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# CONCLUSIONS

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**T**he multitude and the complexity of the reactions of the economic, social, environmental, institutional or political systems to shocks are reflected in various forms and representations in *The European Atlas of Resilience*. In the attempt to offer the widest and most in-depth possible comparative approach from a multidimensional and multilevel perspective, resilience was analysed mainly with reference to the 2008/2009 crisis. Various case studies included in the atlas completed this approach with analyses of resilience in the context of other shocks. The complexity of the indicators used, the interdisciplinarity of the teams involved, as well as the fact that they are affiliated to different universities, the vast volume of information that was processed, and the cartographic representation and analysis of this information, are all important pillars of the atlas.

As a key transversal conclusion, *The European Atlas of Resilience* provides an extra argument to support spatial-sensitive policies. A shock, regardless of its nature, is not a unique event followed by a unique response trajectory that is unfolding sequentially over time. The collection of maps provided by the current atlas shows that, although a shock might have one distinctive ‘epicentre’, it nevertheless manifests as a multitude of events in a large number of places. Hence, it is rather a set of events happening simultaneously in different places, but in different manners, and triggering different responses and transformations from one place to another. Thus, the manifestation of spatial asymmetry of resilience to various crises suggests that policies which are sensitive to geographical contexts might be a better response in order to enhance growth and recovery (as opposed to the previous space-neutral strategies that did not rise to the expectations).

Another important aspect that can be noticed throughout the atlas is the spatial clustering of the way in which EU countries and regions reacted to various crises. Space-temporal situations indicate, on one hand, that the country effect, for some indicators, sets a certain behaviour for all or for the majority of the regions of that country, but on the other hand, that regional resilience (both in terms of performance and capacity) creates new structural differentiations. Also, through their hysteretic effects, shocks can alter long term trajectories of development, either by increasing or decreasing territorial imbalances. For example, the 2008 Great Recession and the migration crisis (to name only two of the crises that affected the EU) proved that shocks can bring to the surface, or even create, new and more dangerous imbalances and political disagreements, that could ultimately undermine the existence of the EU as we know it. In this respect, geographical clustering of resilience raises additional challenges for stakeholders aimed at delivering effective strategies and policies from a social, economic, political, or environmental perspective.

The analysis of resilience according to sectors has revealed the fact that at least through the lens of the spatial dimension but also of the intimate mechanisms that lead to its manifestation there is no clear East-West or North-South divide (although centre-periphery differentiations were noticed). In other words, resilience does not follow the centre-periphery model of EU economic development. The analyses reflect a different capacity for adaptation of the post-socialist economies, the young democracies (in some cases a better capacity than that of the developed countries), but also structural weaknesses of some countries or regions with an obvious economic tradition and with consolidated democracies. The behaviour in crisis situations

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determines economies and societies to face immense challenges and the speed of reaction or the lack of it could generate major costs, of an economic, social, environmental, political nature. This could call for a re-evaluation of the long-term perspectives of development, including for the developed countries and regions, usually associated with the “centre” concept. Consequently, the regional development and cohesion policies must integrate as a result much clearer and convincing perspectives on resilience.

The *European Atlas of Resilience* has not been designed to establish definitive scientific facts and conclusions. Instead, it has been aimed at inspiring the reader to envision resilience from a spatial perspective, and not only from a temporal one, as we are accustomed to. It has been, in this sense, an attempt to bring together resilience thinking and spatial thinking.

We also wish for this atlas to be an instrument for scientific knowledge and the foundation of development policies, a work tool for academics and experts, as well as an instrument for critical reflection and practical usefulness for policy-makers. The relevance of resilience-based policies could be very broad in the European space in which resilience approaches are increasingly integrated in the EU’s system of governance (its internal dimension), as well as in relation to the specific issues of its external policies and the geopolitical approach towards its partners or global competitors (its external dimension). In a specific sense, however, the atlas could be useful for the development of macroeconomic stability policies, regional development policies and cohesion policies integrating a resilience-based approach. From our perspective, *The European Atlas of Resilience* has been a challenging scientific endeavour, we hope a relevant reference in the literature, but at the same time, or maybe precisely because of that reason, a product which is subject to improvement. We therefore remain open to any constructive debate, in our common goal to put science at the service of society and to support resilient transformation in an increasingly unstable world.

The editors