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MONITORING THE HEADLINE TARGETS OF THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY BY DIFFERENT NUTS LEVELS

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During the past ten years, with the emergence of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the Europe 2020 Strategy has played a chief role in promoting socio-economic growth, quality of life and economic and environmental sustainability in the European single market, the European Union. As the Strategy was planned to be finished by the end of 2020, revealing its main achievements up until the emergence of the pandemic is an issue with scientific and policy-making relevance.

The main purpose of this work is to provide a monitoring on the headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy on two spatial levels, on the level of countries (NUTS 0) and the level of regions (NUTS 2) by calculating the degree of fulfilment that indicates the extent of progress towards the predetermined target values.

For familiarising with the Strategy, I provide an overview about its structure, priorities, targets and some of its main features. In order to answer to questions, such as how much progress has been made by the Member States towards the national targets, the degree of target fulfilment is monitored in the form of quantitative data analysis based on Eurostat data during the period 2008-2019.

In order to illustrate the main findings, maps were created through the classification of the EU-27 countries and the EU NUTS 2 regions.

Advanced analyses, an analysis of correlation, hierarchical cluster analysis and a multi-dimensional scaling analysis, were also performed to recognise similarities and differences among Member States, as well as to show common features concerning the headline targets.

The main conclusion of the work is that while the Europe 2020 Strategy improved upon some of the shortcomings of its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy, and the EU managed to make progress towards the headline targets on country-levels, the level of the implementation of the Strategy and the picture within all three priorities is relatively diverse.

Concerning the performance of NUTS 2 regions, very similar tendencies can be observed within the Member States: the dichotomy among regions is obvious from at least three aspects: north vs. south, west vs. east, capitals vs. countryside.

Based on the results, I believe that my findings may help the discourse deepen and contribute to the work of policy- and decision-makers in the identification of actions that can lead to further improvement and growth in the future.