

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
– DIRECTORATE E –
Horizontal Policies and Networks



QUESTIONNAIRE

ASSESSMENT ON TERRITORIAL IMPACTS

Submitted by Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)

Michael Schneider is the rapporteur for the CoR own initiative opinion on *Assessment on territorial impacts*. This opinion will discuss the European Commission's Staff Working Document on **Assessing territorial impacts: operational guidance on how to assess regional and local impacts within the Commission Impact Assessment system, SWD(2013) 3 final**. This questionnaire identifies important issues for the Committee of the Regions and is designed to assist in the drafting of the own initiative opinion on the assessment of territorial impacts.

Please complete and submit by **20 March 2013**. If you are member of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network you can upload the completed questionnaire directly onto the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network website (<http://subsidiarity.cor.europa.eu> – remember to log in). Alternatively and in case you are not member of the Network, you can send it by email to subsidiarity@cor.europa.eu.

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If necessary, you can also contact the CoR Data Protection Officer (data.protection@cor.europa.eu). You have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time (www.edps.europa.eu). Please note that the questionnaire with your contribution and your contact details will be published online. Your questionnaire might be transmitted to CoR Rapporteurs and other EU institutions for information. If you do not wish so, please inform us accordingly.

QUESTIONS

1. The Staff Working Document states that: *"the guidance provided here also responds to a request from the Member States, expressed in the debate following the 2008 Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and under the Polish EU Presidency in 2011 as part of the Territorial Agenda process"*.

a) Do you consider that the document published by the European Commission meets the expectations and the ideas expressed in the political debate raised after the publication of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion in 2008? Do you believe there is a need for greater follow-up to this debate on territorial cohesion and if yes, could you give some concrete examples?

The European Commission's working document summarises the key issues for assessing the impact of policies on territorial cohesion. The methods proposed for measuring the impact of policies on territorial cohesion represents an important contribution. This document is made up of a number of rather general statements; however, this is understandable given the wide scope and diversity of the activities which may be the subject of a territorial impact assessment.

Before adopting any final approach, it would be useful to carry out a number of "trial-run" territorial impact assessments based on the proposed methodology in order to verify its effectiveness. These trial-runs should cover legislative acts that were recently implemented or which are currently being implemented along with those already implemented some time ago. In this way, it will be possible to assess the effectiveness of the assessment and to make any amendments prior to adopting a final approach.

2. In order to better coordinate the territorial impact of sectoral EU policies, there needs to be a better understanding and measurement of those impacts. The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion already focused on this point, stating that "improving territorial cohesion implies better coordination between sectoral and territorial policies and improved coherence between territorial interventions".

b) Do you believe that the European Commission's proposal can be an effective instrument able to improve coordination between EU sectoral policies having territorial impacts? In your view what else should/could be done?

The European Commission's proposal can be an effective instrument provided that the effectiveness of the adopted methodology is verified and that the suggested method for assessing the impact on territorial cohesion is tested out on concrete examples.

The EC document gives relatively little attention to the coordinating action between different policies. The document states only that it is possible to adjust the asymmetric territorial impact of one policy using another one, referring specifically to cohesion policy in this context. It would be worth analysing in more detail what measures could be taken to mitigate the negative impact of given policies on specific areas.

3. The Staff Working Document provides operational and methodological guidance on how to answer a range of questions regarding the potential territorial impact of a given proposal. Nevertheless, it underlines that assessing territorial impacts is not mandatory, and states that it is just a tool that can be helpful to enhance the policy coherence of some policy proposals.

c) Do you consider that territorial impact assessments should be made compulsory for those sectoral policies having a territorial impact? If yes, in your opinion for which sectoral policies should the assessment of territorial impacts be made mandatory?

As stated in the document, certain sectoral policies can have a significant impact on given areas and regions. Accordingly, it should be compulsory to at least assess whether there is a high chance of a large asymmetric territorial impact arising in a given situation, in line with the decision tree set out in Figure 1 of the Commission's working document. This is particularly important in relation to industrial policies as some sectors are spatially concentrated in specific regions of Europe.

4. The Staff Working Document states that a territorial impact assessment should be carried out when the proposal explicitly focuses on specific territories or when the proposal risks of having a large asymmetric territorial impact (outlier impact). It also highlights different methods that can be used to assess territorial impacts. In particular, it mentions qualitative and quantitative analysis. These tools and methodologies should be used by the different Directorates-General at the European Commission when preparing territorial impact assessments for proposals they are responsible for.

d) Do you consider the data, methodology and tools proposed for supporting territorial impact assessments (such as ESPON ARTS¹ or QUICKScan) are sufficient to measure the potential territorial impacts a given proposal could have in your region? Would you propose any other type of tools/methodology?

e) Do you believe the complexity of territorial impact assessments require them to be carried out by a single specialised entity (one-stop shop) or do you prefer the idea of a decentralised system as proposed in the Staff Working Document?

d) The list of suggested sources and tools should certainly not be fixed – where possible, one should also use available data relevant for the specific situation being assessed and the given area, if there is reason to believe that a certain policy will have a large impact on the area in question.

e) Provided that an effective organisational and procedural framework is established, there is no need for a separate specialised unit to be given the task of carrying out an assessment. The decentralised system would mean that such action could remain the responsibility of the units involved in the given project and which have a good understanding of its wider context.

¹ http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/arts.html.

5. Multilevel Governance and partnerships are key factors in the implementation of territorial cohesion, focussing on strengthening a place-based approach. The Committee of the Regions has already asked for the assessment of specific territorial impacts and recalls the potential role² of the CoR in assisting the European Commission in the process of Impact Assessment as well as to be associated to some of the EC's initiatives towards improvements in the capacity building of regional and local authorities³.

f) What should the specific measures providing for the involvement of local and regional authorities be in these exercises?

g) What role do you see for the Committee of the Regions in this context?

f) One valuable measure that should be implemented is to include questions on territorial impact during consultations on legislative proposals. Organisations active in those areas covered by the act, including regional authorities, can be an important source of information about the possible impact of a proposed policy in a given region.

g) The proposal set out in the working document to consult the Committee of the Regions in the case of policies which may have an asymmetric impact on various regions makes good sense.

6. The Committee of the Regions has already asked for territorial cohesion to be strengthened in relation to the EU2020 Strategy. One possibility for this could be not to confine the assessment of territorial impacts to legislative proposals and to extend them to other documents, such as key planning documents, such as the Annual Growth Survey.

h) Do you think there should be a territorial dimension of the EU2020 policy cycle?

i) Do you consider the Annual Growth Survey (as a key planning document for the launch of the annual EU2020 policy cycle) should contain a territorial impact assessment?

j) In your opinion, should Territorial Impact Assessments also be carried out at Member State level?

h) The territorial dimension should primarily be taken into account under the action implemented via cohesion policy. The launch of a territorial impact assessment in relation to the new legislation should be perfectly sufficient for all other areas.

i) The territorial dimension should certainly not be fully omitted from the survey. It should be included to the extent needed to ensure the coherence of the recommendations addressed to specific countries and enable the goal of sustainable (including spatial) development to be achieved throughout the EU. There is however no need to carry out a separate territorial impact assessment.

² See section 5.5 of the EC's Staff Working Document: "Under the Protocol on Cooperation between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions (2012) the Commission services may ask for support from the Committee in preparing its assessment.

³ CdR 353/2010, CoR Opinion on Smart Regulation.

- j) The territorial dimension question should be highlighted during the consultations on the new legal regulations and be taken into account during their preparation. It is not however necessary to introduce any top-down requirement to carry out this type of assessment. Developed methodologies and tried and tested methods of assessing territorial impact would be useful in this respect – e.g. made available in the form of recommendations and databases of best practices.
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