

EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula: main territorial impacts (1986-2013) and challenges for a more efficient new programming period (2014-2020)

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Abstract:

This paper identifies the main territorial impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula, in its first four programming periods (1989-2013). Moreover, it discusses the relevance of the strategy associated with this Policy, the role of the EU funds in promoting a more cohesive territory, and suggests alternative paths to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. In short, our analysis concludes that, despite the high levels of inefficiency, and the lack of an adequate medium-longer term strategic vision to make the most out of the Iberian Peninsula's territorial capital, the large volumes of funding were crucial in modernizing many territorial infra-structures, and in improving the human capital of both Iberian countries. Yet, overall, the territorial cohesion goal was not achieved during the last couple of decades. Worse still, the continuous negative trade balance which has been characterizing both Iberian economies for a long time, associated with low productivity increases, is illustrative of the existing and persistent structural territorial development constraints. Hence, these need to be tackled in a more effective manner during the next programming period of the EU Cohesion Policy, in order to put the Iberian Peninsula in track with the most developed territories in Europe.

Keywords: EU Cohesion Policy, Territorial Impacts, Territorial Cohesion, Territorial Development, Iberian Peninsula.

1 – Introduction and methodology

By the time the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain signed the Tordesilhas Treaty, in 1494, with the goal of dividing all the discovered and non-discovered territories outside Europe, both Iberian countries were at the beginning of an epic empire expansion phase, which lasted for several centuries. When these empires finally collapsed, with the loss of the last colonies (mid 1970s), both countries also saw the end of a long period of dictatorship, which had drastic negative effects on their territorial development. It was time to make a change. And the only possible solution was to join forces with the other western European countries, in this new political-economic project, which we now know as the European Union (EU). Right from the start, and even before the official date of their accession (1 January 1986), both Iberian countries received financial aid to modernize their infrastructure and productive system. Since then, almost three decades have passed, and the more than 240 billion euros (160 in Spain and 80 in Portugal), financed under the umbrella of the EU Cohesion Policy, had a significant impact in the territorial transformations witnessed in the Iberian Peninsula until the present moment. But the questions are:

- Were these EU investments used in a smart, efficient and strategic way, in order to promote territorial development, and explore the territorial capital of this vast, polycentric, and cultural and environmental rich European peninsula?
- What were indeed the main territorial impacts of the EU Cohesion policy in both Iberian countries?
- Is the Iberian Peninsula a more cohesive territory?
- How should the European Structural and Investment Funds be spent in the next programming period?

Understandably, the proposed analysis had to make use of a vast set of information, both qualitative (bibliography and interviews) and quantitative (approved projects and statistics), from both the Portuguese and the Spanish cases. More specifically, this data was applied to a Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) tool, named TARGET_TIA (see Medeiros, 2013), which produced a general territorial impact value (from -4 to +4) of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula (1989-2013), and more specific impact values for the four dimensions of Territorial Cohesion: (i) socioeconomic cohesion; (ii) environmental sustainability; (iii) morphologic polycentricity and (iv) territorial governance/cooperation). These impact values are a secure indication of the main effects of the EU structural and cohesion funds in all these dimensions, which can contribute to identify the principal achievements and shortcomings, and to propose alternative paths to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of these funds, for the present Policy programming period (2014-2020).

In order to answer the previously mentioned questions, this paper is organized in four main topics and a conclusion. The second topic is focused on the baseline scenario of the Iberian Peninsula prior to the adhesion of both Portugal and Spain to the presently known EU (1986). The following topic discusses the defined strategy in using the available structural and cohesion EU funds in both countries. In turn, the fourth topic

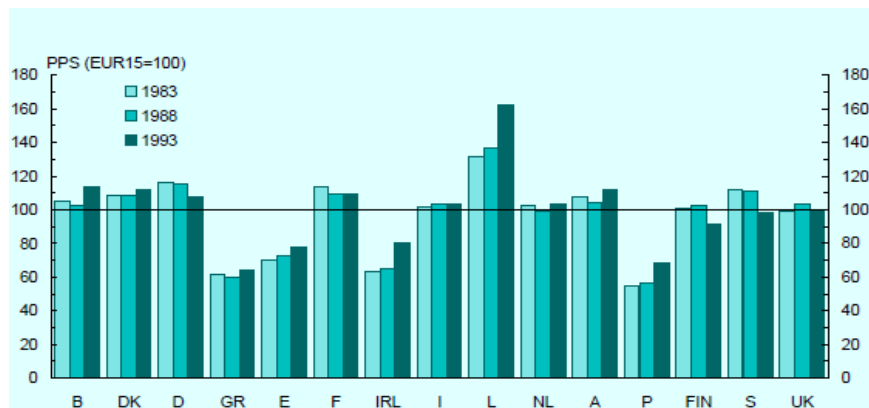
sheds some light on the main impacts of the use of these funds in the Iberian territory, based on the use of the TARGET_TIA procedure. Finally, a last topic elaborates critically on possible ways to amplify the impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy investments for the next programming periods, by better exploring the territorial capital of the Iberian Peninsula.

2 - The Iberian baseline scenario:

The long-term historical awareness of the Iberian countries undercuts the common assumption that their vast empires, carved during the sixteen-seventeen centuries, brought wealth and territorial development to the Iberian Peninsula. Notwithstanding, while the former was visible in collection and trade of valuable raw materials (silver, gold, spices), its concentration in the hands of a few prevented an adequate territorial development and cohesion path, both in Portugal and in Spain. To aggravate matters, long periods of dictatorship in the first half of the XX century played a key role in placing both countries well below the EU (15) average in terms of the GDP per capita, when they entered in the present EU (Figure 1).

Additionally, by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Iberian countries, when compared with the most developed EU member states, also suffered from insufficient levels of: (i) productivity; (ii) human qualifications; (iii) infra-structural endowments; (iv) innovation and technology; (v) social protection; (vi) institutional capacity. Beyond this, by this time, the primary sector was still excessively large (labour and GDP), the trade balance was persistently negative, the fossil-fuel energy dependency was considerable, and the territorial imbalances were significant, amongst many other territorial development constraints (Table 1).

Figure 1 – GDP per capita (EU 15 -100) – 1983, 1988 and 1993



Source: (EC, 1996: 18)

Table 1 – Key development indicators (Portugal, Spain and the EU) – 1990 e 2010

Indicator	1990 PT	1990 ES	1990 EU	2010 PT	2010 ES	2010 EU
1 – GDP (Million €) (EU 15)	53.100	447.205	5.192.400	172.571	1.062.591	11.331.859
2 – GDP <i>per capita</i> (€)	8.381	11.354	14.864	16.200	23.063	28.400
3 – GVA Primary Sector (%)	5.1	2,5	2.4	2.4	4.0	1.7
4 – GVA Secondary Sector (%)	33.6	35.0	31.9	23.0	30.9	24.8
5 – GVA Tertiary Sector (%)	61.2	60.7	65.7	74.6	66.6	73.5
6 – Illiteracy rate (%)	11.2	2.8	2.4	5.2	1.5	0.8
7 – Tertiary education (%)	4.11	8.1	13.99	11.42	24.3	21.3
8 – Physicians (100.000 inhabitants)	280	204.9	225	390	373.8	333
9 – Population Density (inhabitants/km ²)	108,3	76.8	89	115,4	91.2	116,6
10 – Old-age dependency ratio (%)	20,3	20.8	20,7	27,0	24.9	26,0
11 – Young age dependency ratio (%)	30,8	33.9	29,0	22,7	23.5	23,3
12 – Average age (%)	33,9	33.4	35,2	40,7	39.9	40,9
13 – Ageing ratio (%)	65,7	61.2	71,3	118,9	106.1	111,7
14 – Total age dependency ratio (%)	51,1	54.8	49,7	49,6	48.4	49,4
15 – Active population (%)	73,4	58.0	65,4	78,5	72.8	72,2
16 – Foreign Active population (%)	1,3	2.1	4,0	4,4	14.8	7,3
17 – Activity rate –(%)	62,8	50.2	56,6	60,8	57.0	57,5
18 – Unemployment rate (%)	4,6	18.9	8,2	10,8	20.1	9,6
19 – Employment rate (%)	56,1	43.6	55,7	55,2	47.1	52,0
20 – Income per capita (PPS) €	5.436	9.181	9.535	9.855	11.287	7.609
21 – R&D expenditure (companies) in % of GDP	0,11	0,79	1,12	0,69	1,40	1,27
22 – Energy consumption (domestic sector) (%)	19,4	16,0	25,4	16,4	19.0	26,6
23 – Renewable energy production share (%)	96,6	18.1	7,5	97,4	42,5	20,1
24 – Patent requested GPO (Proportion . %)	50,1	62.2	86,1	79,2	77.7	85,4
25 – PC use in the last 3 months (%)		20		55	72	71

Source: (EUROSTAT; MPAT, 1993, PORDATA, INE, INEE, OECD) - Note: (some indicators are close to 1990 or 2010) – PT: Portugal / ES – Spain

Under this not so favourable baseline scenario, the EU funds represented a crucial opportunity for both Iberian countries to face this huge challenge of reaching the EU average, in the most crucial territorial development indicators, at the medium and longer-term. Needless to say, however, that in face of these significant Iberian disparities with the EU average, this longer-term period would signify, at least, a two decades period. But optimism was a general rule in the EU, concerning this convergence task. And indeed, both Iberian countries were about to experience a new economic growth phase, largely due to the EU financial aid.

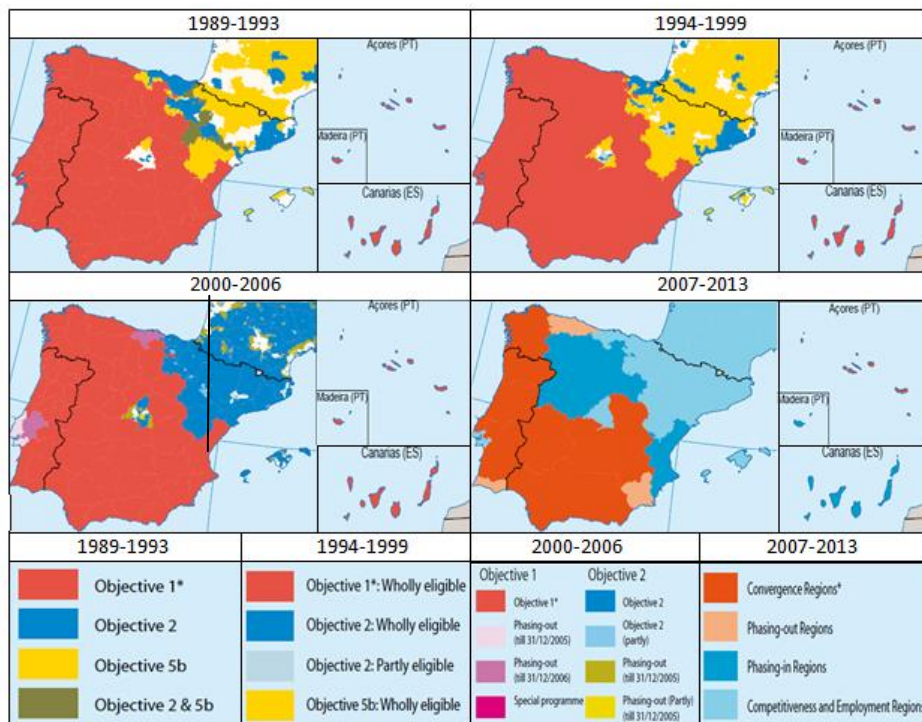
Fact is, both Portugal and Spain, despite being EU peripheral countries, presented huge potentials for the territorial development. For one, almost 50 million souls were added to the EU population charts, which attracted external investment for their low wages demand, and the good enough skills for the low-knowledge industries (e.g. textile industry), and also the presence of a qualified younger generation with above-average skills for high-technological industries (e.g. car manufacturing). Secondly, the presence of large urban agglomeration areas represented potential markets which attracted several international business headquarters. Thirdly, the historical Iberian connection/relationship with central-south American and some African countries made them a preferential EU gateway to establish and reinforce external links with this part of the world.

3 – EU Cohesion Policy and Development Strategies:

In view of the substantial needs to promote territorial development and cohesion, the Iberian territory was included within the less developed territories (also known as Objective 1 or regions – see Figure 2) of the EU, right from the first phase (1989-1993) of the modern era of the EU Cohesion Policy. This made possible the income of large amounts of structural and cohesion funds, from that initial phase, till the present moment, to boost the territorial development in the Iberian Peninsula.

In broad terms, from 1989 till 2013, Portugal received more than 80 billion euros from the EU funds (Mateus, 2013) and almost the double (160 million – Medeiros, 2014) was received by Spain. As expected, these available funds were spent differently according to the delineated intervention strategies for each of the four concluded programming periods of the EU Cohesion Policy (see Figure 3). The reading of these main goals, however, presents similar concerns in both Iberian countries in supporting: (i) the economic competitiveness; (ii) the regional development and cohesion; (iii) the improvement of the human capital; (iv) the territorial articulation and valorisation (key infra-structures); (v) the science and innovation; and the (vi) environmental sustainability.

Figure 2 - Main strategic goals of the EU Cohesion Policy programming cycles in the Iberian countries.



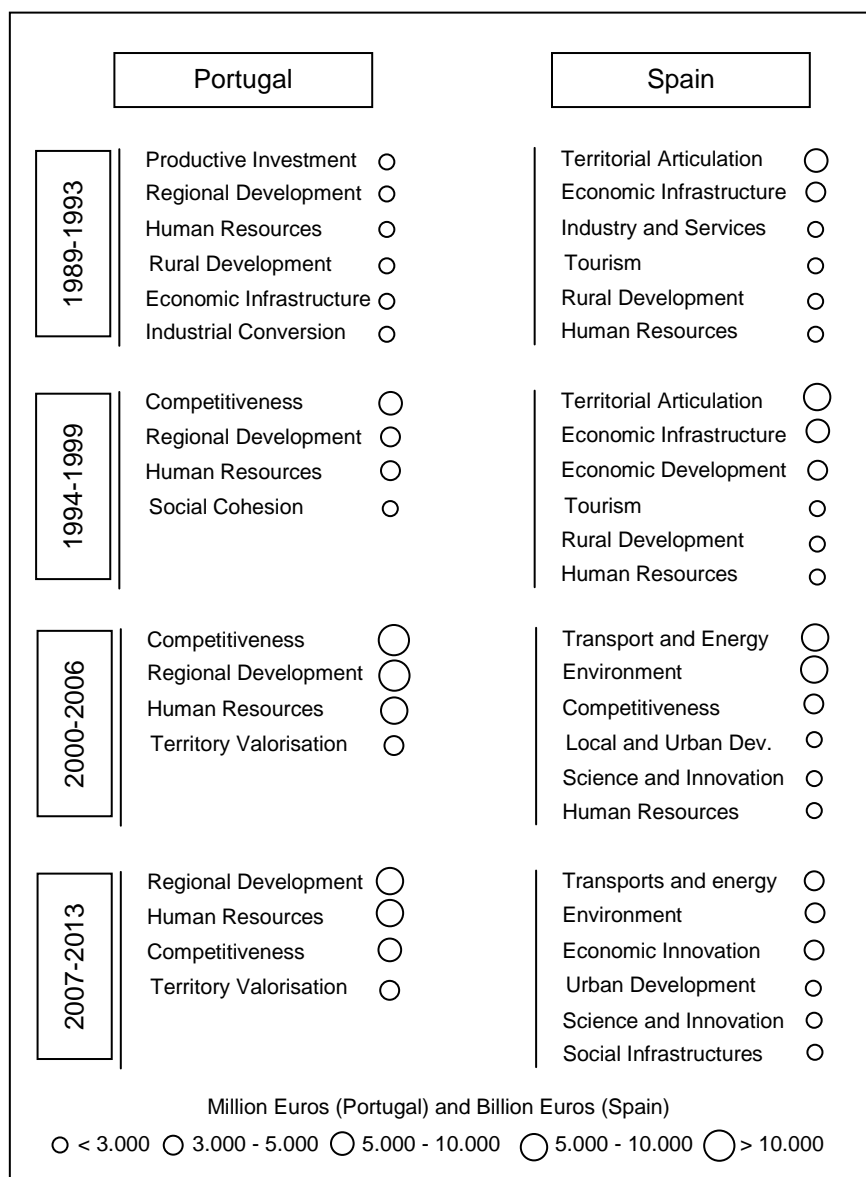
Source: EC, 2008 - Adapted

At a smaller scale, financially speaking, some other territorial development areas were supported, such as (i) the territorial cooperation (through the INTERREG Community Initiative and the Territorial Cooperation Objective); (ii) the urban rehabilitation (URBAN Community Initiative and other programmes); (iii) the local and rural

development (LEADER Community Initiative); and (vi) the administrative modernization (mainly in the two latter programming cycles), amongst others.

In the end, after the implementation of thousands of projects, hundreds of programmes, and four programming cycles (1989-2013), related with the EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula, the distribution of the investments in the major territorial development components was largely unbalanced. Put together, more than 25% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and almost half of the Cohesion Fund (CF) was spent in building and improving transports and accessibilities related infra-structure (see Fig. 4 and Table 2).

Figure 3 - Main strategic goals of the EU Cohesion Policy programming cycles in the Iberian countries.



Note: For Spain we only considered the Objective 1 Programmes

In the following, four other main areas were subject to large volumes of financing from the EU funds. Firstly, education and training, which not only received support from the ERDF, but also, and mainly, from the European Social Fund (ESF). Secondly, the direct support to companies, in order to improve the economic competitiveness and to reduce unemployment. Thirdly, the environmental sustainability (ERDF + CF), mainly through the construction of infrastructural endowments (water, sewage, waste). Finally, the support given to science and innovation, mainly in the latter two programming cycles. At a lesser scale, several other areas benefited from the EU funds, in the Iberian Peninsula, such as tourism and cultural activities, energy, urban and regional planning, and the rural economy.

Figure 4 – ERDF expenditure per main intervention goal (1989-2013) in Portugal (%) and Spain

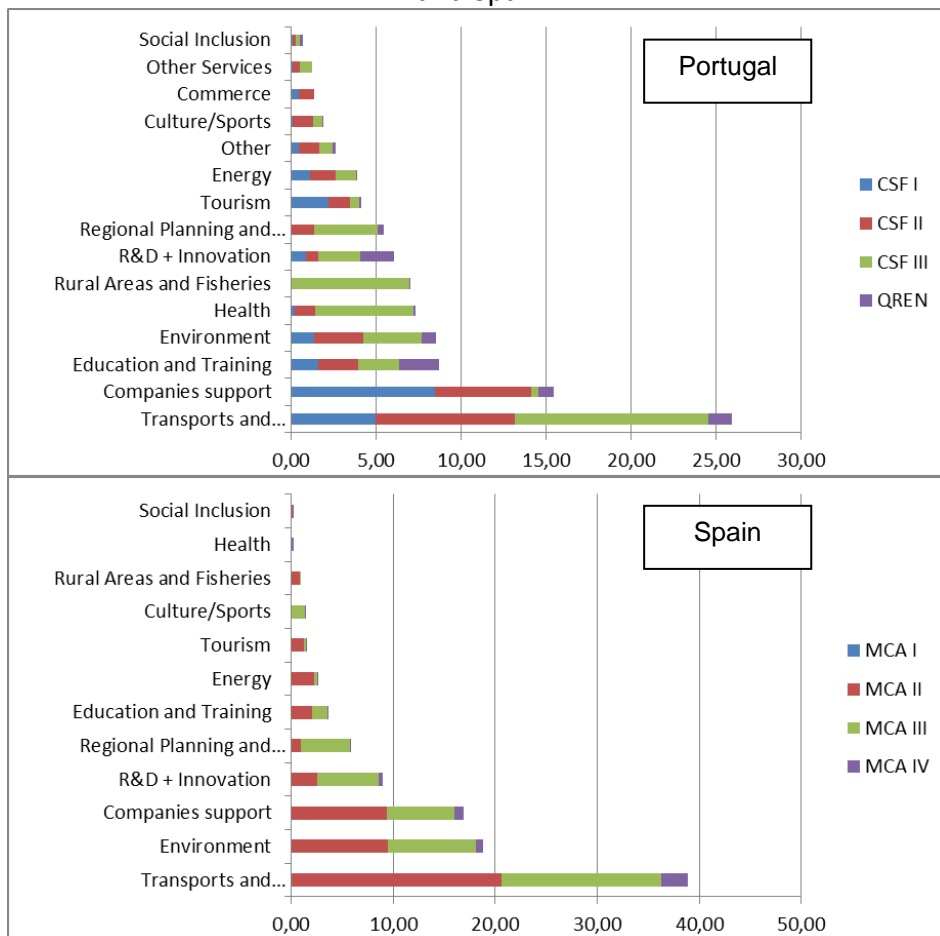


Table 2 – Cohesion Fund in Portugal and Spain (1993-2013) – Millions of €

Sector	Portugal	Spain
Environment	6.466	12.902
Water supply	3.015	3.548
Water treatment	1.332	6.128
Waste Treatment	1.375	2.287
Other	744	849
Transports	5.505	12.959
Rail	1.870	8.074
Ports	582	1.652
Road	2.225	3.089
Airports	287	114
Other	540	29
Total	11.978	25.861

Source: (Florio, 2006 + DGAPP, 2011 + DGFC + IFDR databases) – Author elaboration

4 – Main territorial impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy:

The estimation of the main territorial impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula (1989-2013) through the TARGET_TIA, in all the analysed components (see Table 3), resulted from a prolific literature reading (reports, papers and other studies), on a series of interviews, and on the analysis of the approved projects.

A brief overview of Table 3 suggests that the EU Cohesion Policy investments had a quite positive impact on most of the analysed dimensions and components. There were, however, a few negative impacts, for instance, in some of these components: urban system hierarchy/ranking and distribution/shape (all of which, associated with the morphologic polycentricity dimension of Territorial Cohesion). In simple terms, these results suggest that the EU Cohesion Policy favoured, in some cases, a path towards a more monocentric urban hierarchy, which goes against the ESDP principles (EC, 1999). In sharp contrast, and still in the same dimension, to its advantage, the EU Structural and Cohesion funds gave a quite positive boost to improve the territorial connectivity, which is a pivotal element to establish a more polycentric urban network.

Better still, the analysis of the Table 4 values show that the EU Cohesion Policy was particularly positive in improving the socioeconomic cohesion and the environmental sustainability. Yet, for this analysis to be complete, and again following the TARGET_TIA formula for the ex-post type of assessment, we also used a wide set of comparable statistical indicators related to the analysed components, for two periods of time (1989 and 2013). The main goal was to use those indicators in order to build two aggregated statistical indexes (using the same rationale and formula of the United Nations Human Development Index), to make it possible to detect changes in all the analysed dimensions, over the last couple of decades, in the Iberian Peninsula.

Following the methodological steps proposed by the TARGET_TIA, the result from the difference between the value from the ‘final Statistical Aggregated Index’ (the Territorial Cohesion Index for the Iberian Peninsula in 2013) and the ‘initial one’ (the

Territorial Cohesion Index for the Iberian Peninsula in 1989) was then added to the TARGET_TIA formula. To better understand the results, we not only used this value in our spreadsheet, but also the specific values for the four analysed dimensions (see table 4). Further, we elaborated a cartographic picture with the regional differences in the Territorial Cohesion trends in the Iberian Peninsula (1990-2010) (Fig. 5). The latter is important to understand the regional differentiated effects of the assessed programmes/policies.

Table 3 - EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula – Territorial Impacts Matrix – 1989-2013

Dimension	Component	Posi/Nega	Endo/Exog	Sust/Shor	Mult/Subs	Average	Poli/Inte	Regi/Sens
Socioeconomic Cohesion (SOC)	Education	3	2	2	3	2,5	1	1
Socioeconomic Cohesion (SOC)	Health	2	2	2	2	2	0,5	0,75
Socioeconomic Cohesion (SOC)	Culture / Sports	2	2	2	2	2	0,25	0,75
Socioeconomic Cohesion (SOC)	Exclusion/Inclusion	1	1	1	1	1	0,25	0,75
Socioeconomic Cohesion (ECO)	Income	3	3	1	3	2,5	0,75	0,75
Socioeconomic Cohesion (ECO)	Employment	3	3	1	3	2,5	0,75	1
Socioeconomic Cohesion (ECO)	Productivity	2	3	2	2	2,25	0,5	1
Socioeconomic Cohesion (ECO)	Innovation	2	3	3	3	2,75	0,75	1
Average		2,25	2,38	1,75	2,38	2,19	0,59	0,88
Environmental Sustainability	Energy	1	2	2	2	1,75	0,25	0,75
Environmental Sustainability	Environmental Protection	2	3	3	3	2,75	0,5	0,75
Environmental Sustainability	Sanitation / Recycling	4	3	3	3	3,25	1	0,75
Environmental Sustainability	Biodiversity	1	1	1	1	1	0,25	0,5
Average		2,00	2,25	2,25	2,25	2,19	0,50	0,69
Governance/Cooperation	Horizontal Cooperation	2	2	2	2	2	0,5	0,5
Governance/Cooperation	Vertical Cooperation	2	2	2	2	2	0,5	0,75
Governance/Cooperation	Participation	1	1	1	1	1	0,25	0,75
Governance/Cooperation	Involvement	2	1	1	1	1,25	0,25	0,75
Average		1,75	1,50	1,50	1,50	1,56	0,38	0,69
Morphologic Polycentricity	Hierarchy / Ranking	-1	-1	-2	-2	-1,5	0,25	0,75
Morphologic Polycentricity	Density	1	2	1	1	1,25	0,5	0,5
Morphologic Polycentricity	Connectivity	4	3	1	3	2,75	1	0,75
Morphologic Polycentricity	Distribution / Shape	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0,25	0,25
Average		0,75	0,75	-0,25	0,25	0,38	0,50	0,56
General Average		1,69	1,72	1,31	1,59	1,58	0,49	0,70

Note: **Posi/Nega** – Positive vs Negative; **Endo/Exog** – Endogenous vs Exogenous; **Sust/Shor** – Sustainability vs Short-term; **Mult/Subs** – Multiplier/Substitution; **Poli/Inte** – Policy Intensity; **Regi/Sens** – Regional Sensibility.

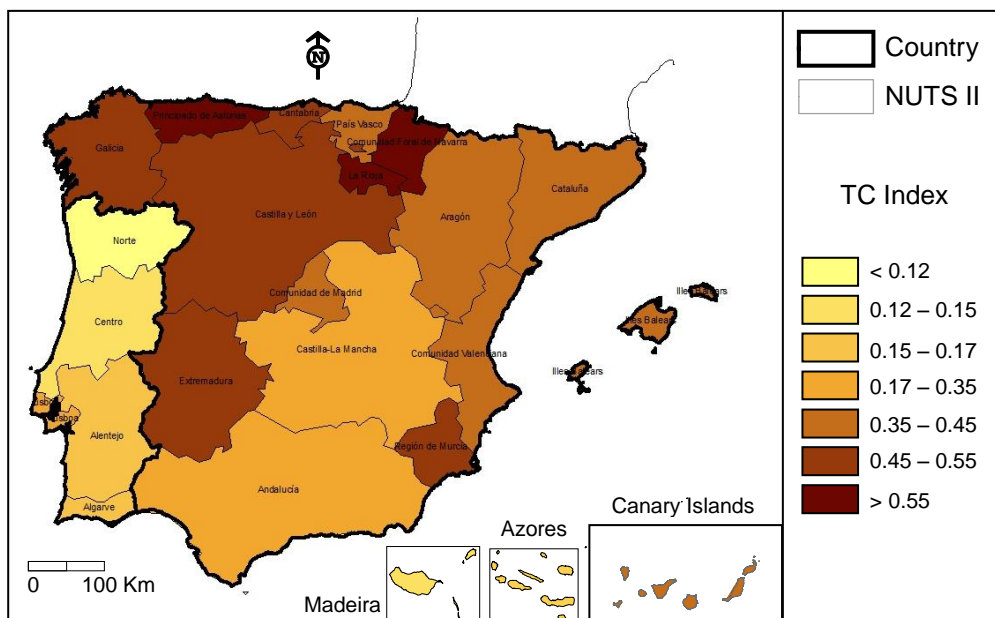
Degree of impact: 4 = Very significant positive impacts ; 3 = Significant positive impacts; 2 = Moderate positive impacts; 1 = Low positive impacts; 0 = Null impacts; - 1 = Low negative impacts; - 2 = Moderate negative impacts; - 3 = Significant negative impacts; - 4 = Very significant negative impacts

Table 4 – EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula Territorial Impacts Indexes – 1990-2010

	General	Soc/Eco	Env/Sust	Gov/Coo	Polycen
EIMql = Estimated Qualitative Impacts	1,578	2,188	2,188	1,563	0,375
Territorial Cohesion Index	0,355	0,276	0,270	0,120	0,034
EIMqt = Estimated Quantitative Impacts	5,680	4,416	4,320	1,920	0,544
EIM	3,629	3,302	3,254	1,741	0,460
I = Policy Intensity of 'p'	0,492	0,594	0,500	0,375	0,500
S = Regional Sensibility of 'p'	0,703	0,875	0,688	0,688	0,563
Territorial Impacts	1,256	1,715	1,118	0,449	0,129

Soc/Eco – Socioeconomic Cohesion; Env/Sust – Environmental Sustainability; Gov/Coo – Territorial Governance/Cooperation; Polycen – Morphologic Polycentrism

Figure 5 – Territorial Cohesion Index change in the Iberian Peninsula (1990-2010)



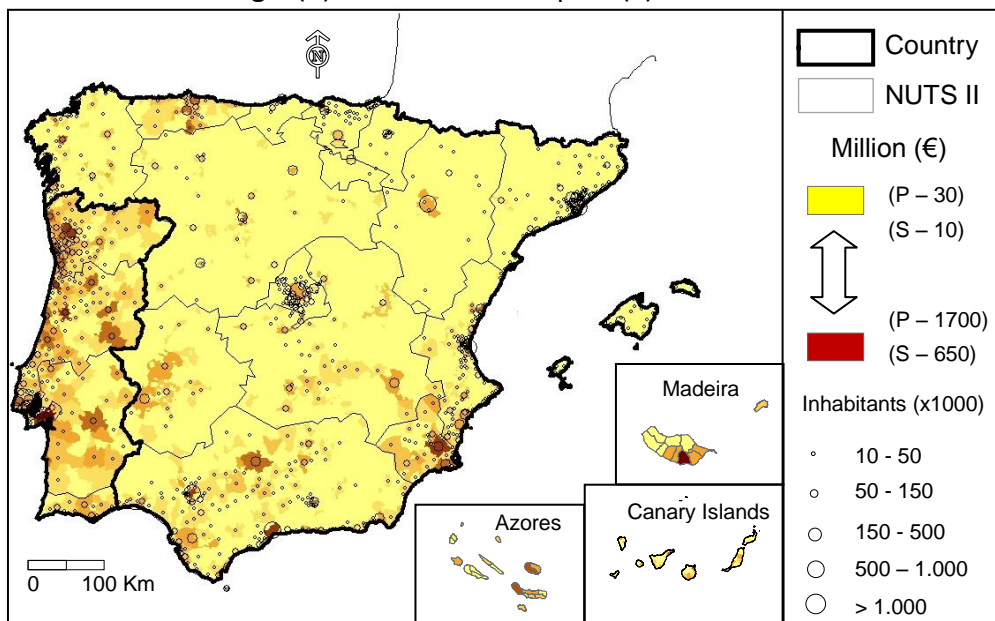
Source: (Data- national statistics) – author compilation and cartography

In essence, the final generic value of territorial impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Iberian Peninsula is positive (1.256). However, it is only situated between the low positive and the moderate positive impacts classification. This result clearly illustrates this Policy's shortcomings and inefficiencies in the Iberian Peninsula, despite the overall positive results, around the last couple of decades. Additionally, the reading of the different impact values in the same table makes it possible to understand in which dimensions the territorial impacts of the Policy were more positive and less positive. In short, the socioeconomic cohesion was, by far, the analytic dimension which was more positively affected by the EU Cohesion Policy investments in the Iberian Peninsula. In sharp contrast, these investments had a negligible effect in establishing a more polycentric and balanced urban system in this EU space. Then again, a below average territorial impact was induced in the remaining dimensions: environmental sustainability and territorial governance/cooperation.

The available literature (see for instance: Romão, 2006; Boura and Jacinto, 1992; MNE, 2010; Gaspar and Simões, 2005; Ribeiro, J.F., 2010; DPP, 2005; DPP, 2011; Vallvé and Solsona, 2006; Guillén and Álvarez, 2004; Correa and López, 2002; Luzarraga, 2007; Carid, 2007; Royo, 2011; Requena, 2006) is very much aligned with the overall conclusion that the EU Cohesion Policy was directly and indirectly responsible for the substantial positive socioeconomic transformations occurred in both Iberian countries, since they entered in the EU. More concretely, these impacts were particularly positive in reducing the gap between both Iberian countries and the EU average in many socioeconomic indicators, despite the economic divergence occurred in Portugal since 2000, and Spain since 2008. This is visible in many quality of life related indicators, like the income per capita, and the improvements in education and health systems.

Other positive impacts are directly visible in the modernization of environmental and transport infrastructures, and indirectly in territorial governance/cooperation aspects, and in the overall standards of living of the population. However, the concentration of the structural and cohesion investments (in total) in the more populated areas (Figure 6), did not favour a more cohesive and harmonious territorial development.

Figure 6 – ERDF investments in the Iberian municipalities (1989-2013)
Portugal (P) 1989-2013 and Spain (S) 2000-2013



Source: (IDFR + DGFC databases) – author compilation and cartography

5 – EU Cohesion Policy: a critical view and suggestions

As the more recent Cohesion Report highlights, the 2008 financial crisis had a profound negative impact on the amount of public investment put available to regional development in the EU member states (EC, 2014). Also, it uncovered many of the existing structural problems which the Iberian Peninsula still faces, and namely: (i) the excessive dependence of fossil-fuel energy; (ii) the overall level of education (not necessary the academic training); (iii) the overall quality of the political class, and the

administrative capacity, which is correlated with undesirable levels of red-tape, collusion and corruption; (iv) the overall level of productivity, employment, research and innovation; (v) the overall level of socioeconomic and regional disparities; (vi) the overall lack of vision and spatial planning and development strategies.

Due to the vast amount of approved EU structural and cohesion projects and funds poured into the Iberian Peninsula since 1989, the degree of inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the EU Cohesion Policy related investments remains unclear. However, it is now routinely contended that an important share of these funds was either used without a longer term development vision (building unnecessary infrastructures or promoting useless training), or as a means to finance companies/entities with privileged political connections. Indeed, a cursory glance at some national and local newspapers unveils a constant flow of news revealing the misuse of EU funds. Even worse are the pervasive schemes to get access to such funds, without any intention to follow the required legislation and rules associated with the EU funds' regulations.

In view of this somewhat grey panorama, and taken into account the large territorial potential of the Iberian Peninsula to produce renewable energy, we advocate that, in the next EU Cohesion Policy programming phases, the EU investments should be concentrated in supporting three main interrelated goals: (i) promotion of a green and sustainable economy (ERDF + Cohesion Fund); (ii) valorisation of the human capital (ESF); and (iii) reduction of socioeconomic and regional imbalances (ESF + ERDF). The basic idea is to canalise funds to improve the inhabitants' level of education, which is expected to have profound positive implications on many areas of development (governance, productivity, etc.). The support to the creation of a renewable energy industrial cluster is intended to boost the levels of research/innovation and productivity, while reducing the excessive unemployment and the external fossil-fuel energetic dependency. Finally, these investments should favour the medium-size urban centres, to counteract the continuous and excessive growth of the capital (Madrid and Lisbon) metropolitan areas.

6 - Conclusion:

At present, there is no consensus when it comes to the positive or negative role of the EU Cohesion Policy in promoting cohesion and development in the EU (see Molle, 2007). In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, however, the large majority of the existing analysis reveals a widely positive contribution of the structural and cohesion funds to promote territorial development, in many domains, in this physically and cultural diverse and rich territory. This goes along with our analysis, which applied a TIA procedure in order to assess the main territorial impacts of this Policy in the last quarter of a century.

More specifically, the use of this methodology made it possible to conclude that, in general, the impacts of this Policy were low-moderately positive, somewhat higher in the socioeconomic domain, and lower in the morphologic polycentrism domain. In other words, the structural and cohesion funds were pivotal to modernize

socioeconomic and environmental infrastructures, to stimulate the economic activity and to enhance the human capital. However, some negative impacts were found in the spatial arrangements of the urban system, since they contributed to promote a more monocentric, rather than a polycentric structure. In the end, the goal of territorial cohesion was not achieved, either in Portugal or in Spain.

Again, the level of efficiency and effectiveness of this Policy is far from a desirable one. Further, the absence of a longer-term development strategic vision in using the available EU funds constrains the sustainability degree of many approved projects. Finally, for the next programming period (2014-2020), we propose the concentration of the EU investments in the renewable energy economic cluster, as a strategic territorial development investment to reduce fossil fuel imports, promote economic activity, employment, research and innovation, and to help the shifting to a low-carbon economy. Running parallel to this goal, there is an urgent need to continue the path of valorising the human capital and reducing the socioeconomic and regional disparities, which should require the concentration of the investments in less developed areas and in medium-sized urban agglomerations.

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