

# Preface

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The regional and urban development policy of the European Union, or more precisely, EU Cohesion Policy, is currently undergoing many changes. These changes are driven both by the enormous changes in European regions and also by changes in thinking and analysis. The issues raised by these changes touch on fundamental analytical and conceptual matters regarding the nature of regional growth and development processes as well as the case for public policy in this arena. The debates regarding the policy changes cannot be separated from a detailed assessment of the major regional and urban features of the European economy. Moreover, the issues raised by the changes to regional and urban development policy in Europe also span many different academic disciplines and build on many different research methodologies and no single discipline or analytical approach has a monopoly of knowledge. A broad approach is therefore required in order to properly address these issues and while many of the main themes of the book follow an economic geography approach, this book explicitly incorporates insights from a range of different disciplines. As such, in terms of scientific audiences, this book is aimed at all economists, geographers, regional scientists, spatial planners, transportation scientists, sociologists, urban studies researchers, environmental scholars, political scientists and policy-analysts who are interested in regional and urban issues.

In terms of professional audiences the book is aimed principally at two rather different audiences. On the one hand, the book is written for a range of academics, scholars and researchers – working in fields such as economics, geography, environmental sciences, spatial and land-use planning, political science, urban studies, sociology and transportation systems – who are interested in issues of EU regional development but for whom many of the EU regional policy discussions and debates are rather opaque. Many of the EU Cohesion Policy debates and the policy-related publications often presume a great deal of prior knowledge regarding legal, institutional, political and economic issues specific to the policy in question, and it can be quite difficult to find an arena where such a body of both background and core material can be easily accessed

in a single volume. This book therefore aims to synthesise these discussions into an accessible and research-relevant format.

On the other hand, this book is written for policy-makers working at EU, national, regional or local governance authorities, who have a reasonably good knowledge of the workings and architecture of the policy but for whom some of the conceptual debates seem to be rather abstruse. Many of these policy-makers have a broad understanding of the day-to-day case for the policy, but tend to be largely unaware of the fierce academic debates regarding the nature of the policy or the arguments about the justifications for or against the policy. In addition, policy-makers are also often unaware of the extent to which these debates both inform and also draw from much wider international and global debates well beyond Europe. These are not just European issues but matters of more general relevance for many parts of the world. Again, this book aims to synthesise these discussions into an accessible and policy-relevant format.

Finally, as well as examining the major regional and urban features of the European economy and then discussing the analytical underpinnings of the current re-design to EU Cohesion Policy, the book also aims to provide a roadmap of the various EU regional and urban data-sources which are available to researchers and policy-makers. There are numerous sources of high quality data on almost all aspects of the regional and urban economies of Europe. Sometimes, however, these are rather fragmented and produced by different institutions and organisations and therefore an overview of where and how to find out what is also an important aspect of this book. Much more is known about regional and urban issues in Europe than many observers realise and basing all policy-related discussions on sound evidence is essential. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental principles of the policy-reform.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the following people who have read different draft parts of the book and who provided very detailed feedback, criticism and constructive comments.

Wolfgang Petzold, EU Committee of the Regions  
John Bachtler, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde  
Iain Begg, London School of Economics  
Luc van den Brande, EU Committee of the Regions

Lewis Dijkstra, European Commission  
Veronica Gaffey, European Commission  
Mikel Landabaso, European Commission  
Karen Maguire, OECD  
Joaquim Oliveira-Martins, OECD

Chapters 5 and 6 could not have been written without enormous intellectual help from Raquel Ortega-Argilés, University of Groningen, who co-authored the various scholarly papers on which these two chapters are largely based. Raquel also helped to source and interpret large numbers of technical documents relating to many different aspects addressed by the policy reform process.

Andreas Huck, University of Groningen, kindly proofread the whole text.

I am also heavily indebted to various other people with whom I have discussed the matters discussed in this book in great detail over recent years. Most importantly have been my discussions with Fabrizio Barca, Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, and Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, alongside whom I worked for 20 out of my 36 months as Special Adviser to the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy.

In addition, I wish to thank: Maria Abreu, University of Cambridge; Dirk Ahner, European Commission; Rudiger Ahrend, OECD; Andrea Bonaccorsi, University of Pisa; Monica Brezzi OECD; Gianni Carbonaro, EIB European Investment Bank; Claire Charbit, OECD; Mario Cervantes OECD; Nicola de Michelis, European Commission; Alessandra Faggian, Ohio State University, USA; Dominique Foray, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland; Enrique Garcilazo OECD; Xavier Goenaga, JRC-IPTS, Seville; Henri de Groot, Free University of Amsterdam; Simona Iammarino, London School of Economics; Eric Marlier CEPS/INSTEAD; Rose Olfert, University of Saskatchewan, Canada; Mark Partridge, Ohio State University USA; Andrés Rodriguez-Pose, London School of Economics; Matthias Ruth, Northeastern University USA; Riccardo Scarpa, Queens University Belfast; William Tompson OECD; Frank Vanclay, University of Groningen; Jouke van Dijk, University of Groningen; Attila Varga, University of Pecs, Hungary; Eric von Breska, European Commission, all of whom have provided me with important intellectual insights relating to different dimensions of the reform process, along with Ronald Hall, Katja Reppel, Elisa Roller, Luisa Sanches and Claus Schultze, all from the European Commission, who provided me with great support and policy-related inputs during my time as Special Adviser.

## Disclaimer

I have taken on board advice and insights from these many different people but in the end the material contained in this book reflects entirely my own understanding of these issues. The material contained here therefore does not reflect the views of any sub-national, national, international or European organisations, but reflects my own understanding as a scholar and a policy adviser.

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Chief Scientific Advisor 2013–2014: *Investment for Jobs and Growth – Promoting Development and Good Governance in EU Regions and Cities. Sixth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion*

Groningen, the Netherlands  
May 2014

