

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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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?

Two focal points of the Green Paper and follow-up discourses are reflected to a too limited extent in the Staff Working Paper: the **value of diversity** of the regions; and the potential need for **place-based approaches**. This can be easily added in the path of argumentation leading to the objective of the TIA; in other words it should be made explicit that the requirement of a TIA does not neglect these aspects, and that when initiating a TIA, these two aspects are already considered before the process outlined in Figure 1 starts.

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 need for **cross-sectoral coordination** has been translated into the proposed procedure of the TIA to a limited extent. While it is (for this stage) sufficiently covered in the requirement for modelling cross-sectoral impacts, it has not found consideration in the phase of initiation of TIA and within the

strategic dimension of EU policies. For providing on example, where therefore the TIA is likely to fail to cover important issues is the budgetary distribution and member states ex-ante evaluations for the upcoming funding period, which are likely to be discussed in detail only with the individual DGs. However, whether the non-agricultural-related support to rural areas (currently covered under EAFRD Axis 3) appears appropriate and sufficient for furthering territorial cohesion at both, member state and EU level, can only be judged on, when considering CAP and ERDF resources, as well as national resources spent for the development of rural areas. Particularly the latter is currently totally neglected when discussing about potential EU-wide impacts of EAFRD and ERDF spending. Consequently, setting minimum budgets spent in member states which hardly invest from the national budget into rural infrastructure is missed and disparities between countries and rural-and urban areas within one country might increase. For this reason, it would be advantageous to underline the **need for stronger cross-sectoral collaboration at an early stage**, in the best way when weighing whether a TIA for EU policies is needed or not.

Another aspect, not sufficiently covered in the Working Paper is the longer-term dimension and monitoring of territorial impacts in cases where a policy, for which a TIA was required, which would allow to use the TIA as strategic tool. For some cases the monitoring through existing data bases might be fine, for others it might be necessary to define appropriate instruments before the policy is implemented.

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?

From the experiences gained with evaluation and data collection in the current funding period, the FADN data base, and the need for EU-wide data, collected following a coherent approach, it appears be meaningful to make the assessment – at least for EU policies/ programmes - mandatory and to complement it by Technical Assistance funds as a TIA might in some cases rather of Community interest than of national interest.

Having in mind that currently not all data is not provided by member states appropriately and evaluation reports are sometimes insufficient (despite obligatory), it might be thought about the centrally organised initiation of the TIAs. This would also be a prevention for the misspending of Technical Assistance funds.

Making the TIA mandatory appear to be particularly relevant for rural development, agricultural policies, energy, infrastructure and state aid regulation, provided that the EIA remains an inherent part of any policy programme.

The decision whether a TIA has to be conducted for national policies (like EIAs) should be made case-specific at European level.

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

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

decentralised system as proposed in the Staff Working Document?

d) Generally, ESPON ARTS and Quick Scan appear to be a good solution for taking a comprehensive view on the problem/ question concerned without too much administrative effort and thus to limit administrative costs. However, in some cases solely inviting stakeholders to workshops to discussing the indicators and impacts to be assessed might not be sufficient as side effects of a policy might be insufficiently known. Furthermore, workshop results are severely determined by the selection of participants. As this initial decision making determines the outcome and value of the overall TIA, for this step it should be better specified how to be conducted. Decision on required levels of analytical intensity could be set up in a manner like it is currently done within the EIAs.

Another point is modelling of cumulative and cross-sectoral effects. The working paper rightly points out that there are already good models on place. It should be specified how to proceed if the existing models cannot cope to assess the impact of one planned policy – for some policies it might not be worthwhile to elaborated a new model, for others it might be a valuable exercise for fine-tuning policy proposals.

e) For the reason mentioned earlier (transparency, and application of a coherent methodology) organising the TIAs centrally appears clearly advantageous, what does not imply that it should not be relied upon country/regional experts.

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) Local and regional authorities might become involved in data collection and should be asked to comment on the selection of the investigation area and on analytical results.

g) Apart from technical assistance, an important role of the Committee of the Region would be to underline and communicate the value of TIAs as planning tools. The main reason for this, that any contribution the regional and local authorities are asked for should not be perceived as obligation (even if effort is reimbursed) but that they see it as tool, from which they can benefit as well. Furthermore, the CoR might be supportive to regional/local authorities which like to be desired in a TIA but are not foreseen to be considered by the experts in charge with the TIA.

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) yes

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

- i) Yes. In that case the standard TIA procedure might be adapted to the specific question, but the territorial dimension should find consideration.
- j) Yes, for some policies it would be essential – see, e.g. the example provided under Question b.
