

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



QUESTIONNAIRE

THE ASSESSMENT OF TERRITORIAL IMPACTS

Submitted by Dr Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)

Dr Michael Schneider is the rapporteur for the CoR own initiative opinion on *Assessment of 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 published document reflects the public debate on territorial cohesion. It is an open question whether the approach suggested in the document to impact assessment of political decisions at local (municipal) level is applicable to every country or region. Political culture (especially in terms of decision making processes, debates and direct democracy) varies from one country to another (and also, in line with the subsidiarity principle, from one region or local community to another). In the short term, it is not therefore possible for one single coherent framework to cover European cultural diversity. Building European cohesion takes time, with decision makers acting and thinking in the same way, while taking into account the needs of local communities and Community (EU) requirements. Constant public consultation and analyses of trends within a given society are the right way to go.

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 EC's proposal could be one instrument, but at this stage there is no way of objectively evaluating how effective it is. There can be no doubt that the role of cities (or metropolises, if a Member State's legal system provides for such an organisational entity) are centres concentrating the economic, social, intellectual and cultural life of a given region (in the annex to the Commission document, the Pomerania voivodship is mentioned as a "second tier metro region" – page 16). Thanks to technological progress, cities are playing an increasingly important role. The "territorial impact assessment" process (annex) emphasises the function of cities. One approach which is consistent with the democratic spirit of Europe is constant monitoring of needs and attitudes in local communities (using the relevant NUTS classification).

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 policy coherence of some policy proposals.

c) Do you consider that territorial impact assessments should be made compulsory or not 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?

They should be made mandatory, unless EU law makes it compulsory for Member States (or EU institutions) to carry out impact assessments. After all, local authorities represent the basic environment in which ordinary Europeans operate. Any assessment can therefore provide local or regional authority bodies with important information on how useful a given decision taken by them is.

The most important sectors in relation to economic policy are those which help to make a given region (city, rural municipality, etc) more competitive, i.e. transport, employment, entrepreneurship, the environment and new technologies.

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 these 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 and instruments could help to assess territorial impact. However, they are certainly not enough. It is worth using methods based on the EU statistics (EuroStat) and information from other sources, particularly ESPON.

e) Excessive systems should be avoided. In this case, a decentralised system makes the most sense.

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

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

f) No specific measures are needed. However, it is important to take into account the views not just of cities and regions, but also of rural areas which are economically and socially linked to larger centres. (see annex, p. 36 – "mapping the territorial impact").

g) The CoR should act as an integrator and moderator in the assessment process.

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 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 be carried out also at Member State level?

h) Definitely - the territorial dimension could provide useful input for the Europe 2020 strategy.

i) Yes.

j) Not necessary, especially given that the impact assessment should have a significant influence on future decision-making processes at local level. At the same time, aggregated assessments will be produced at EU level.

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.