

This newsletter focuses on the results of work package 4, which is drawing to a close.



Main results of WP4

It is time for WP4 to come to an end. In October, the COHSMO-consortium gathered in Vienna, Austria for discussing the results of the cross-nation case study.

In WP4, more than 210 COHSMO-interviews have been carried out in 21 specific case-locations – one rural, one sub-urban and one metropolitan location in each of the participating countries. 20 qualitative interviews have been conducted in each of the 21 localities divided across different types of

“Counteracting territorial inequality through policies aiming at lessen territorial inequalities is closely dependent on local involvement, collective efficacy, competitiveness and growth.”

important local actors – 5 with entrepreneurs and business actors, 5 with community actors and 10 with governance actors (Read more in the previous newsletters).

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When teasing out similarities and differences of the COHSMO case locations and investigating strategies at different scales, there is a crosscutting tendency that public policies able to lessen territorial inequalities vary in their effectiveness. The policies referred to are centred on economic growth, vocational education, childcare, labour market and area regeneration that are aimed at territorial cohesion, inequality or enhancing democratic engagement.

The results show that these policies are most effective in locations marked by a high degree of collective efficacy and local involvement whereas they are facing preclusions in locations marked by a low degree of collective efficacy. This finding is most frequent and most crucial in rural locations. In urban and suburban locations, this effect is not as pronounced. Locations with a high degree of local involvement seem to foster a high degree of transparency and a collective mind-set that is responsive to public policies. Whether the collective mind-set is a precondition for local involvement or local involvement produce a collective mind-set is a fundamental issue that is not to be answered by COHSMO-data but the positive interaction and the emergence effect is significant in the present data material.

This finding is not an attempt to identify so-called “untapped integrative” forces of communities and

neighbourhoods for use in reconfiguration processes of the welfare state's responsibilities regarding social integration and social problems. Instead, it is a way of understanding the importance of local social interaction – be it formal or more informal – as a precondition for the translation and for implementation of policies. Furthermore, this finding calls for a subdivision within the three types of locations, meaning that rural, suburban and metropolitan locations differ by their level of collective efficacy.

The conclusion to the study of the COHSMO case locations must therefore be, that the level of collective efficacy is an important driving factor for the impact of policies and therefore also a territorially dividing dimension.

With COHSMO's WP4 closing, WP5 is well advanced. The aim of WP5 is to study under what local, contextual conditions a social investment strategy can obtain positive results and what their impact might be in terms of territorial cohesion. The entire COHSMO-team will therefore meet in April in Bristol to discuss the new findings as well as the following step in the COHSMO-project. Before that a smaller group within the team will meet 1 February for a review meeting and a roundtable discussion in Brussels

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PARTNER FEATURE

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom partner is the University of the West of England, Bristol. The COHSMO team consists of Prof. Rob Atkinson, Dr. Maria Casado Diaz, Dr. Stephen Hall, Dr. Ian Smith and Dr. Andrew Tallon.

Prof. Atkinson, Dr. Casado Diaz, Dr Hall and Dr. Tallon are members of the Department of Geography and Environment Management and are attached to the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments. Dr. Smith is a member of the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance.

All the team members have previous experience of participating in comparative research projects. The UK COHSMO team is the lead partner for the work on 'cross-evaluation that reassesses cohesion policies and instruments' and the implications for policy in work package 6.

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