

**Cohesive Competitiveness and sustainability: an planning application of STeM approach at the italian scale NUTs3**

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*Abstract*

In Italy we have observed in the last ten years strong forces moving towards a new approach to territorial and economic development.

New guidance and new procedures in the international and European researches have singled out in the NUTs 3 level the best geographical scale for programming the economic development; this means that provinces must have, at least in Italy, broaden competences useful to give ‘European’ solution to the problems of organization and management of territory, economy, society, environment.

In this sense, the application of new geographical criteria to the analysis of Italian province competitiveness could give a measure of the progressive ‘federalisation’ of the Italian system.

In this paper we presents the main results, and the most important following line of project, of the Research worked out by the AGeI (Association of the Italian Geographers) national Group in the last two years. The Research Group have applied the STeM approach (Sustainable Territorial Economic/Environmental Management Approach) at the geographical scale NUTs3 in Italy. Through the application of a broad range (116) of indicators to all the 109 Italian provinces, we observe how the territorial diversity could be considered like a relational good, something that could add value to the opportunity of economic and territorial development in the European integration process. The best example, in this sense, is the choice to put sustainability at the base of the policy for a competitive development in the long term; a choice shared by institutions but not always put into practice. In this sense, the results of the analysis stress the new role of the province in a governance process that must be not just regulation but a tool of social cohesion.