

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?

a) The green paper on territorial cohesion is one of the documents that establish the framework for action aimed at managing change, particularly demographic change, the effects of global economic structural changes and climate change. One of the views that emerges from the debate on the green paper on territorial cohesion is that cohesion policy should move from national to regional and local level. Synergy and an integrated approach among sectoral policies are important preconditions for good territorial cohesion. The assessment of territorial cohesion should respect the responsibilities of the various levels of management and implementation: that is to say, territorial cohesion should be subject to the principle of subsidiarity. Territorial cohesion should lead to a reduction in the differences between Member States and regions and should ensure the development of geographical areas with varying characteristics in a way that is sustainable in the long-term, which requires that cohesion policy and sectoral policies are adapted to the specific needs of particular territories. On the basis of our experience from the current programming period, we are convinced that there is a need for closer monitoring of the situation concerning the territorial impact of current sectoral policies. For example, statistical data, which are independent indicators, clearly show a further increase in disparities, particularly in relation to cohesion policy and employment policy. Unemployment and poverty continue to rise, regardless of where we are in the economic cycle and irrespective of the implementation of sectoral policies (the average unemployment rate in Slovakia is currently almost 15%, while poverty is above 13%).

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 document indicates that there are three dimensions to territorial cohesion (the national, regional and local levels) that national bodies should take into account when

implementing the policies for which they are responsible. However, in that respect one has to note that the regional level does not have the power to influence the implementation of cohesion policy. The document emphasises that there is a need to measure the territorial impact of sectoral policies as a prerequisite for the development of territorial cohesion. However, there is a lack of recognised indicators for measuring the territorial effects and impacts of sectoral policies and of close involvement of the regional authorities in activities related to the measurement of their territorial impact. In that context, it would appear to be efficient for the national level to implement cohesion policy while the regional level measured its territorial impacts, i.e. provided feedback to the national level.

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?

c) We are convinced that territorial impact assessments should be made compulsory for those sectoral policies having a territorial impact. The territorial impact of policies should in particular be assessed in relation to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy with proper consideration of and compliance with the principle of subsidiarity as to management, as well as the principle of proportionality as to the territory. In that respect, it must be noted that even though territorial cohesion is regularly discussed and the issues are mentioned in a range of documents, the identification of specific territorial impacts of sectoral policies is problematic. We believe that there is a particular need for more careful assessment of the territorial impacts of cohesion policy, regional policy, economic policy and employment policy. It is necessary to know who should be the ultimate beneficiaries of the outcomes of sectoral policies. Is it a restricted group of beneficiaries or society as a whole? If we do not succeed in ensuring that the macroeconomic outcomes of sectoral policies have a direct effect at the microeconomic level, that is to say that they also have a territorial impact, we are unlikely to achieve the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

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 proposed methods are insufficient, because they are based on statistical data that usually have little evidential value at the level of local and regional self-governing authorities (such authorities do not collect a sufficient amount of data because of the financial burden of data collection).

e) We prefer the idea of a decentralised system for measuring territorial impacts.

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) Conclusion of territorial pacts setting out clear competences in relation to strategic planning and implementation of measures in support of regional development between national, regional and local authorities; strengthening of multilevel governance; decentralisation of certain decision-making powers to local and regional self-governing authorities.

g) The role of the Committee of the Regions should be to provide political support for the regions' efforts to push for the conclusion of territorial pacts among national, regional and local authorities with a view to successful implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, support for acceptance by the national authorities of the regions' priorities for reducing regional disparities, and political support for the efforts of the regions to achieve decentralisation of certain decision-making powers from national to regional level.

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

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.

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 Europe 2020 strategy should have a substantial territorial dimension. One must bear in mind that its main goal is cohesion policy, including therefore territorial cohesion. We cannot imagine how territorial cohesion can be achieved without a territorial dimension.

i) The Annual Growth Survey should of course, as far as possible, contain a territorial impact assessment, since territorial impacts may appear a certain time after the implementation of measures. If there were no territorial impact assessment of measures in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy were not, how would we obtain feedback on their relevance or on the effectiveness of the planning document?

j) Territorial impact assessments on the basis of representative samples should mainly be carried out at regional level, since assessments at Member State level could be distorted (particularly in relation to the political interests of the government and particular departments), while assessments at local level may be highly detailed.

Note:

This questionnaire was completed in coordination between the self-governing regions of Košice, Trenčín, Banská Bystrica, Trnava, Nitra and Žilina.