

**European Union
Regional Policy**

TERRA

An experimental laboratory
in spatial planning

European Commission

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>) and on the Inforegio Website (<http://inforegio.cec.eu.int>).

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Preface

TERRA was launched in 1997 in the context of the innovative actions financed by the Art.10 of the ERDF Regulation. Fifteen projects were selected, involving 63 local partners in 11 Member States, mainly in Objective 1 regions. A total of 40 Mio € were earmarked for the TERRA programme by the European Commission and the local partners.

TERRA was conceived as a laboratory for testing new approaches to and methodologies for spatial planning. In addition, TERRA – together with the INTERREG IIC programmes – intended to assess the relevance of the policy options proposed by the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

This report – prepared by the four TERRA technical assistance offices – provides an overview of three years of work: it clarifies the policy context in which TERRA operated, explains the relation between TERRA and the ESDP, explains what happened and how it happened, and presents the 15 TERRA stories.

Readers must bear in mind that the study does not necessarily reflect the official position of the Commission but first and foremost expresses the opinion of those responsible for carrying out the study.

Authors

The four TERRA technical assistance offices (contact details are available in Annex III).

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1. Introduction

TERRA was one of several programmes initiated in accordance with Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which contributed – between 1994 and 1999 – to financing innovative actions in the field of regional development.

The TERRA programme focussed on areas in the European Union whose specific territorial features make them more fragile and offer greater challenges for the development of an integrated territorial strategy. TERRA was explicitly designed to operate as a laboratory and act as an instrument to assist experimental research on spatial planning at the local level and test the relevance of specific policy priorities of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

TERRA was conceived as a network representing different geographical contexts, themes, administrative conditions and planning structures. Projects were chosen to address specific challenges in different planning sectors, especially in Objective 1 regions such as:

- Coastal areas
- River basins
- Rural areas with difficult access
- Areas suffering from erosion
- Areas with endangered natural and cultural assets.

Following a call for proposals by the European Commission in 1996, 15 projects involving 63 formal participating partners in 11 Member States were selected from among the 142 proposals presented. A total of 20 million € in EU contributions was devoted to their financing and the projects were officially launched in 1997 and 1998 for the period to 2000. Each project set up a network of a small number of local authorities and partnerships in various EU countries that shared similar features or problems.

TERRA was designed to have a multiplier effect going well beyond its limited resources by generating concepts and techniques valuable to the spatial planning community throughout the European Union and even beyond in view of the forthcoming enlargement of the EU. Such approaches in regions devastated by rural migration, in distant river valleys or fragile coastlines, among others, have been propagated to other practitioners and authorities throughout the European territory.

The ESDP

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) represents a new approach to economic and territorial planning which developed almost in parallel and was also a major source of influence for the TERRA programme.

The genesis of the ESDP process dates back at least to the first meeting of EU Ministers responsible for spatial planning in 1989 in Nantes, which affirmed the need for carrying out a forward-looking reflection on territorial developments in the Union. As a result a series of studies was launched by the European Commission on key aspects of land use and territorial planning which culminated with the publication of the Europe 2000 report in 1991 and the follow-up Europe 2000+ report three years later. These summarised the issues and emphasised the need for closer and more systematic co-operation to ensure coherence in planning.

This discussion also coincided with the formation of a closer European Economic and Monetary Union, which also underlined the need for economic and social cohesion.

EU Ministers agreed in Liege in November 1993 to develop a common strategic approach to be known as the ESDP. The ESDP structure was approved in Corfu in June 1994 and the policy principles in September of the same year in Leipzig. Other meetings followed, leading up to the adoption by Ministers of the first draft in Noordwijk in 1997 and of the final document in 1999 in Potsdam. It was considered desirable to establish an instrument to translate into local practice the guiding principles of the ESDP. TERRA was chosen as a means of demonstrating the importance of a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to spatial planning.