

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?

Any debate is always a good thing, especially when it concerns a topic such as territorial cohesion which emerged thanks to the commitment of local and regional authorities, whom it concerns closely and directly. For this reason, follow-up to the debate on territorial cohesion is necessary in order to evaluate and regularly update concrete goals and methods that can help achieve this cross-cutting EU objective.

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?

We consider that the Commission's document offers a broad methodological and procedural catalogue for coordination between sectoral and territorial policies. It is a step towards standardising and disseminating these practices throughout the EU and is therefore to be welcomed.

However, in order for it to become a fully-fledged instrument, implementing mechanisms for it must be clearly laid down in a specific calendar, including territorial impact studies in all proposals while also providing for consultation with stakeholders. This would be a qualitative step forward in implementation and awareness-raising regarding territorial cohesion criteria.

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?

Inclusion of the territorial dimension alongside the economic and social dimension in the Union's fundamental cross-cutting objectives had been a long-standing demand by local and regional authorities and experts until its inclusion by the Lisbon Treaty. A new assessment policy is needed which takes account of the territorial dimension, as we believe that its cross-cutting nature means it should be present in all policies formulated by the Commission. As we have suggested, the inclusion of territorial impact studies in all proposals which should also involve consultation of stakeholders would be a major step forward in implementation and awareness-raising regarding territorial cohesion criteria.

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?

The Community of Valencia is extremely concerned about cohesion within regions, as our region has significant geographical (and thus also socio-economic) differences within it. It is therefore extremely important that the assessment tools used make it easy to make comparisons not only between regions but also within regions. An example of such an assessment in the Valencia context would be an

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

analysis of the *comarcas* (districts). A list of internally diverse regions should be established, which can be used when developing a public policy that might have differing impacts in different parts of the region. Drafters of public policies should take account of this list when assessing the impact of a given project on the particular area concerned.

Turning to the assessment system, the Community of Valencia is very mindful of the bottom-up approach that is consistent with the subsidiarity principle. The scale of public intervention should be adapted to the scale of the problems to be solved, which may be transnational, national, regional or local, thus requiring concrete measures on the part of the relevant public authorities. Accordingly, a decentralised system such as that proposed by the Commission is more in keeping with the policy which the Community of Valencia has traditionally upheld.

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?

Active involvement of local authorities will only be possible if there are high standards of transparency, together with open, preferential communication channels. Transparency means giving local and regional authorities free access to information sources and decision-making procedures. Also, players from European bodies must consider, accept and encourage involvement and cooperation from local and regional authorities.

Furthermore, we believe that the Committee of the Regions is the body that is best placed to uphold these principles and conduct an external audit of the process, ensuring the participation rights of subnational bodies.

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?

Territorial cohesion is a cross-cutting objective of the European Union; it should therefore be a criterion in all its decision-making processes and should inform all its public policies. The EU 2020 Strategy, as a benchmark for the Union's future, cannot overlook the imbalances and changed balances that may arise. In conclusion, it is a dimension that must be taken into account both in the EU 2020 Strategy and in the Annual Growth Survey which begins the planning process.

As regards the territorial impact at Member State level, the Community of Valencia believes that territorial impact should be assessed at all levels – not only EU, national, regional and local, but also subregional (i.e. the level between regional and local), as well as areas with special characteristics. These would include the outermost regions recognised by the EU, but also other regions connected by joint projects such as the whole of Spain's Mediterranean seaboard which shares, upholds and proposes the project for a Mediterranean corridor as an engine of growth for all the regions concerned. These are special geographical cases which should be taken into account for concrete policies.