



GREEK ESPON CONTACT POINT 2013
PANTEION UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES OF ATHENS
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*ESPON Knowledge matters
take your place in ESPONTrain!*

Press Release

ESPONTrain Final Transnational Conference

Are European planners familiar with ESPON findings?

*Integrating ESPON in higher education and policy making
at central, regional and local levels*

Athens, Greece

3 - 4 April 2013

The Greek ESPON Contact Point organized, in cooperation with the ESPON Coordination Unit and the ESPONTrain Partners, the Final Transnational ESPONTrain Conference “**Are European planners familiar with ESPON findings? Integrating ESPON in higher education and policy making at central, regional and local levels**”. The Conference took place in Athens (Greece) on 3-4 April 2013 and brought together 298 participants representing the ESPON CU, ESPON Monitoring Committee, ESPON Contact Points, ESPONTrain Tutors and Trainees as well as stakeholders participating in ESPONTrain and previous TNAs (e.g INTERSTRAT), mainly Universities and training centres (e.g the National Center of Public Administration) but also ministries and regional/local authorities. Postgraduate and graduate level students in territorial development fields were also present.

As recent ESPONTrain implementation showed and this is widely reported, the best part of the teaching/learning experience is the fact that ESPONTrain largely neutralized some of the skepticism surrounding the ESPON projects, clearly marked their limits and highlighted the benefits from their use in every-day planning and policy making.

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Purpose of the event

The purpose of the Seminar was two-fold:

- Enhance transnationality of the ESPONTrain Project, bringing together the **ESPON Coordination Unit, 10 ESPONContact Points (ECPs)** participating in the ESPON Programme as well as **trainers and trainees** involved in the **ESPONTrain Virtual Learning Environment Project**. This first day focused on the issue of using ESPON findings in higher education and in territorial development strategies. Participants mostly came from higher education institutions, both professors and students as well as from state and regional authorities.
- allow policy makers and practitioners to discuss themes for **further integration of the ESPON knowledge in the implementation of territorial development and cohesion** in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean.

The ESPONTrain Conference succeeded in promoting dialogue between **political leaders, policy makers, academics and professionals** on the field of territorial development and cohesion and was structured around the following topics:

- The progress of the ESPONTrain Project, its results, its evaluation as well as the perspectives of further development of the ESPONTrain VLE model in the ESPON countries;
- The use of ESPON findings in spatial planning and in territorial development focusing on European cities and regions;
- The ongoing spatial and urban planning reform in Greece and in other ESPON countries and particularly in relation to the use of the ESPON findings;
- The profile of European planners (qualifications, skills, etc.) required to meet the challenges of territorial development and cohesion in Europe and the necessary innovation that ESPON can bring in its education.



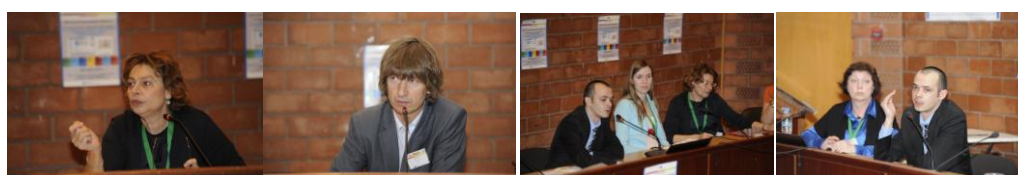
Welcome and Opening Speeches

Participants were welcomed by the Vice Rector of Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences of Athens and the Greek ECP. Salutations were given by : the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Vice Rector of the National Technical University of Athens, the Greek representative in the ESPON Monitoring Committee, Representatives of the Region of Attica, members and experts of the Greek ECP.



The opening speeches by Peter Billing (ESPON CU) and Stella Kyvelou (ESPONTrain LP) identified the ESPONTrain Project in the larger context of ESPON and its concept, structure, achievements, results and lessons learned by its implementation in the ESPON countries.

Followed **4 Round Tables** that gave the opportunity to explore the degree of appropriation of the ESPON Findings both by the academic community and the state, regional and local authorities and the great potential of ESPON knowledge demand by higher education and stakeholders that the ESPONTrain could efficiently respond to, in the near future. These round tables also gave the opportunity to present ESPONTrain Project's implementation in each participating country from different points of view, the one of the ECPs and this of the Trainers and the Trainees involved in the educational cycles which inspired the discussion on future ideas and demands for further implementation.



Priorities for further development of ESPON education activities

There is indeed a large potential in ESPON education, a fact that was clearly revealed by the ESPONTrain Final Transnational Conference and the participating ECPs asked for the continuation of the Project in order to reach more target groups of potential trainees and add more knowledge coming from the ESPON Projects in the existing ESPONTrain Virtual Learning Environment.

The ESPONTrain project contributed to the familiarization of specific target groups with ESPON results and vocabulary, but has also been a major input to the strategic goals of ESPON: on the one hand forming the next academic generation in ESPON related research, and on the other hand contributing to the “European territory of tomorrow” by developing learning efforts towards higher education institutions.

Furthermore, Since a large majority (70%) of the countries involved in the ESPONTrain Project were Mediterranean and Balkan (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Bulgaria) and due to the positive response of the trainees and trainers in this region, a new initiative based on the ESPONTrain VLE Project could be considered in form of an educational ESPON “pole of competence” in the Mediterranean region, which also would contribute to the extension of ESPON towards neighboring countries. The location of this “pole” could be Greece or Cyprus which can have significant results for the extension of ESPON towards neighboring countries. *This strategic goal of ESPON can be facilitated by and based on the ESPONTrain VLE Project.*

The above proposal has been assisted by all Greek Universities and Training Centres present at the Conference as well as by Greek politicians.

Another important continuation, capitalization and synergy effect of the ESPONTrain Projects’ philosophy and successful implementation is the new TNA entitled “USESPON” whose Lead Partner is the UK ECP (RTPI) and partner with tasks mainly related to VLE further development mainly on ESPON Tools and the use of ESPON findings by regions is the Greek ECP (Panteion University) that is the Lead Partner of the ESPONTrain Project.

More information

- Considering that the theme is interesting to a wider audience, ESPON Contact Point will produce a report which aims at disseminating the main outcomes of the event based on the discussions registered during the Conference.
- Please find below the programme, the press releases and the presentations made during the event.
- Should you have questions please do not hesitate to contact the Greek ESPON Contact Point at espon@espontrain.eu
- Photos: *Efi Apostolopoulou and Nikos Apostolopoulos*. More photos are available in the Gallery.
- Also visit : [Facebook](#), [USESPON Website](#), [Greek ECP Website](#)