

REPORT

EU Seminar on Territorial Impact of EU policies

Thursday 5 March 2009, Amsterdam

Action 2.2 of the Action Programme for the implementation for the EU Territorial Agenda

1. Introduction

The territorial impact of EU sectoral policies is becoming more and more visible in the EU Member States. Policies influence the territorial development of Member States. There is also an effect on the administrative and political framework of national and local tiers of government. The territorial impact can be intentional or unintentional and can result in both positive and negative effects for a territory.

The incoherence of EU sectoral policies and the lack of an integral approach make it difficult to build on regional identities, potential and diversity to develop territories across Europe. Therefore it is of vital importance to be fully aware of the policies' possible territorial impact – which covers more than just the geographic impact – in order to be able to anticipate developments and react in a suitable manner. Assessments of the territorial impact are necessary.

As part of the *Action Programme for the implementation for the EU Territorial Agenda* (action 2.2) a seminar was organised to discuss the topic. This report presents the recommendations of the seminar and describes the presentations and workshops held during the seminar.

2. Recommendations

Assessment of the territorial impact of EU policies needs to take place at two levels:

1. at the EU level, primarily by the European Commission;
2. at the national and regional levels, by the Member States.

For territorial assessments at the **EU level** the following is recommended:

- Further integrate and expand on territorial elements in the Commission's general Impact Assessment. Territorial elements should be easily applicable for policy makers;
- Look into different types of territories;
- Do not introduce additional (bureaucratic) instruments, use existing ones instead;
- Within the Commission there should be a coordinating role for DG REGIO;
- Assessment at EU level should not go into detail regarding the impact at regional and local level;
- Do not expect an 'one size fits all' solution;
- Define the scale of effects in relation to territory and policy;
- Also define the time scale (look for a balance between short-term and long-term effects);
- Assessments should be included in regular reviews of EU policy;
- Assessments should be cross-sectoral and should include fields outside of EU competence;
- They should build on databases to provide evidence-based pros & cons;
- Databases should consist of clear, comparable, transparent indicators and should be updated regularly.

Recommendations on how to **use the results** of territorial assessments **at the EU level**:

- Make the *assessment process* itself part of EU legislation so that Member States are able to take the best decisions for their regions during implementation (e.g. Flooding Directive);

- Use framework legislation at EU level while leaving as many details as possible to the Member States to increase flexibility;
- In the wording of EU policies, focus on targets but let Member States decide on how to implement them. The targets itself are not under discussion;
- Provide for consultation and discussion with Member States and regions at an early stage of policymaking. Use their creativity and flexibility;
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices between Member States. Awareness of territorial impact is important;
- Ensure that the assessment is of help to regions and local authorities in the implementation phase of the EU policy;
- Organise transparent and structured loops between different government tiers to ensure two-way information flow and communication about the assessments.

For territorial assessments carried out by the Member States at the **national and regional levels**, the following is recommended:

- Be aware that national assessment instruments are of a voluntary nature;
- A quick scan can help to gain insight in the probability of serious impacts;
- In some cases, a more extensive impact assessment is useful;
- Use a cross-sectoral and integrated policy approach (economic, social and ecological aspects);
- Assess both allocation (e.g. Cohesion Funds, CAP) and legislative (e.g. Air Quality Directive) policies;
- Be aware of territorial differences within Member States. Group together comparable types of regions;
- Assess development strategies of specific regions;
- Work together to develop a glossary to enhance a common understanding of territorial impact assessments.

Recommendations on how to **use the results** of territorial assessments **at the national and regional levels**:

- Incorporate the main findings of your assessment in the national position;
- Organise a cross-sectoral discussion at national level as this is a precondition for an integrated position in the EU policymaking process;
- Try to influence EU proposals at an early stage by submitting your assessment to the European Commission (and others);
- Organise an exchange of best practices between different regions in Europe, especially with regions comparable with yours, in order to find the best way to implement an EU policy;
- Use the assessment results to raise awareness for territorial issues;
- Involve regional and local authorities at an early stage in order to detect and mitigate negative territorial impact factors as far as possible. Make sure smaller interest groups with 'softer voices' are not marginalised;
- Also look for positive effects of EU policies on regional and local communities (especially those that are communicated as such by these communities).

Conclusion

Territorial impact assessments are an opportunity for the European Commission – mainly DG REGIO – and for the Member States to render EU policies more effective by taking territorial elements into account. In this context, a lot remains to be done. By organising assessments and communicating about them, awareness can be raised at all levels.

3. Presentations and workshops

The seminar began with an introduction to the issue of territorial impact by *Chris Kuijpers*, Director-General for Spatial Policy at the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. He emphasised that the territorial impact of EU policies is most strongly felt at the local and regional levels. Once the impact is felt there, however, it is too late to influence the EU policymaking process. Therefore, assessments are necessary. Virtual conflicts between EU and local/ regional interests should be avoided. Often the aims are shared and it is important to turn Europe's territorial diversity into a real strength.

There is a role to play both for the European Commission and the Member States. More attention could be paid to territorial aspects within the Commission's existing impact assessment and Member States could conduct their own assessments. Awareness of territorial impact is the key issue and should be raised. A proactive approach is required to make Europe's territories a better place to live, work and play.

Zef Hemel, deputy director of the Amsterdam Physical Planning Department, inspired participants with a story about the development of the city of Amsterdam. He charted the course of urbanisation from the past till today and described the role 'Brussels' played in the making of the plans.

Lewis Dijkstra, policy analyst at the European Commission/ DG REGIO, presented an idea on how territorial impact can be measured. Asymmetries can be visualised by combining two maps, one with the effects of a proposed EU policy and one with a regional characteristic (e.g. population density). This is relevant as European cohesion policy focuses on trends and issues that have a clear asymmetric impact. We should ask ourselves if the same policy goal can be reached in a territorially balanced way.

The *participants* from all over Europe played an active role during the seminar. Especially in the workshops there were lively discussions. The outcome is presented below.

Workshop: Conflicts between environment and renewable energy policies

In the workshop, a case study outlined the difficulties encountered in the UK with simultaneously pursuing policies for the environment, renewable energies and economic development. In the discussion, participants from other countries, including Spain, said they recognised the UK experience. The main problem was the conflict between environmental protection and economic development policies.

At the EU level, a less prescriptive approach to policymaking is needed, with a shift away from the many detailed minimum standards set by EU policies. In turn, Member States need to show clearly how they intend to meet the underlying aims or spirit of EU policies.

A spatial development strategy/ plan at the Member State, regional or local level can be a valuable tool in this respect. Such strategies generally take a long-term approach and can therefore be used to show how a Member State intends to meet common objectives for the environment, biodiversity, water quality etc. They can inform decisions on individual developments which may have a more immediate impact. Behavioural change is needed to implement this less prescriptive, more strategy-focused approach.

To achieve this, an effective communication programme is needed to present evidence of problems arising from the implementation of EU policies as well as the benefits of doing things differently. The territorial cohesion initiative itself could act as a powerful communication tool. One **recommendation** to Ministers could be to set up a pilot to demonstrate approaches to agreeing and implementing shared EU and Member State aims through effective action to integrate policy objectives at the regional or local levels.

Workshop: Quick scan on territorial impact (NL)

The quick scan that was devised by the Netherlands is a good example of an assessment tool. It contains 16 questions that should be answered by specialists from all the layers of government and by specialists with different professional backgrounds.

It is important that the same quick scan be used within all bodies of the national administration. The impact (and its assessment) can change with the perspective and administrative level of the official who is filling in the quick scan. The principle of subsidiarity is important.

The workshop participants **recommended** for the quick scan to be easy (not too many questions) because excessive complexity can discourage people from answering. Furthermore the scan has to be flexible, updated regularly and needs to be put on a solid scientific and technical basis.

The quick scan's output can be used by policymakers and experts without in-depth knowledge of EU policymaking to detect possible territorial impacts. The tool improves the implementation of collectively reached decisions and rules. It prevents problems in the national implementation phase of European regulatory acts. The quick scan can be seen as an early warning system.

Workshop: Territorial impact analysis of Hungary

The workshop discussed the territorial impact analyses conducted in Hungary. It made assessment **recommendations** that are of use to other countries as well.

Member States do not need new assessment instruments or methods, they can use the ones they have, but a harmonisation of assessments is necessary. Indicators and databases need to be compatible.

Territorial impact assessments should be more sophisticated in the future and based on landscape structure, conditions and local potential. It is important to harmonise data of political boundaries with data of territorial assessments that are based on landscape units.

Territorial impact assessments are most useful at an early stage (ex ante). This requires cross-sectoral collaboration with a high degree of coordination. The territorial/ spatial planning department can take the lead.

Workshop: ESPON policy support – The TEQUILA II Model

The ESPON 2013 Programme is developing a tool that can support policymakers in territorial impact assessment of EU policies. The tool, called the TEQUILA Model, provides a general logical and methodological framework and is currently being elaborated and tested. TEQUILA sets a framework for measuring the impact of an EU policy on the territorial cohesion principles “territorial efficiency”, “territorial quality” and “territorial identity”.

During the workshop it was concluded that there is a clear need for EU-wide evidence-based comparative analysis of the territorial impact of EU policies in order to support policy and decision making processes. Territorial impact assessment of EU policies on European regions and types of territories should be based on a frequently updated and high quality database and an identical set of indicators. Territorial impact assessment should not only focus on different regions but also on different types of territories.

The TEQUILA Model is a sophisticated scientific tool that can support policymakers in understanding and comparing territorial impacts of proposed EU policies on different European regions. The main philosophy and the methodological framework of the TEQUILA Model were supported by the participants. TEQUILA was considered useful as a transparent tool in territorial impact analyses in particular for its evidence-based and comparative characteristics.

It is **recommended** to integrate tools for territorial impact assessment into one comprehensive impact assessment tool at European level. Investigation into how the main frame of the TEQUILA Model can be transferred into a comprehensive assessment tool can deliver added value to this exercise. Also further development of evidence-based, comparable and transparent tools for territo-

rial impact assessment is necessary. The focus of further applied research should lie on the definition of indicators and the integration into a comprehensive assessment tool.

Workshop: European Commission Impact Assessment

The workshop began with some proposals in relation to the Commission's Impact Assessment. Research from Delft University of Technology found that acceptance of a separate territorial assessment at the EU level is highly unlikely. What is more, territorial elements are already part of the Commission's 2009 Impact Assessment Guidelines. That is, there already is a territorial impact assessment framework at EU level. According to the researchers, this makes awareness raising and transfer of knowledge the key issues of the moment.

The Commission's Impact Assessment is a dynamic instrument and is becoming more comprehensive. Its quality is also improving. The aim of the procedure goes beyond assessing potential impact as such – it also aims to create broad support for the proposal at an early stage with the help of an interactive procedure. The assessment is carried out by the developer of the policy proposal, i.e. commission officials from the respective Directorate General.

Completing an assessment takes one to two years, providing a lot of room to comment on the policy proposal, which is developed in the same period. To be effective, stakeholders should be there right from the start of the policy proposal development and the assessment procedure, so that they are involved at the problem definition stage. As a rule, once the proposal has been drafted, few changes are made to the draft.

These observations lead to some **recommendations**. The present Commission Impact Assessment is far more useful for the assessment of territorial impact than a separate territorial assessment. In terms of influencing assessment processes, one has to be proactive and be able to produce the appropriate type of evidence (in terms of proportionality as well as clarity). The evidence should be presented at the right moment and the right place. The roadmaps published together with the Commission's work programme give an indication of this. The responsibilities of Member States and DG REGIO are particularly great when it comes to territorial aspects. At the Commission level, DG REGIO is the political and administrative 'owner' of territoriality. Member States should also implement territorial assessments in their countries. There is a need for a cross-sectoral approach. All stakeholders have to learn how to use the impact assessments.