

**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](mailto:subsidiarity@cor.europa.eu).

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*If necessary, you can also contact the CoR Data Protection Officer ([data.protection@cor.europa.eu](mailto:data.protection@cor.europa.eu)). You have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time ([www.edps.europa.eu](http://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?**

Since the EU does not specifically include territorial impact among its top priorities and despite the effect that this has on achieving other priorities such as innovation, education, technological development, employment, etc., we believe it would make sense to follow up the debate on territorial cohesion.

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?**

It might be useful to draw up proposals for setting up a network of monitoring centres for each region sharing a common identity and characteristics.

Regional unity is a key reference point for defining these territories and the role of the Committee of the Regions therefore provides an immediate benchmark.

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?**

Knowing the extent of the impact a given proposal or policy will have on a region is always essential.

Each region's reception capacity is in line with its structure. Exceeding the rational land use threshold can alter region's balance and, despite offering certain benefits, causes social and environmental damages that cannot be repaired.

Each action therefore needs to be assessed on its own merits, to determine whether it should be rejected or adopted. The territorial impact assessment is appropriate for any policy having a territorial impact.

**Legislative Decree 1/2005 of 10 June approving the revised text of Law 1/2001 of 24 April on Land-use in the Region of Murcia** addresses the need for our region to assess the territorial impact of certain regional policies, as reflected in their land-use plans, by introducing the "Territorial Impact Study", established by Article 18, as an additional tool for land-use planning.

Article 48 defines this study as: "*a technical document supplementing all land-use management and planning instruments expressly provided for in this Act*", in other words, the Land-Use Plans, Territorial Action Programmes and Actions of Regional Interest, for land-use planning instruments (Articles 27, 33(2) and 43) and the General Plans in their revisions and amendments affecting structural components for urban planning instruments (Articles 121st, 138 and 148.1). The law does not, however, require the study to apply to development instruments. This can be seen as a significant shortcoming in the legislation, because it is precisely in development planning that the actions to be implemented in the region and their implications are most clearly defined.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Territorial Impact Study is not a document that is separate from the territorial and urban instruments it assesses and which should be dealt with separately. It is an integral part of these instruments and should therefore be dealt with in conjunction with these. It should actually be seen as an internal quality control tool for the

different documents.

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 ARTS<sup>1</sup> 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?**

In our view, in addition to an overall assessment, specific methodologies should be developed to assess the land use and territorial policies developed by the different Member States. The Regional Government of Murcia has consequently developed a useful initiative in the form of the Urban Functions Analysis, which arose from the need to ensure that growth projections are reflected in budget increases for the different infrastructure, equipment and services in the area in which action is planned. The ultimate aim is to ensure the quality of life of the people living in the region. These functions will provide support for the various sectoral policies determining the provision of the different services (health, education, social welfare, communications, etc ...) on the basis of a growth rate set out in the urban and regional land-use plans.

Under one of its areas of responsibility, the Directorate-General for Land-use and Housing, which forms part of the Ministry of Public Works and Planning, developed the project "Technical Assessment and Guideline Values for Urban Functions in the Murcia Region" which lists the optimal indicators or standards for these functions, and which territorial impact assessments need in order to evaluate any imbalances that planned actions may have on the territorial structure.

A list of guideline values has been published in The Official Bulletin of the Region of Murcia (see "Technical Assessment and Guideline Values for Urban Functions in the Murcia Region": <http://www.borm.es/borm/documento?obj=anu&id=411841>). The Technical Assessment and Guideline Values were compiled on the basis of a prior assessment made under the CIUMED European project (see [http://www.carm.es/web/pagina?IDCONTENIDO=2468&IDTIPO=100&RASTRO=c521\\$m37253](http://www.carm.es/web/pagina?IDCONTENIDO=2468&IDTIPO=100&RASTRO=c521$m37253)), as part of the Interreg III-B Community initiative, which examined the role of medium-

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_AppliedResearch/arts.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/arts.html).

sized cities in Southeast Europe. These documents were aimed at promoting polycentric settlement structures as a counterpoint to the cumulative polarisation processes resulting from urban growth in large agglomerations.

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?

The environmental impact assessment should include territorial impact assessment in order to avoid duplication and creating excessive bureaucracy.

We believe that the principle of subsidiarity should apply when assessing territorial impact, so that the authority in charge of the region or sector most likely to be affected by the potential impact is responsible for evaluating it, in coordination with other authorities.

We prefer a decentralised system.

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 role<sup>2</sup> 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 authorities<sup>3</sup>.

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

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

As mentioned in question 2, the Committee of the Regions' role as a consultative body could be useful for expressing the uniqueness of certain regions sharing common characteristics and for establishing the operational scope of different **territorial monitoring centres**, with the aim of facilitating territorial analysis and assessment: both in terms of the impact of policies already in place and to test new ones. In short, these monitoring centres would represent a tool to aid decision-making for safeguarding territorial balance.

By way of example, it should be pointed out that the Murcia Region is involved, as a project leader, in the OTREMED European project (Tool for the Territorial Strategy of the MED Space ([www.otremed.com](http://www.otremed.com)), aimed at establishing a European Mediterranean Monitoring Centre,

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

through setting up a Spatial Data Infrastructure: SDIMED (Spatial Data Infrastructure for the Mediterranean: [www.sdimed.eu](http://www.sdimed.eu)). This tool will make it possible to analyse changes in the different regional variables that are relevant to decision-making on establishing the future territorial model for the Mediterranean area by creating a network of interconnected regional monitoring centres.

The Mediterranean regions share an identity characterised by substantial territorial capital. This uniqueness is reflected in their enormous dynamism and natural and cultural wealth, which makes them attractive tourist destinations, for example. However, their territorial situation still reflects an area that is fragmented and imbalanced, with the need to address factors such as: (i) urban pressure and a population concentrated on the coast, (ii) poor transport and communication networks; (iii) natural risks arising from geological hazards such as erosion and flooding.

Use of the Internet is currently one of the basic tools of professional work in this field. Dissemination through this medium of mapping or geographical representation has led to a real revolution in recent years, changing the way in which information is accessed. The use of Internet mapping started some years ago with the popularity of tools such as Google Maps and Google Earth. The rapid acceptance by the general public of these tools and their ease of use has forced producers of geographical information tools to adapt and create fast, effective and secure tools providing high-quality information. Also important here is the adoption of the European Union INSPIRE Directive, which requires Member States to provide free platforms for public access to geographical information. These factors have forced public authorities to generate geographical information portals known as Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI). SDIMED will be one such portal and will offer the public and professionals access to interconnected geographical information on the Mediterranean area. To ensure the information is regularly updated, each region will be responsible for maintaining and expanding its information.

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?**

In our opinion, the territorial approach to implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy is of great importance, as it would make it possible to assess whether or not the territorial and geographical component is used – in many cases it is not – in the implementation of strategies such as reducing greenhouse gases.

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