil servant level, made up of representatives of each Land and of relevant federal ministries. In relation to Cohesion policy, while the federal authorities are responsible for leading negotiations with other EU Member States and the European Commission, as well as contributing to the EU budget, their main role domestically is via 'soft' forms of coordination. The federal authorities are not responsible for deciding on Cohesion policy funding allocations nor on the content of programmes (except for one ESF federal OP, which operates alongside 16 Land-level ESF OPs); rather, each Land decides on the content and funding of its own programmes. The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy brings together the Land-level ERDF managing authorities to discuss issues of common interest but it does not have control or oversight of OP-level financial plans.

- **The Austrian Conference on Regional Planning (ÖROK)** is an organisation established by the federal government, the Länder and municipalities to coordinate spatial development at the national level. The political decision-making body is chaired by the Federal Chancellor and its members include all federal ministers and heads of the Länder, the presidents of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and the Austrian Association of Municipalities as well as the heads of the social and economic partners with a consulting vote. One of the central areas of work comprises the preparation and publication of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept that is a strategic instrument for overall spatial development in Austria. Within the context of European regional and spatial development policies, ÖROK plays an important role as the co-ordinating body between the internal and the European level. It was responsible for drafting the Austrian Partnership Agreement "STRAT.AT" and organises the wider partnership process in Cohesion policy. ÖROK brings together the national and Land levels, as well as the presidents of the associations of cities and municipalities, but has no legal status. It serves as a compromise solution to coordination as there is no legal or constitutional obligation for the federal level and the Länder to coordinate their activities.
- **Mandatory territorial 'proofing' or impact assessment in Finland.** Territorial proofing acts as a basic coordination mechanism that monitors sectoral policies to prevent them from having a negative impact on certain types of territories. Ideally, proofing should be implemented in the early stages of the policy design process. This is mandatory in some countries. In Finland, the Ministry of Employment and Economy has required sectoral policy makers to clarify and assess their activities and impacts from a regional perspective since 2004. Other countries, have used similar approaches in the past, with varying degrees of success. A key lesson from these experiences is that genuine commitment from sectoral ministries and strong political support is crucial to make this work.
- **Requiring territorial assessment in the relocation of public administration jobs in Norway.** In Norway, an increasingly prominent element of policy concerns the location of public sector jobs. A 2017 White Paper was accompanied by a plan for the relocation of public jobs which required any new additional structures created in the public administration to be located outside Oslo, unless an Oslo location could be explicitly justified.

## 3.2 Structural arrangements

Effective coordination between funds and instruments is being pursued through the **establishment of organisational mechanisms to foster joint working**. At the highest degree of integration, organisational instruments will take the shape of a boundary-spanning structure or overarching authority that oversees, steers and coordinates the problem as a whole.<sup>12</sup> However, to be effective these organisational mechanisms must be invested with sufficient capacity, legal competence or political status. Examples include overarching ministries that combine relevant policy portfolios, inter-ministerial structures, cross-cutting agencies at national or regional levels or 'ambassadors' to address cross-sectoral regional policy problems.

**Ministries with broad responsibilities and powers encompass traditionally separate sectors.** The concentration of different responsibilities within the same authority provides a focus or figurehead for regional policy at the highest level, with sufficient authority to push for integration of the territorial dimension in sectoral ministries. A strong, dedicated Ministry

responsible for regional development counters the tendency for Ministries to think within their own sectoral siloes.

- In **Poland**, the key national entity in regional policy is the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development which brings together departments and units responsible for regional development, planning, spatial development and housing and tasks related to construction. This Ministry is the managing authority for all national/sectoral ERDF and ESF programmes, with other ministries acting as intermediate bodies. Within the MID, the Department for Strategy Development is tasked with coordination of Poland's strategic system for programming economic development policy.

**Inter-ministerial committees and commissions** are one of the simplest systems for horizontal governance as they are based on existing government structures.

- In **Switzerland**, the Conference for Spatial Planning (*Raumordnungskonferenz*, ROK) serves as a forum for inter-ministerial coordination, jointly headed by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), with the Spatial Planning Council (*Raumordnungsrat*, ROR) serving as an external advisory committee.
- In **Finland**, coordination of broad-based regional development policy is the responsibility of the Committee for Regional Renewal (AUNE) at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. AUNE is made up of Permanent Secretaries of the seven ministries contributing to regional development, the Association of Local Authorities, the regions and largest cities, and the trade unions. AUNE coordinates and monitors the activities of different bodies involved in regional development.<sup>13</sup>
- In **Sweden**, the Government Forum for Sustainable Regional Growth and Attractiveness has proved a productive means for pursuing dialogue and cooperation between State authorities, regional actors and other stakeholders. Discussions are increasingly strategic, bringing together different policy areas under the regional growth heading (e.g. education, rural areas, environment, labour market, integration, digitalisation and infrastructure, future Cohesion policy, and the hospitality sector and tourism).
- In **Germany**, there are multiple levels of coordination between federal and Land levels, involving politicians or civil servants. One important dimension of coordinated decision-making, which involves regional policy as well as other policy fields, are the 'minister conferences', whereby, for instance, the Economy Minister from each Land meets together with the Federal Minister for the Economy to take coordinated decisions on a joint basis.
- In **Italy**, the *Cabina di Regia* is a committee comprising the key ministries involved in regional policy, an Undersecretary of State operating in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Presidents of three regions and the President of a metropolitan City designated by the association of Italian municipalities. It selects regional policy plans, based on thematic area, that provide an indication of managing authorities, timetable, expected results and resource allocations. It is also worth noting that coordinating structures can be charged with specific tasks or issues. In the Italian context, the ESIF Partnership Agreement established a 'Steering Committee' charged with coordination of all measures funded under ESIF Thematic Objectives 11 (institutional capacity and efficient public administration) and 2 (ICT). The Committee meets at least twice a year, is chaired by Italian Ministry for Public Function, and involves the Agency for Cohesion, Agency for Digitalisation, various national

representatives from regional authorities and from the European Commission. The Committee produces an annual report on the implementation of the two TOs highlighting existing synergies between and across EU and domestic measures and areas for improvement.

- In **Portugal**, a Territorial Coordination Council promotes consultation between the Government and different entities across administrative levels. The aim is to operate a permanent, periodic and institutionalised dialogue platform for consensus building, with a special territorial focus. The Council analyses and discusses matters with a territorial dimension, monitors strategies and programmes with a territorial dimension and discusses coordination initiatives. Alongside this, there is a number of thematic networks to strengthen the coordination of Cohesion policy interventions (e.g. green growth, rural development etc.). This includes a Regional Dynamics network that coordinates the monitoring and analysis of economic, social and territorial developments as well as the regional impact of the ESI funds.

**Special units or agencies at central government level** provide planning and advisory support to facilitate regional policy coherence across sectors. High-level “special units” have been created in several countries to ensure this cross-sectoral coordination. The proximity of such units or co-ordinators to a chief executive provides strong incentives for co-operation across sectoral ministries.<sup>14</sup>

- In **Denmark**, the Danish Business Authority (*Erhvervsstyrelsen*, DBA) has an important role in the coordination of regional economic development, maintaining oversight of the RGF and acting as managing authority for EU Cohesion policy programmes. In addition, the DBA facilitates the strategic linking of regional and national initiatives in regional development by bringing the regions and national government together within the framework of regional growth partnerships. Through this collaboration, the DBA has formed taskforces to intervene in local unemployment crises and develop targeted strategies to tackle specific problems in the regions.
- **Regional-level agencies fulfil important coordinating functions.** In the Netherlands, Regional Development Agencies carry out tasks such as business development and entrepreneurship support, and also support the national Top Sector's research and innovation initiatives in the regions. As these agencies are co-owned by the central State and provinces, they fulfil an important function in terms of network-building between regional and national partners.<sup>15</sup>

**Ambassadors or ‘champions’ for regional policy** are senior officials who strengthen vertical coordination across national and sub-national administrative tiers.

- **France** provides an example of the use of several of these structural or organisational arrangements designed to strengthen regional policy coordination. A number of these arrangements have been specifically strengthened over the past 1-2 years (see Box 1)
- In the **Netherlands**, Regional Ambassadors, who are installed in five regions (North, North-west, South-West, East and South, ensure coordination between central government and regional economic policy objectives. They do not command a large budget; instead, they establish links between different funding streams and support alignment of activities, acting as an interface between national and sub-national actors. The Ambassadors focus increasingly on the coordination involvement of regional actors in specialised policies.



## Box 1: Policy coordination through structural arrangements in France

**Ministry for Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Sub-National Authorities** (*Ministère de la Cohésion des territoires et des Relations avec les collectivités territoriales*) plays an important coordinating role. The Ministry is responsible for a number of policy areas such as spatial planning, rural development but also urban policy and housing. In 2018, responsibilities associated with relations with sub-national authorities, previously held by the Ministry of the Interior, were merged into the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion. This move aims to strengthen regional policy coordination, integrating within a single Ministry both major funding programmes and support to build and maintain regional and local capacities.

**The General Commission for Territorial Equality** (*Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires*, CGET, previously DATAR) is in charge of the implementation of central State regional policy. CGET is accountable to the Minister for Territorial Cohesion and supports the government in addressing territorial inequality. This is achieved through its coordinating role with regard to the State-Region planning contracts, as well as other place-based contracts implemented by sub-regional authorities in the fields of urban and rural cohesion. A law creating a National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (*Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires* ANCT) was adopted in 2019. The new agency will integrate fully the CGET, as well as two other agencies (the National Agency for Development and Restructuring of Commercial and Artisanal Spaces and the Digital Agency) while establishing coordination mechanisms with agencies responsible for housing (ANAH), urban renovation (ANRU), environment and energy (ADEME). Its role will be to redefine the link between the territorial entities and the State by focusing on capacity building and targeted project support.

**Inter-ministerial committees.** Three Inter-ministerial committees on rurality (*Comités Interministériels à la ruralité*) and three on urban issues (*Comités Interministériels pour l'Égalité et la Citoyenneté*) have been set up since 2015. These committees have established a number of measures for territorial equality across policy areas and monitor their implementation.

- In **Italy**, a 'Minister for the South', appointed in 2018 has important coordinating roles, including: coordinating policies and interventions for economic development of the territory; coordinating the use of EU Structural Funds; liaising with EU institutions; encouraging and guiding inter-institutional coordination on the economic development of the territory; ensuring the synergy and coherence of relevant policies.

## 3.3 Coordination through strategic frameworks

**The formulation and implementation of strategies provide impetus for greater co-ordination.** A challenge for regional policy coordination is that there are often fundamental differences in the way in which various policy goals are framed and perceived, also in terms of their timescale or geographical scope.<sup>16</sup> The 'proofing' of sectoral strategies for territorial impacts is one way of tackling this challenge. However, coordination can be more actively pursued through integrated strategies to achieve consensus on problem definition, set joint objectives and specify the priorities of shared policies. Working Groups, set up along thematic or territorial lines, provide arenas for interaction and the development of links across policy subsystems as strategies are being drafted. A basic challenge under this coordination approach is ensuring



the long-term commitment of relevant sectoral ministries to design and implement strategies with an explicit territorial dimension.

In some cases, the focus is on **identifying a series of concrete issues or themes** that bring together a range of sectoral and territorial actors.

- **In the Netherlands**, mission-oriented policies are providing a coordination framework by mobilising a wide variety of technological and innovation efforts under a single challenge.<sup>17</sup> Eight ministries have - along with entrepreneurs and knowledge institutions - established 25 missions spread over four themes, with different Ministries responsible for each theme: Energy transition and Sustainability; Agriculture, Water and Food; Health and Healthcare; Security and Safety.<sup>18</sup> Cooperation between the State and the regional level is seen as an essential element in fulfilling the missions. Provinces and other regional stakeholders are being invited to coordinate on the identification of societal challenges under these headings, including through the Regional Innovation Strategies and the (2021-27) regional ERDF programmes.<sup>19</sup> The Top Sectors, ministries and knowledge institutions will jointly draw up the new Knowledge & Innovation Agendas (KIAs) for 2020-2023 based on the 25 missions and the Dutch Government will announce at a later stage how available financial resources will be deployed.

Some strategies make **coordination between sectoral and territorial dimensions an explicit objective** or 'pillar'.

- **In Switzerland**, cross-sectoral coordination is an important element of regional policy and there are a wide range of sectoral support schemes with regional development implications. Efforts to integrate regional policy with other policies are a pillar of the New Regional Policy, the main strategic framework. This pillar is dedicated to coordination and synergies with sectoral policies, especially in relation to innovation policy and tourism policy. More recently, relationships between the NRP and spatial development policy have been increasingly on the agenda.

**In CEE, the development of strategic frameworks has been influenced by EU Cohesion policy requirements** as EU funding often represents a substantial proportion of development funding. This has provided impetus for strengthened coordination between sectoral and territorial development issues and between domestic and EU policies.

- **In Poland**, the 2017 Strategy for Responsible Development describes a new development model and outlines overarching strategic objectives, including for territorial development (see Box 2).

**Strategic frameworks are also being used to strengthen coordination between domestic and EU regional policy.**

- In **Italy**, the 'Growth Decree', converted in law in June 2019, introduced the obligation for each administration charged with the implementation of domestic regional policy projects – national ministry, regional authority or metropolitan city – to draft a single 'Cohesion and Development Plan' drawing together all investments into one single, multiannual document, similar to Cohesion policy's operational programmes. This move is intended to strengthen the strategic nature of the projects funded by domestic regional policy, to improve coordination and synergies with Cohesion policy, to reduce fragmentation, to provide more certainty in the financial disbursements from the central state, and to strengthen accountability.





## Box 2: Policy coordination through strategic frameworks in Poland

The Polish Strategy for Responsible Development sets out a hierarchy of strategic documents at national and regional levels. This document acts as the basic strategic reference point for all legal and programme initiatives. It is also seen as the key strategic framework to inform the ESIF Partnership Agreement for 2021-2027. A new hierarchy of strategic documents is being developed. This includes nine key development policy issues, including transport, energy, environment, social capital, human capital, agriculture and rural development), 16 regional integrated strategies (regional strategies and regional spatial development plans) and local integrated strategies (combining economic, social and spatial issues). A new National Strategy for Regional Development is being finalised as part of this framework. The Government is developing a new 'integrated approach' to development policy set out in the document 'Development Management System of Poland', adopted by the Polish Council of Ministers in October 2018. This describes a new layout of integrated strategic documents at all levels of governance and relations between them, including:

- the introduction of foresight and scenario planning into development planning;
- integration of socio-economic and spatial planning issues into strategic documents at all levels of government;
- a mechanism (based on binding regulations) to ensure that key strategic documents at different levels are compliant in terms of content, based on the principle of subsidiarity;
- a strategic State investment mechanism that secures the interests of all involved parties (local governments, societies, enterprises) through reformed territorial contracts between State and sub-national levels; and
- targeting specific territories for strategic intervention (on a national, regional or local basis).

## 3.4 Coordination of policy instruments

The achievement of coordination in practice depends on the implementation of measures, schemes or programmes on the ground', and the allocation of resources directly to address a regional policy problem. Examples include:

**Combining financing and/or creating a consistent and comprehensive budget.** The budgeting system is a potentially powerful incentive for more coordinated policy making, ensuring that contributing actors have a tangible stake in the coordination process.

- In **France**, a budget heading for 'territorial cohesion' provides for the State's contribution to projects with a territorial dimension and supports the financial implementation of national programmes with a territorial dimension. Its budgetary allocation in 2018 was €17.2 billion, covering urban policy, the National Fund for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development, the Regional Development Grant, territorial interventions of the State, and budget lines to help access to housing.
- In **the Netherlands**, a new 'Regional Budget' (*Regio Envelop*) fund aims to support regional growth through enhanced coordination.<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature



and Food Quality (LNV) is largely responsible for this fund, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (*Ministerie voor Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*, BZK) and other ministries, depending on the focus of specific activities.<sup>21</sup> Part of this funding will be allocated via Region Deals<sup>22</sup> which are proposed by coalitions of municipalities, provinces, knowledge institutes and businesses in self-defined regional territories.

**Dedicated programmes or action plans that combine a range of measures.** These approaches coordinate a mix of policy instruments addressing a specific regional development challenge or territory.

- **In Poland**, the 'Programme for Silesia' aims to modernise the economic profile of the region, increasing innovation in an area dominated by traditional sectors of the economy (including mining and metallurgy sectors). The programme is based on cooperation between the State and the region, involving sectoral ministries, the regional government and regional social and economic stakeholders. Until 2020, the bulk of funding will come from Cohesion policy programmes although domestic public and private funding is also involved. Currently, the programme includes 85 measures, integrating support for innovation, skills, infrastructure development, 'clean air' initiatives etc. with a total value of over PLN 55 billion (around €13 billion).
- **In Belgium**, the Strategic Action Plan for Limburg (*SALK – Strategisch Actieplan Limburg in 't Kwadraat*) provides an example of coordination of policy instruments at the local level. Involving the Flemish Government, local governments, employers, social economy enterprises, universities and high-tech scientific research institutes, it provides joined-up strategies for job creation following economic setbacks in the region due to the closure of Ford Genk. Several infrastructure projects aim to develop skills within the region, including skills development activities for job seekers, training programmes, support for entrepreneurship and a number of infrastructure investment grants including for the reconversion of the Ford site.<sup>23</sup>
- **Contracts and agreements.** Several European countries use transactional mechanisms (contracts, agreements or deals) as a means of coordinating the implementation of policies. These are usually based on negotiation between national/regional governments and local/municipal authorities. In general, the key aim is to develop responses to territorial development problems involving coordinated action and the pooling of resources by different levels of government and other stakeholders.
- **In France**, regional development policies are mainly implemented via a coordinated approach based on negotiations between central and de-concentrated State entities (*préfets de region* and *préfets de départements*), and between State and subnational authorities. This notably applies to the main funding vehicle, the State-Region Planning Contracts (*Contrats de Plan Etat-Région*, CPER), which are implemented via a cross-sectoral approach, involving a number of ministries and specialist agencies. Although their budgets are relatively limited, the contribution of sub-national authorities is crucial in financing projects.
- **In the United Kingdom**, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 has sought to establish the institutional basis for devolving powers and resources to functional urban areas, including the introduction of directly-elected mayors, in England and Wales. This process has generated different types of agreements negotiated between central government and local entities - City Deals, Growth Deals and Devolution Deals – some of which apply to England and Wales only, and others to the United Kingdom as a whole (see Box 3).

- In Norway, much of actual policy implementation is devolved to the county authorities and/or delegated to specific agencies on the basis of annual 'task letters' from the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. These set out budgetary allocations and the key parameters for policy while allowing scope to reflect local situations.
- In **Poland**, contractual arrangements have been through several iterations over the past two decades, with frequent legislative amendments responding to changes in political agendas, development objectives and budgets.<sup>24</sup> For the 2014-2020 period, 'territorial' contracts incorporate the main investments to be made in regions under domestic and EU funds. They consist of two parts: (i) a general part that is the same for all regions and sets out the rules and organising principles of the parties involved in the contract; and (ii) a region-specific section that outlines development priorities and related projects viewed as important from the perspective of national development. This contractual model is being revised again as part of work on the new National Strategy for Regional Development. The aim is to emphasise contractual arrangements in the coordination of measures in functional spaces by strengthening the input of the local level in the development of integrated project packages.

### Box 3: Policy coordination through negotiated agreements in the United Kingdom

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 has sought to establish the institutional basis for devolving powers and resources to functional urban areas, including the introduction of directly-elected mayors, in England and Wales. This process has generated:

- **Growth Deals** are agreed between the UK government and local authorities on the basis of multi-year local Strategic Economic Plans. These mainly concern the allocation of short/medium-term funding for business and employment/ skills support to local areas;
- **City Deals** are bespoke packages of funding and decision-making powers that are negotiated between the government and city authorities and other local bodies. They are primarily about stimulating long-term economic development through capital investment projects;
- **Devolution Deals** (England only) are 'broadly-framed objectives to support economic growth and rebalancing, public service reform and improved local accountability'.<sup>25</sup> The deals involve the transfer of powers, funding and accountability for policies from central government. The specific arrangements vary as they are negotiated and agreed separately based on local proposals,<sup>26</sup> but all include devolved responsibility for aspects of transport, business support and further education policy delivery.

An assessment of the English Devolution Deals by the UK National Audit Office noted the benefits they offer in terms of: more effective promotion of local innovation and the provision of locally responsive and integrated services; providing a channel for centre-local communication and relations; extending the tasks of local actors; strengthening capacity by providing a stimulus to strategy-building, local cooperation, new structures and tools for priority-setting; and, providing incentives for governance reform.<sup>27</sup>

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Co-ordination is increasingly seen as crucial to strengthening the design, implementation and impact of regional policy. Contemporary efforts to promote regional policy coordination range from regulatory provisions, centrally-induced structural reforms and integrated strategic frameworks, on the one hand, to more negotiated policy and budgeting alignment across sectors and administrative jurisdictions on the other. In terms of what works in practice, it is important for policymakers to gauge how the benefits and challenges associated with different approaches fit into specific institutional contexts.

**Regulatory approaches.** Regulatory complexity is a common challenge in cross-cutting policy areas such as regional policy. Policy-makers have the difficult task of establishing structures and implementation mechanisms that adhere to regulatory requirements which vary across different policy fields, funds or instruments (for instance in terms of eligibility rules, project application requirements, financial control and audit etc.) These challenges are often particularly acute at the level of operations where complex regulations can inhibit coordination in terms of developing project ideas, or require working with multiple authorities with different procedural requirements. As far as possible, regulatory frameworks across levels of government should be standardised and stable, minimising divergent, overlapping or contradictory regulations. There are examples of more 'positive' regulatory reforms designed to strengthen regional policy coordination such as the requirement for territorial impact assessments or the 'region proofing' of sectoral strategies or plans. However, it is doubtful that regulatory responses to coordination challenges are alone enough in a policy field such as regional development.

**What works?** Institutional or regulatory compliance or cooperation under common standards is valuable but should be accompanied by more 'positive' approaches to ensure coordination in a policy field that requires active cross-sectoral participation in decision-making on the allocation or redistribution of resources.

**Example:** Germany combines mutually-agreed legal frameworks setting core eligibility rules, funding allocations and area designation with a range of other institutional frameworks for coordination.

**Structural coordination.** Structures are being established in several countries to strengthen coordination and ensure representation and new cooperative dynamics in regional policy. There is a danger that the establishment of such structures can complicate rather than coordinate regional policy implementation. Key to the success of these approaches is sufficient clarity on the roles and responsibilities of these structures, as well as sufficient political authority and coordinating capacity. Political support is particularly important in countries where sectoral ministries have traditionally been dominant in the field of economic development. In some contexts, regional policy 'champions' have helped to provide status and focus to these efforts. Sufficient coordinating capacity is also crucial. This concerns the ability of officials in cross-cutting structures to assume a coordinating function (as distinct from

and in addition to their regular programming or line function). A significant problem in terms of human resource capacity often expressed concerns the 'add-ons' or additional coordinating responsibilities.

**What works?** Coordinating structures for regional policy should have the political authority and administrative status to discuss and agree commitment to regional development issues with directors of other ministries or departments. The level of human resources should be sufficient to take on coordinating responsibilities at national or at sub-national tiers.

**Example:** In France, the new National Agency for Territorial Cohesion integrates three national level agencies, establishes coordination mechanisms with other agencies with relevance to regional policy and is consolidating links between the territorial entities and the State by focusing on capacity building and targeted project support.

**Strategic coordination.** This concerns drafting of strategies as a means of pursuing coordinated approaches, involving representatives of different levels of public administration, sectors in the process. Establishing a strategic policy framework for regional development helps ensure that sectoral and territorial policies are coherent under common objectives and commitments. Governments use strategic policy frameworks as tools to orient regional development policy across line ministries. A fundamental challenge is how to ensure 'buy in' for these strategies from sectoral ministries and other key stakeholders: how do you ensure that these strategies do not become purely symbolic?

**What works?** The selection and definition of concrete issues or 'missions' that also have sufficient breadth to motivate action across different sectors and levels is crucial. The role of cross-cutting working teams in the process of drafting strategies is an important means of defining and agreeing strategic direction. It also presents opportunities for the development of dynamic debates, trust-building and the evolution of reciprocal working relationships.

**Example:** In the Netherlands, the 'mission orientation' aims to offer a coordination framework by mobilising a wide variety of technological and innovation efforts under a single, clearly defined challenge. In Poland, work on the hierarchy of strategic documents at national and regional levels has included inputs from thematic and territorial working groups which have helped build links.

**Coordination of policy instruments.** Coordination approaches include integrating funding streams and instruments to address regional policy themes or the challenges facing specific territories. The coordination of different policy interventions can introduce or strengthen the focus on specific types of area and facilitate the design of measures that stretch across traditional administrative borders (e.g. in transport, innovation, the labour market etc.). Within this, negotiated arrangements help to integrate national and local level development initiatives. Agreements ensure that nationally-led programmes and projects better reflect local priorities, or they allow the State to play a role in coordinating local initiatives from a national perspective. Novel or innovative policy approaches can emerge with the inclusion of new partners bringing different perspectives and ideas. The potential for new models for funding



policy initiatives is also possible, identifying alternative funding sources and models beyond central government grant funding, mixing public and private investment.

In this, it is important to find a balance between 'bottom up' and 'top down' inputs, to decide the role of the state, regional and local authorities, the private sector and civil society organisations in order to avoid asymmetries between different sides. A key point is the use of delegated competences or State investment as incentives but with the State playing a flexible coordinating role. This can help facilitate multi-level collaboration and bring networks together. Key challenges include: the level of formality the use of incentives (e.g. delegation of tasks to sub-national level, prospect of State investment); conditionalities (e.g. use of indicators, targets, governance reform at local level etc.); and, capacity-building initiatives (e.g. for strategy-building, local cooperation, new tools for data gathering, priority-setting). An example of these challenges comes from the Swiss pilot programme PHR Wirtschaft, launched jointly by ARE and SECO. This identified 12 'action areas' and aimed to implement business-oriented projects that link urban and rural areas. However, challenges have arisen due to the artificial rather than functional character of the action areas which has made it difficult for potential project actors to coordinate with each other.

**What works?** In developing coordinated 'bundles' of policy instruments, it is important to decide the optimal combination of functional territorial focus (e.g. city-region, metropolitan area, etc.), administrative jurisdiction (national, regional, urban, local), thematic scope (e.g. covering a range of policy areas or focusing on a more limited selection of headings), and instrument mix (tax breaks, budget envelopes, grants, contracts etc.) in specific contexts.

**Example:** In the United Kingdom, different types of agreements are negotiated between central government and local entities, establishing the institutional basis for coordinated actions in functional areas through a mix of regulatory instruments, devolved competences, grants etc. However, ensuring accountability, scrutiny and transparency must also be a priority.





## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Candel, J.J.L and Biesbroek, R. (2016) 'Toward a processual understanding of policy integration' *Policy Science* (2016) 49:211–231

<sup>3</sup> Tillväxtanalys (2017) Regionala tillväxtpolitiska utmaningar – behov av strukturreformer och nya samverkanslösningar? PM 2017:10

<sup>4</sup> Regeringen (2017) *Regional tillväxt, Förslag till statens budget för 2018*, Prop. 2017/18:1 Utgiftsområde 19.

<sup>5</sup> For countries covered, see list of EoRPA Consortium Members.

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<sup>9</sup> Tosun, J. (2013) 'Coordinating and Integrating Cross-Sectoral Policies: A Theoretical Approach' Paper prepared for presentation at the 7th *ECPR General Conference 4 - 7 September 2013*, Bordeaux, France.

<sup>10</sup> A policy subsystem is defined by a substantive issue and geographic scope and composed of a set of stakeholders including officials from all levels of government, representatives from multiple interest groups, and scientists/researchers

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2015) *Alueiden uudistumisen neuvottelukunnan asettaminen*, TEM/2181/00, 4 February 2015

<sup>14</sup> OECD (2010), *Regional Development Policies in OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087255-en>.

<sup>15</sup> Ecorys (2016) Evaluatie van de Regionale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappijen (ROM's), available at: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2016/06/08/eindrapport-evaluatie-van-de-regionale-ontwikkelingsmaatschappijen-2010-2015/eindrapport-evaluatie-van-de-regionale-ontwikkelingsmaatschappijen-2010-2015.pdf> (accessed 28 July 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Candel, J.J.L and Biesbroek, R. (2016) *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Mission-oriented innovation policy and dynamic capabilities in the public sector Rainer Kattel Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Governance Deputy Director, UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose Mariana Mazzucato)

<sup>18</sup> Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat (EZK) (2019), *Missies voor het topsectoren- en innovatiebeleid*. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2019/04/26/missies> (Accessed 24 June 2019).

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<sup>20</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2018). Gebiedsgerichte economische perspectieven en Regionaal Economisch Beleid, kst-29697-37. Available at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/dossier/29697/kst-29697-37?resultIndex=7&sorttype=1&sortorder=4> (accessed 1 June 2018)

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<sup>22</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2018) *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> OECD (2015), *Employment and Skills Strategies in Flanders, Belgium*, OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation, OECD Publishing

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<sup>25</sup> National Audit Office (2016) Department for Communities and Local Government. English devolution deals. HC 948 Session 2015-16, 20 April 2016; <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/English-devolution-deals.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2019).

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<b>United Kingdom</b>	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, London Scottish Government, Glasgow

The EoRPA research programme is directed by Professor John Bachtler, Dr Sara Davies and Professor Fiona Wishlade, and managed by Ruth Downes. Country-specific research was contributed by the following research team:

<b>Austria, Switzerland:</b> Stefan Kah, EPRC	<b>Norway:</b> Prof. Fiona Wishlade, EPRC
<b>Finland:</b> Heidi Vironen, EPRC	<b>Poland:</b> Dr. Martin Ferry, EPRC
<b>France:</b> Fabian Gal, EPRC Associate	<b>Portugal:</b> Viktoriya Dozhdeva, EPRC Associate
<b>Germany:</b> Dr. Sara Davies, EPRC	<b>Sweden:</b> Heidi Vironen, EPRC
<b>Italy:</b> Dr. Laura Polverari, EPRC Associate	<b>United Kingdom:</b> Rona Michie, EPRC
<b>Netherlands:</b> Dr. Wilbert den Hoed, EPRC	

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