

**Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters Workgroup**

**Thematic subgroup**

**Urban and development sprawl**

**Final report**

**prepared for and presented to the TCUM Workgroup**

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## Executive summary

This report has been drafted by the Belgian delegation<sup>1</sup> of the Territorial cohesion and Urban matters workgroup, on behalf and with the collaboration of the "Urban and development sprawl" thematic subgroup comprising 14 Member States. It presents the results of the approach that started mid 2007.

The structure of the report reflects the specific focus of the approach on the experience of Member States. The compilation of challenges raised by sprawl and of strategies and tools to deal with it in the Member States, based on their answers to a questionnaire, represents the central part (chapters 5 and 6) and the bulk of pages of the report. That part is preceded by four chapters presenting respectively the context, the scope of the thematic action, its methodology and a review of the sprawl issue as it is presented in European policy documents. An analysis of sprawl in a territorial cohesion perspective follows, making the link with the conclusions.

Chapter 1 introduces the context in which the four interlinked thematic actions carried out within the TCUM are developed. It underlines how this provides the TCUM with an opportunity to play a role in giving more concrete contents to the territorial dimension of Community policies, in particular cohesion policy. It pinpoints the links with different processes under way, notably the First Action Programme of the Territorial Agenda (AP1). The chapter also presents the specific context of the "Urban and development sprawl" action and its process, which make it differ from other approaches of the issue.

Chapter 2 describes the scope of the thematic action. It discusses the theme and underlines that, while the significance of the theme of sprawl is clearly acknowledged on the international scene, the issue remains open in terms of conceptual delineation as well as in terms of policy answers. The chosen angle of view on sprawl is broad and without pre-conceived ideas, in order to accommodate a diversity of situations and options. The aim is not to make a scientific study nor an assessment of the behaviour of Member States, but instead to find means to support Member States in dealing with the negative effects of sprawl, and to explore the way towards a concerted approach between them and the European Commission in this matter.

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In chapter 3, the method is presented, starting with the general approach, which mainly relies on a questionnaire addressed to the Member States. The steps and details of the process are exposed, demonstrating that such a gradual and concerted policy approach needs much time in order to reach a satisfying state of progress. The results are nonetheless encouraging, as the answers cover a majority of Member States, with a balanced geographical distribution.

In order to give a background to the work, chapter 4 devotes attention to the issue of sprawl in 20 European policy documents, selected for their relevance for the issue itself or its context. Implicit definitions, features, causes and consequences of sprawl, objectives and action means as presented in these documents are reviewed. Most documents focus on the negative effects of sprawl - residential sprawl in particular - and hence on action means to prevent / control / limit it ("quantitative" approach). A number of documents emphasise the link between sprawl and quality and affordability of life in cities, notably through numerous recommendations about urban development. Issues linked to governance are also underlined.

With chapter 5 starts the synthesis of answers of the Member States to the questionnaire, allowing a large place to examples extracted from the national contributions. After an introduction about the respondents (their nature suggests that sprawl is viewed and dealt with primarily as a spatial planning issue), chapter 5 focuses on the features of sprawl and the challenges it raises.

Sprawl is encountered in the 15 Member States that have answered, but with varying importance and in very diverse forms. In particular, it touches many other functions than residence. Sprawl of economic activities is for example a concern for many respondents. Affected areas are also diverse, well beyond periphery of cities. Dynamics vary considerably both among countries and along time, new Member States being currently more exposed on average than the others.

The information collected about the two main identified challenges - consequences of sprawl and mechanisms / contexts that foster it - shows that sprawl is composed of some complex causal chains which encompass a wide range of domains. These chains may in some cases generate loops that foster or mitigate sprawl. This combines with a variety of national, regional and local contexts, which also have a significant influence on sprawl and its consequences. A number of factors that fuel sprawl can hardly be changed, as they may be deemed positive in other regards. An additional challenge comes from the fact that many



stakeholders are concerned, but with diverse sensitivities and interests. Some stakeholders may benefit from sprawl in given circumstances, while others experience negative effects.

Chapter 6 focuses on what lies at the core of the approach, i.e. strategies and tools implemented or considered in the Member States. The considerable collected material, while quite heterogeneous, shows that a diversity of tools answers to a diversity of situations. Most implemented tools however belong to the domain of spatial planning and many of them target land use, i.e. the concrete manifestation of sprawl, rather than its causes. Many tools are either recent, or recently modified, showing that the sprawl issue is as actual as ever. On the other hand, coherent global strategies seem rare, probably reflecting the fact that recognition of the issue at a high level of policy making is still lacking in most countries. A few answers mention tools which aim at improving quality and sustainability of existing neighbourhoods generated by sprawl.

Considered (or wished for) tools tend to focus less on spatial planning and more on other domains, emphasising the need / wish to go to the roots of the issue and to have more integrated approaches. Many proposals concern urban development and planning, but also governance and financing and fiscal matters. While regulatory tools are numerous in the category of implemented tools, there are significantly more informal / guiding tools among considered tools. Diversity and permanent evolution of the instruments make it difficult to establish general rules, to identify "universal" best practices, or to extract efficiency criteria for future tools.

In order to introduce and frame the conclusions, chapter 7 discusses which mutual implications between the sprawl issue and the concept of territorial cohesion emerge from the analysis, relying notably on the Green Paper on territorial cohesion and on the Sixth progress report on economic and social cohesion. By many regards, territorial cohesion as a concept, an objective and a shared competence provides an appropriate framework to apprehend and deal with sprawl, with its specific focuses on diversity (including specific territories), territorial co-operation, cross-sectoral coordination, multilevel governance, and involvement of stakeholders.

Chapter 8 is devoted to conclusions of the work. Sprawl represents a widespread, growing and diversified concern, allowing room for a European approach of the issue. The time dimension plays a big role, offering a potential for exchange of experience and underlining the importance of a prospective vision. Going beyond the traditional spatial planning approach, there is a need for a multi-sectoral toolbox. More generally, multilevel governance

and partnerships are keys to effective approaches. Territorial cohesion may offer a basis to develop new truly territorial tools taking into account the extreme diversity of territories.

It is intended to produce common policy recommendations in a next stage, based on the four thematic approaches.

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 General context**

Since the emergence of the concept of territorial cohesion in the European debate, boosted by its integration into draft Treaties, importance of the territorial dimension for successful policies has begun to gain some recognition.

This recognition progresses along two paths (Community / intergovernmental approaches) which complement each other:

- the dynamics that led to the adoption of the ESDP and its Tampere action programme in 1999 has been revived since 2004 and the Rotterdam Agenda process. The intergovernmental cooperation of ministers of spatial planning / territorial development has notably produced the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and their respective action programmes;
- the European institutions focus on the elaboration of the concept of territorial cohesion, notably in the Cohesion reports and in the Green Paper (2008).

Both processes are notably pushed by the perspective of a shared competence in matter of territorial cohesion once the Lisbon Treaty is ratified.

Still there is much to do to convince stakeholders beyond the usual spatial planning sphere.

Territorial aspects are discussed at European level in several "circles": ministerial meetings, DG meetings, Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP),... The Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters (TCUM) workgroup is one of these, covering a specific field, as a reflection group where the Commission and Member States are trying together to find ways to contribute to territorial cohesion.

In this regard, the TCUM workgroup also makes a link between cohesion policy and territorial aspects, between political and technical matters, through a global approach that goes beyond the mere technical / regulatory aspects of cohesion policy.

## **1.2 The TCUM workgroup and its thematic subgroups**

In order to give more substance to the specific role of the TCUM workgroup, during the discussion on the 2007 Work programme (17/04/2007), DG REGIO proposed to start a work on a few specific themes. This should demonstrate how taking the territory into account may bring an added-value when dealing with some delicate and complex issues at EU level, to

show how a territorial approach can help to tackle or at least to approach in another - better - way a number of sensitive and cross-sectoral issues which affect the EU.

DG REGIO proposed three themes: climate, demography, and energy. The Belgian delegate suggested adding the Urban and development sprawl theme. DG REGIO agreed that the sprawl issue fits well into the territorial cohesion frame, and may even be viewed as typical. The TCUM workgroup agreed with the proposal.

The 4 themes represent important issues for the Territorial Agenda. In addition, they are important challenges raised in the Fourth report on cohesion.

DG REGIO proposed during the meeting of 19/06/2007 to set up subgroups focussed on the strategic dimension of each theme, comprising a lead Member State and at least 4 other Member States.

Concretely, the thematic subgroups should provide outputs that are action-oriented and create achievable goals for Member States in the short to medium term, and to this end:

- identify the major challenges for each theme;
- make a benchmarking of the way how the Member States deal with these challenges (organisations and institutions involved, inter-ministerial coordination and coordination between different levels of government, financial and human resources available, position of the concerned issues with regard to other ones, assigned objectives, implemented measures and actions, etc)
- identify (wholly or partially) good practices examples that could be implemented in other Member States.

Based on the four thematic reports, it could be possible to produce a common final report transcending the thematic division to focus on the territorial dimension and territorial cohesion.

During the TCUM workgroup meeting of 23/10/2007, the idea of common principles for the four thematic approaches was agreed upon, while the need to leave sufficient room for taking specificities of the themes into account was acknowledged. Overlaps between themes should be avoided, as well as too formal co-ordination procedures that would hamper the process.

The Commission made it clear that it would not provide specific financial support. Its role would be in a supporting capacity, for example, to provide any documents and data or contact points in other DGs. Moreover, the work of the thematic subgroups has become a recurrent item on the agenda of the TCUM workgroup meetings.



### 1.3 The thematic subgroups work and the 1<sup>st</sup> Action Programme

The work in thematic subgroups is linked with the Territorial Agenda of the EU, and its outputs should feed it. It has thus been agreed to integrate the thematic works in the framework of the 1<sup>st</sup> Action Programme (AP1), in the form of an action (2.1) structured into 4 sub-actions. Output of the sub-actions would be reports built around a common outline.

There are naturally differences between the TCUM workgroup framework and the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) framework in charge of the monitoring of the AP1, which may have an effect on the approach: the NTCCP includes non EU countries as well as representatives from diverse European institutions, networks and NGOs, and it is headed by the Member State holding the EU presidency. On the other hand, as a subcommittee of the Committee for the Coordination of Funds (COCOF), the TCUM workgroup headed by the Commission is closely linked to the EU cohesion policy and addresses the EU Member States.

Action 2.1 of the AP1 is thus dedicated to the work of the "TCUM thematic working groups" as a whole, to be started immediately: *«Cooperate with the EC to use the activities of the TCUM thematic working groups to analyse key-dossiers, policies and legislation at MS and EU level in the light of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter»*. The contents of the template for this action mainly confirm what has been decided by the TCUM workgroup, in particular the common structure of the 4 reports.

The fact that the four thematic approaches are grouped in a same template confirms that they have a common finality, and the products should thus be at least "compatible" (minimizing overlaps and dealing with potential differences in standpoint).

Taking on board what had been agreed upon by the TCUM workgroup, the AP1 defines the expected outcomes as 4 reports including:

- a short reminder of the main challenges related to the themes;
- a survey of the policies, instruments and approaches existing at national and European level to address those challenges;
- identification of best practices.

The PA1 does not go as far as a common report of the four subgroups such as foreseen by the TCUM. However, some NTCCP members have expressed their wish to have the opportunity to discuss the intended cross-thematic synthesis document and the common recommendations before a presentation at DGs level.

#### **1.4 The "Urban and development sprawl" thematic subgroup**

As the Belgian delegation (more precisely the Walloon Region) was at the origin of the inclusion of the Sprawl theme, it agreed on 19/06/2007 to prepare a first methodological working paper, without committing yet to lead the subgroup. Cyprus was willing to share the leadership of the subgroup.

This first methodological working paper presented at the TCUM workgroup meeting of 23/10/2007 was favourably received. Most importantly, the other subgroup leaders were ready to follow a similar approach.

The Belgian delegation circulated a second working paper in view of the TCUM meeting of 29/11/2007, a few days after the ministerial meeting in Ponta Delgada (Azores) where the AP1 was adopted. The working papers disseminated by the Greek delegation about energy and by the Italian delegation concerning demography allowed to specify the potential complementariness. Most of all, they showed that the work could go on without significant risk of overlaps.

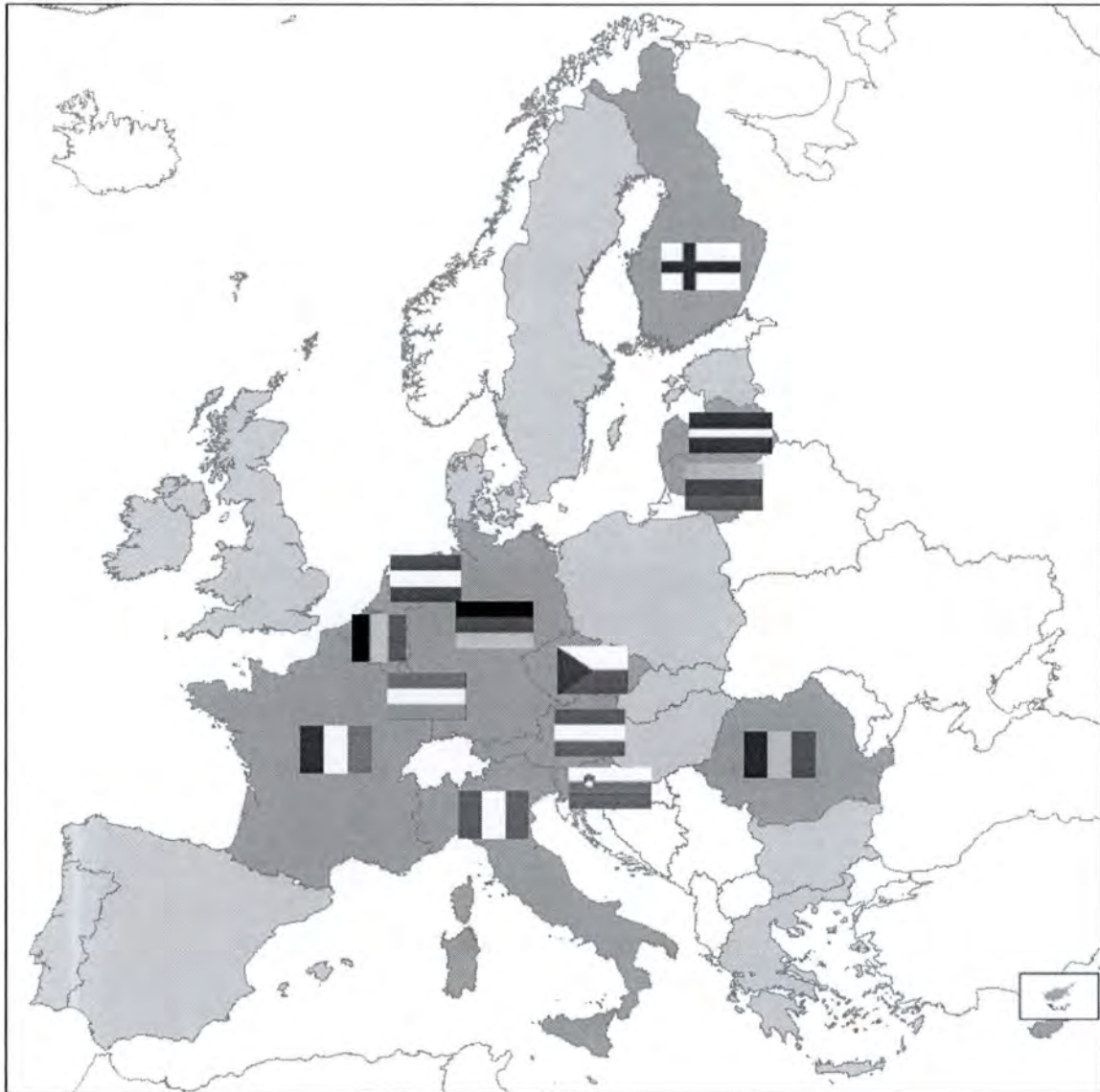
The EEA, which presented its report about urban sprawl at the TCUM meeting of 29/11/2007, expressed its willingness to be associated, notably because the subgroup approach might be useful for the update of EEA's report foreseen in 2009-2010. The Urban inter-service group of the Commission is also closely following the work.

The subgroup gradually grew during the following months, to stabilise at 14 members in April 2008 (map 1). The Belgian delegation (Walloon Region) played de facto a leading role. Although not presenting itself as a member of the subgroup, Spain has been among the most active Member States.

As for the three other subgroups, a progress update was provided at each of the TCUM meetings of 2008 and 2009. A short progress report has also been presented during the NTCCP meeting of 18/03/2008 in Brdo (Slovenia).

These various presentations did not generate many reactions, which is not surprising as they were mainly progress reports. They were however useful to ascertain that the work of the different subgroups could progress in a satisfyingly coordinated way. They also allowed to notice that a number of Member States had expectations about the work, clearly more focused on tools to deal with sprawl than on objectives.

Map 1: Members of the "Sprawl" thematic subgroup



Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Italy (IT), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxemburg (LU), Netherlands (NL), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI)



## 2. Scope of the thematic action

### 2.1 Delineation of the theme

The ESDP, the CEMAT Guidelines, the Territorial Agenda of the EU as well as the Leipzig Charter mention the issue of (urban) sprawl. The European Commission refers to it in the Fourth report on economic and social cohesion and in the report on the territorial and urban dimension in the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and in the Operational Programmes (see section 4).

The European Environment Agency published in November 2006 a report titled «*Urban sprawl - Europe's ignored environmental challenge*». The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change mentions the issue in its Fourth Assessment Report (May 2007). Earlier work more or less directly related with the Sprawl issue still remains largely valid today, such as the CEMAT document presented during the ministerial session in Oslo on 6-7 September 1994 for example. The number of papers still published nowadays demonstrate ongoing topicality.

While the significance of the theme is clearly acknowledged on the international scene, the issue remains very open in terms of policy answers. Sprawl affects Member States and their regions in diverse ways, in function of their territorial features. Any approach of the issue must thus take into account the specific typologies of human settlements. It can indeed be assumed that sprawl is perceived, and dealt with, in different ways according to the spatial planning culture and to the institutional and political context of the different Member States.

This means that there is a need to have a better view of the aspects that make sprawl undesirable, which are its negative effects as actually perceived by the Member States. In short, what are the problems with urban and development sprawl? Does it depend on different types of sprawl?

In order to avoid ideological debates, the issue must be tackled without pre-conceived ideas, and in particular without privileging pre-set (positive or negative) opinions on sprawl as a phenomenon. The aim of the approach is to build on experience and opinions of the Member States.

The theme of the subgroup work has been qualified in various ways during the preliminary discussions. First notes of DG REGIO refer to *urban issues (sprawl and transport issues)* or to *urban sprawl and urban transport*. However the approach adopted here is not limited to transportations issues, nor to the sole urban perspective. The phenomenon of sprawl affects territories that extend far beyond urban areas.



This is a typical case where territorial and urban policies are inter-dependent. Spatial and urban development are precisely more and more envisaged in coordination: common ministerial meetings, seminars of the Commission on the urban - rural issue, action 1.1 of the AP1 (*Prepare and promote policy options to foster coordination between spatial and urban development in the light of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter at EU and MS levels*).

The theme has thus been designated as (urban and development) "sprawl", encompassing in this all kinds of activities - notably retail and leisure activities – and areas, without any pre-conceived idea of the aspects that should be taken into account. The form that sprawl can take may vary, its origin also, and its consequences as well, depending on the original spatial context.

Sprawl being a key spatial planning issue - which notably questions, at local scale, the aim of polycentrism promoted by the ESDP - and an important issue for sustainable development as well, it has strong connections with aspects such as mobility, public facilities and services, energy and its impacts on climate, landscapes (tending to make spatial structures alike, hence threatening identity and diversity of territories). Cross-sectoral issue, it requires a cross-sectoral approach.

## **2.2 Expected results**

How do the broadly defined contents for the work in subgroups apply to the theme as it is delineated here?

- Main challenges: added value compared to scientific literature is to have the view of the actors in charge in the field. expose the own experience of MS with sprawl, in order to make apparent possible national / regional differences and to identify common components; qualify the way in which the MS see sprawl with regard to their territorial objectives; see if some common challenges emerge for EU
- How do the MS deal with these challenges (strategies, instruments,...): What are the problematic aspects and how are they dealt with? Do some common trends emerge? Are there objectives regarding sprawl that apply to all Member States (facing those aspects that are in all cases considered as negative)?
- Best practices: probably difficult to generalise, but some strategies / tools may appear more successful / promising in given contexts. What can be done to assist Member States toward more efficiency in countering the negatively viewed effects of sprawl; explore the way towards a concerted approach between MS and Commission, which can reach further than regional policy

The subgroup work is definitely not a scientific study nor an assessment of the behaviour of Member States. However, the exercise could reveal some aspects that would be interesting to analyse more in depth in the framework of the ESPON programme for example.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 General approach

Due to the wide scope of the theme and the specific context, the approach must be contained within workable limits. It may not consume too many resources and has to make the most out of the framework provided by the TCUM workgroup. The work is carried out mainly through comments and proposals (by email) on draft texts circulated within the subgroup, and includes presentations and discussions during the TCUM workgroup meetings.

As the template for action 2.1 of AP1 (devoted to the TCUM subgroups) states, the methodology should be similar for the 4 working groups and *"based on existing reference documents and previous research results, and on questionnaires focusing on policies conducted and instruments applied"*.

Given the expected results, the questionnaire aimed at Member States (via the delegations to the TCUM workgroup) lies at the core of the approach.

In January 2008, the Belgian delegation - de facto leader- disseminates within the subgroup a working paper presenting the broad lines of contents envisaged for the questionnaire.

On 28 February 2008, a draft of the questionnaire is submitted to the subgroup for comments and proposals. It is based on a review of policy documents (see section 4) and of a selection of analysis reports and publications (notably the EEA report), which is disseminated at the same time. The constructive feedback from 6 members and the EEA contributed to improve the draft.

The final version of the questionnaire is sent to the 27 TCUM workgroup delegations at the end of April 2008. 15 filled in questionnaires come back very gradually, of which 13 from the subgroup members (map 2). Taking into account the fact that answering the questionnaire is far from straightforward, the answer rate may be considered as good. The commitment of the subgroup members is even excellent, and they have to be thanked for that.

The Belgian delegate presents a first overview of the answers during the TCUM workgroup meeting of 23 October 2008. At the TCUM workgroup meeting of 17 December 2008 it is agreed that the thematic subgroups would present their final report during the first TCUM meeting of 2009, using a same structure. A first draft thematic report is then submitted to the subgroup members and other answerers.

The draft report is presented in its broad lines during the TCUM workgroup meeting of 31 March 2009.

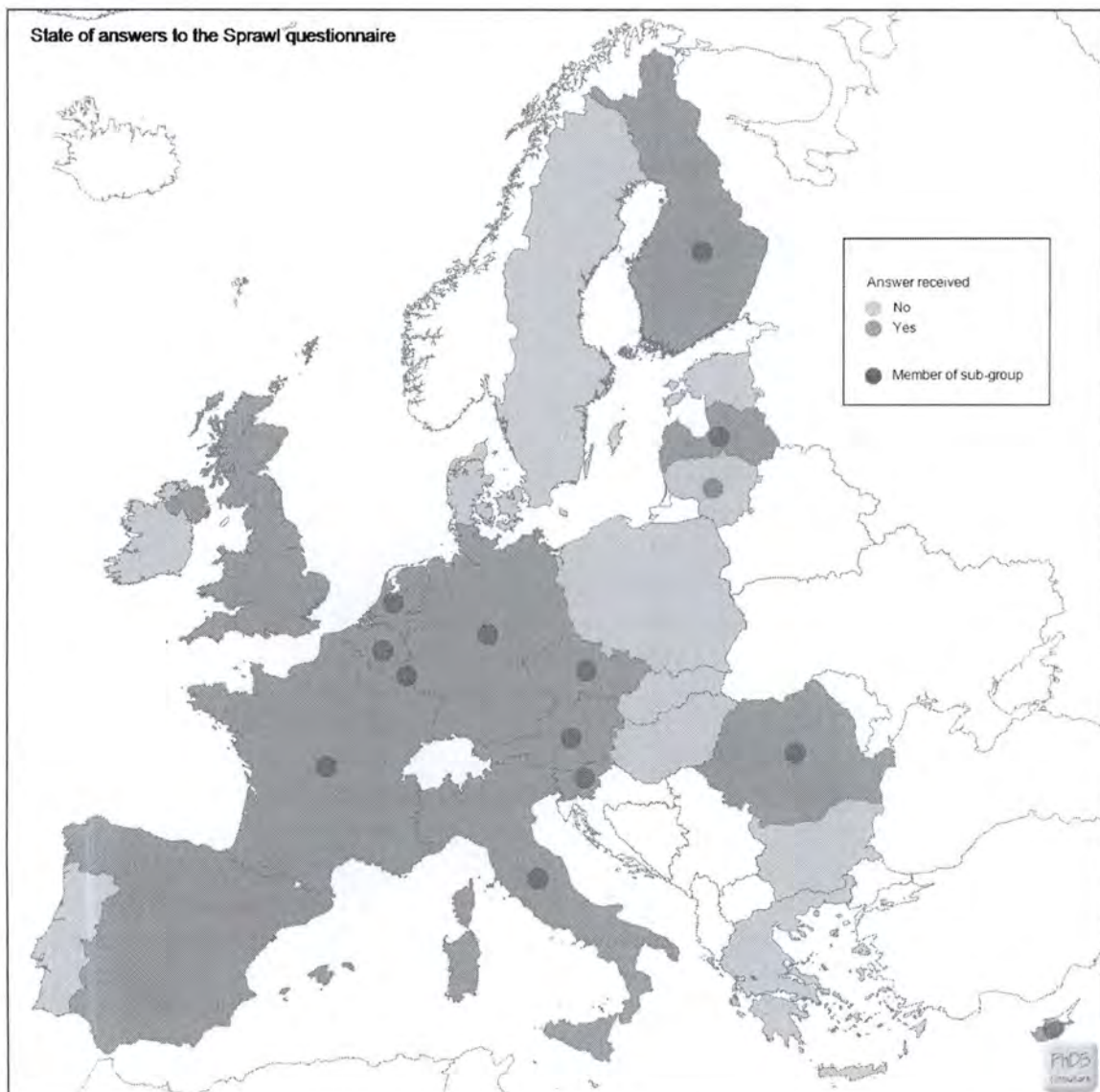


The process has obviously taken more time than expected, notably due to its very nature. A draft technical report is submitted on 6 July 2009 to the subgroup members and two other Member States that did answer the questionnaire (ES, UK). The comments and suggestions received from Estonia, Finland, Romania, Spain and the EEA at different stages of the process have been taken into account as far as possible.

The conclusions are presented to the TCUM workgroup on 24 September 2009.

The present final report (July 2010) integrates the latest remarks received (ES) and some punctual updates.

### Map 2: Answers received





## 3.2 Questionnaire

### Principles

The purpose of the questionnaire is to have the Member States present policy instruments that are or have been implemented in their national / regional / local context in order to deal with the negatively-viewed aspects of the effects of urban and development sprawl.

Considering the wide diversity of contexts in the 27 Member States, not only may the "sprawl" phenomenon itself take various forms, but its causes may also differ, as well as the negative effects which are to be fought against. Several distinct patterns may even be found in a same Member State. A similar diversity may be expected among instruments. The aim of the questionnaire is to explore the target of each instrument, the possibilities it offers as well as its limitations and adverse effects, and to see whether common opportunities or difficulties may be identified.

In order to get an accurate picture of the instruments, it is important to identify what is targeted:

- direct effects (manifestations of sprawl where it takes place);
- secondary / indirect effects (consequences on other domains and/ or elsewhere);
- causes, underlying mechanisms that generate sprawl.

It can indeed be observed that causes, direct and indirect effects do not necessarily affect the same (policy) sectors, the same decision levels, the same territorial contexts, the same type of stakeholders. The questionnaire intends to emphasise these differences, in order to identify possible or needed co-operations between sectors, levels, territories and/or stakeholders. In particular, exploring multi-level governance approaches and cross-border issues should bring a specific added value.

The questionnaire focuses primarily on instruments and policies which are or have been explicitly dedicated to deal with the adverse effects of sprawl. Policies and instruments which have an unintentional / indirect action on sprawl may be mentioned as elements of context or as facets to be taken into account.

Given the wide variety of situations in the Member States and the exploratory nature of the approach, it has been judged better to leave the questions open, while specifying different aspects that should be covered by the answers.

Quantified data are not requested, but it would be interesting to have an idea of which data are available in the Member States.

## Structure

The questionnaire consists of five parts:

- identification of respondents
- setting the background: features and particularities of sprawl in the MS;
- highlighting its negatively-viewed effects in the MS;
- highlighting the underlying mechanisms on which one could / would want to act in the MS;
- presentation of existing / previously used tools in the MS (features, results, obstacles,...).

### 1) Identification of respondents

Each Member State chooses the most appropriate way to answer the questionnaire. This depends of course on the institutional context, but also on the way the sprawl phenomenon is perceived. They are free to send the answers from the different services consulted or a synthesis of their answers, as long as the method is clearly stated. The way the Member States decide to answer to the questionnaire is a relevant indication by itself. .

The Member States disseminate the questionnaire according to their own preferences regarding the range of actors they wish to include in a horizontal and/or vertical consultation. This is interesting to identify which actors are involved and how (sectors / levels / entities).

Coordinates of the person that may be contacted for additional information if necessary, and mention of other services that have been consulted if any (level - national / regional / local - and policy sector) should clearly appear.

### 2) Features of sprawl in the Member State

The section focuses on which type of development is viewed as sprawl (qualitative assessment rather than detailed figures). Additional comments on the method used to fill in the questionnaire or on other points are welcome. Availability of statistical data may for example be usefully mentioned.

- **Function(s)** (examples: main residence, secondary residence, economic activities, leisure / tourism facilities, other)
- **(Macro) development pattern (s)** (examples: oil stain, "leapfrog", scattering, linear development)
- **(Micro) morphological features** (examples: type and size of buildings, configuration, density, space devoted to green spaces)
- **Dynamics** (examples: starting period, duration, pace, extent)
- **General context** (examples: economic growth, demography, dynamics of cities, cultural attitude (model) regarding cities / countryside, accessibility, land price / real estate market)



- **Affected areas** (examples: coastal areas, agricultural areas, forest areas, tourism areas, proximity to or distance from cities, communication axes)
- **Concerned stakeholders** (examples: type of households, type of social groups, type of activities)

### 3) Adverse effects of sprawl in the Member State

How do Member States consider sprawl with regard to their general and territorial objectives?

This depends of course highly on the national / regional context (land availability, wealth, type of economic development, environmental sensitiveness, cultural attitude,...) and on policy choices. It is possible that sprawl / some type of sprawl may be tolerated in some areas and not in other ones.

Another underlying question is whether Member States consider that sprawl can / should be stopped or slowed down or rather better managed and oriented.

- Affected **policy sector(s)** (examples: environment (e.g. climate), agriculture, transport, housing, cultural heritage (e.g. landscape));
- **Territorial (governance) level** at which adverse effects are felt, if applicable (examples: urban municipalities deprived of financial means, regional authorities having to provide extra infrastructure and services);
- Affected **type of area(s)** (examples: the whole territory, urban areas, periphery of cities, countryside, coastal areas, cross-border areas);
- **Stakeholders exposed** to / experiencing the adverse effects (examples: farmers, youth of rural areas in search of housing, inhabitants and authorities of derelict urban areas);
- Possible **specific conditions** that make sprawl produce adverse effects (examples: shortage of infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas).

### 4) Underlying mechanisms which require intervention

This section explores mechanism(s) / driving forces considered as generating / underpinning / influencing sprawl

It is essential to distinguish push factors as well as pull factors: there are reasons why people and activities are attracted by a "sprawling" type of development, and there are also reasons which push / keep them outside of denser settlements. Here is a clear link with urban policy. Among the factors that seem relevant to explore are: life quality in cities / in the countryside,

gradients of land and property prices, transport issues, public services (basic needs must be met for all people, which raises questions about localisation, even more so in a context of liberalisation), lifestyle issues (leisure time, life cycle, decentralisation of work and tele-working, social models, wealth allowing space consumption e.g. second residences), governance issues (competition between local authorities to attract residents and activities and mechanisms that feed it).

Among them, some factors are more linked to the "hard" context (e.g. built environment, transport infrastructure) and other ones to "soft" parameters (governance, cultural attitude). This distinction may help to reflect on possible actions, notably in terms of time scope.

This section may also help to detect whether some factors actually go against sprawl (e.g. energy prices) and what can be expected as effects in the future. A particular question (particularly relevant in the present context) is how the challenges of sprawl may evolve and be faced in an economic slowdown context (as the process is generally correlated with economic growth).

The question has been raised to consider sprawl either as essentially a national / regional phenomenon or as a phenomenon with a European dimension. This is notably linked to the question of the impact (in diverse ways) of Community policies on sprawl. The questionnaire can contribute to collect the opinion of Member States on this point and to possibly provide concrete examples of such links.

For each considered mechanism / driving force:

- **policy sector(s)** (examples: fiscal policy, economic policy (e.g. support to relocation), land use);
- **territorial governance level** (examples: European regulations, national financing / monitoring of local authorities);
- **area(s) they concern / come from** (examples: high density in cities, pressure from neighbouring area);
- **stakeholders** which are at the root of / involved in the mechanisms (examples: political authorities, citizens, financial organisms, businessmen, professionals of the property market).

## 5) Dedicated instruments

Instruments in use - or used in the past – aiming at limiting sprawl and minimising its adverse effects

Instruments may be envisaged at all territorial levels, including partnerships between different authorities, governance arrangements, cross-sectoral approaches, pricing



arrangements, regulations linked to European / national / regional support, awareness raising, pilot projects,...

It would be particularly interesting to assess the results that MS have experienced with various types of approaches (even negative results can provide interesting information).

For each considered instrument:

- **brief definition** (examples: urbanisation perimeter, urban regeneration schemes, fiscal tools integrating the real cost of sprawl, initiatives in matter of public transport in suburban areas) and **purpose of instrument** (targeted effect / cause) (examples: limit sprawl itself, attenuate differentials in quality of life between city and countryside, making suburban housing financially less attractive, reducing car dependency in sprawling areas)
- **(policy) sector** (examples: land use, infrastructure, cross-sector approaches)
- **territorial level (governance)** and **implementation area** (examples: national regulation applying to the whole country, regional plans applying to specific types of area, local actions, multi-level governance initiatives)
- **targeted stakeholders** (examples: citizens, local authorities, firms, NGOs)
- **time parameters** (when was it implemented, for how long, is it still in use)
- **links with other instruments** (examples: is part of a wider strategy, entails conflicts with existing regulation)
- **results** (effectiveness), encountered **obstacles** (examples: co-ordination difficulties between sectors, between levels, institutional hindrances, lack of financial resources, unpopularity), possible adverse side-effects
- further **comments or suggestions** for new tools

## 4 The issue of sprawl in European policy documents<sup>2</sup>

20 documents, selected for their relevance for the issue itself or its context (mostly policy documents concerning the European level in general), have been reviewed (the numbers between brackets refer to the list in annex).

Most but not all documents that refer to sprawl belong to the domain of spatial and urban planning or regional policy. The place given to the issue of sprawl in the documents is quite variable (reflecting their different focuses).

Save for the green paper of the Commission on urban environment (1), the ESDP (2) and the CEMAT Guiding Principles (3), most documents referring to sprawl are recent, suggesting an increasing concern for the issue at EU level. The documents of the Commission on climate change (14, 18), which do not refer explicitly to sprawl, are exceptions to this rule.

### 4.1 Diagnostic

#### Definition of sprawl

Most analysed policy documents do not give a definition of (urban) sprawl. There are two exceptions, giving implicit definitions:

- the Guiding Principles of the CEMAT (3);
- the Urban Guide (16), referring to the EEA report<sup>3</sup>.

#### **CEMAT Guiding principles (§ 51)**

*[...] controlling the expansion of urban areas (urban sprawl) [...]*

#### **Urban Guide (page 74)**

*Cities are spreading, minimising the time and distances between and in-and-out of the cities. Peri-urban areas are now regarded as one of the major common challenges facing urban Europe. This phenomenon is called urban sprawl.*

In a number of policy documents, the terms "sprawl", "suburbanisation" and "urban expansion" seem to be used rather indifferently. There are also references to "uncontrolled growth" (2).

<sup>2</sup> This chapter is an updated version of the working document circulated on 28 February 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *"In this modified landscape, a powerful force is at work: cities are spreading, minimising the time and distances between and in-and-out of the cities. This expansion is occurring in a scattered way throughout Europe's countryside: its name is urban sprawl. Furthermore, it is now rightly regarded as one of the major common challenges facing urban Europe today."* ("Urban sprawl in Europe: the ignored challenge", EEA report, October 2006, page 5).



## European Spatial Development Perspective

### 2.1.3 Continuing Urban Sprawl

(281) *Because of the growing number of households and average residential space per capita, demand for residential accommodation and building land continues to rise. In many cities, new housing has been provided in existing residential areas or on new sites. In many cases, this was done in a planned and orderly fashion, but sometimes it was relatively uncontrolled. Uncontrolled growth results in increased levels of private transport; increases energy consumption; makes infrastructure and services more costly; and has negative effects on the quality of the countryside and the environment.*

The term "sprawl" has intrinsically a rather negative connotation, which is not the case of the other ones.

Considerations about sprawl are regularly associated (by opposition) with considerations about the "compact city" (2, 13). Another association (by opposition) frequently found is with "derelict land" / "brownfield" (1, 2, 10).

This highlights the fact that the sprawl phenomenon has two components that cannot be dissociated: the cities and towns on the one hand, the areas where it is apparent on the other hand. In other words, it is a showcase for urban-rural interactions.

Most documents do not focus on the type of sprawl, but those who do are rather concerned with residential sprawl, although a few also mention sprawl of economic activities (9, 11). The 4th Cohesion report (11) also refers to the interaction between both types.

Five documents (1,4,12,16,17), two of which focus on urban issues, present urban sprawl as an important challenge, be it for "urban Europe" (16), or more largely for "the sustainability of our common European future"(4). This fits with the heading of the EEA report which presents urban sprawl as an "ignored challenge".

### Origin / causes

Only some documents reflect on the causes of sprawl / suburbanisation, but they identify a number of different causes:

- population growth (2, 16);
- increasing prosperity (2)
- individual housing preferences (16), demand for home ownership (3), growth of space demand per capita (2)
- increasing concentration in urban centres causing congestion effects (11)
- (lack of) attractiveness of existing urban areas (1, 16)

- pursuit of a better quality of life (10)
- means of transportation (16)
- price of land (16)
- (past) pressing need of housing justifying "dormitory towns"(1)
- ideal of "garden city" (1)
- cultural traditions and constraints (16)
- (lack of) application of land use planning policies at both local and regional scales (16)

### **Consequences / effects**

Almost all documents express concerns about the consequences of sprawl:

- increased levels of private transport (12)
- increased energy consumption (2, 19)
- increased needs for infrastructure (1, 11)
- increased cost of infrastructure and services (2)
- difficulty to offer collective transport solutions of a sufficient quality to attract substantial amounts of users (15)
- health care for the elderly can become more difficult to organise (15)
- longer travelling times for the individual (1)
- social isolation (1)
- economic decline of the traditional city centre (11)
- negative effects on the quality of the countryside and the natural environment (2, 11)
- land consumption (17, 19)
- soil degradation (9)
- loss of high quality arable land (2)
- destruction of biotopes and fragmentation of eco-systems (2)
- overexploitation of the ecological and cultural resources (12)
- loss of biodiversity (12)
- threat for cultural landscapes (2), fragmentation of landscapes (17)

However all effects are not necessarily deemed negative.

#### **Fourth report on economic and social cohesion: threats and opportunities**

*Migration trends are increasing the importance of "intermediary" areas and leading to more complex urban-rural linkages than the simple one-way exchange between market towns and their surrounding rural areas. Population growth in urban areas is increasing congestion and land prices, while the demand for quality food, local produce and a rural way of life, on the one hand, and space for housing,*



*public amenities and increased environmental protection, on the other, is giving rise to development opportunities and pressure on land at the same time. [...]*

*The arrival of increasing numbers of people from towns and cities can alter the rural character of areas. While it might push up income and tax receipts and so help to maintain public services and expand the local market, it can lead to widening social disparities and new tensions by increasing house prices to levels that locals cannot afford. In some of the more remote rural areas, especially in the UK, the growing number of non-permanent residents in second homes and the declining number of locals is causing local service providers to close down, so encouraging more locals to leave and initiating a downward spiral.*

*Offices and factories tend to locate along transport routes, in out-of-town business parks and in towns easily accessible by car inducing even more commuting and pressure on accessible rural areas. Public transport has usually not kept pace with the building of new roads, which has led to more use of private cars and a further deterioration in public transport services, hitting low income groups without access to a car and excluding them from new employment opportunities. (pages 58-59)*

## **4.2 Objectives and action means**

### **Objectives with regard to sprawl**

Not all documents propose an attitude toward sprawl, but among those who do, nearly all present sprawl as something which should be avoided as much as possible. The objectives range from prevention (13) / avoiding for the future (2) to countering (3), stemming (2), minimising (2), controlling (2, 3, ), containing (3, 4), slowing down or even reversing the trend (11).

The Urban Guide adopts a more neutral attitude (16).

#### **Urban Guide (page 74)**

*[Sprawl] creates environmental, social and economic impacts for both the cities and countryside of Europe, and new needs to be fulfilled such as transport, basic services, leisure, communication and tourism.*

## Action means

Most documents focus on action means to prevent / control / limit sprawl.

Among the wide variety of means, one can distinguish:

### **1. means to control land use**

- minimisation of expansion within the framework of a careful locational and settlement policy (2)
- pursuing the concept of compact city (2, 13), promoting denser development (1)
- effective management of land-use (11), effective measures and strategies to restrict land use (17), strong control of land supply and of speculative development (13)

### **2. means to increase land availability**

- reuse of derelict industrial sites and redevelopment of brownfield sites in the cities (2, 4)
- approaches such as "land recycling" in the United Kingdom and Germany cities (2)
- increasing supply of building land in towns and cities, activation of gap sites and use of space-saving building methods (3)
- give priority to internal over external urban development, and step up, mainly by means of sustainable land management, the re-use, or use for new purposes, of existing buildings, rather than building on new land (17)

#### **European Spatial Development Perspective**

*[...] On the other hand, there are 2000 km<sup>2</sup> of derelict industrial sites in Europe, which are, however, unevenly distributed. Reclamation costs are estimated at 100 billion ECU. This is a huge potential of areas for housing development which avoid further urban sprawl in the catchment areas of large cities. (§ 269)*

*[...] In some countries in the Union, particularly where land is scarce, innovative steps have been taken in urban planning. These include the "compact city" approach in the Netherlands; approaches such as "land recycling" in the United Kingdom and Germany; or "target group" approaches to satisfy housing demand from specific social groups. (§ 282)*

### **3. means to improve urban quality**

- "target group" approaches to satisfy housing demand from specific social groups (2)
- promoting inner urban development / renewal and functions (3)
- raising the quality of living and housing conditions in urban areas (3, 10, 11), which includes the conservation of existing ecosystems and the creation of new green areas and biotopes (3), improving the planning, design and maintenance of public spaces, helping to create attractive streets, parks and open spaces which are safe and feel safe (10)



- mixing housing, employment, education, supply and recreational use in urban neighbourhoods (13), promoting strategies which emphasize mixed use and denser development in order to reduce travelling distances, making the car an option rather than a necessity (1).

#### ***4. means to improve accessibility***

- developing building land near traffic nodes and railway stations (3)
- effective management of public transport (11)

#### ***5. means to coordinate planning among concerned authorities***

- intensification of co-operation between the city and the surrounding countryside / suburbs (2)
- multi-level policy response (20)
- finding new forms of reconciling interests on a partnership basis (2)
- management of the urban-rural interface and coordination and cooperation between all the relevant stakeholders (16)
- co-ordination of land use policies and Structural and Cohesion Fund investments between urban areas, rural areas, the region and the national level (8)

## **5. Challenges in the Member States**

### **5.1 Nature of the respondents**

This section is based on the answers provided by the Member States to the questionnaire circulated in April 2008 (see point 3.2). The brief synthesis that follows does not pretend to an exhaustive overview: it mainly aims at putting the strategies and tools in perspective.

A majority of answers (10/15) come from administrative services which are explicitly in charge of spatial planning / land-use planning / territorial development, often together with one or more other competences such as environment, housing, energy, public works and/or heritage (table 1). 4 other respondents have regional development / planning among their explicit competences. For IT, the answers were provided by the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport, DG Programming. In the two cases where regional policy is mentioned as an explicit competence (AT and CZ), the administration is also competent for spatial planning.

This suggests that sprawl is viewed and dealt with primarily as a spatial planning issue, which will be indeed be confirmed in some parts of the answers (in particular the review of instruments, see section 6).

As the TCUM framework is mainly oriented toward regional policy, this may mean some sort of discrepancy between the framework of reflection and the "place" where the issue is encountered and dealt with. However, depending on the concrete meaning that the concept will finally take, introduction of the territorial cohesion component could provide for a more operational articulation.

However some MS (CY, LV) mention consultation of stakeholders in other policy fields in order to answer the questionnaire.

Four countries (AT, BE, ES and UK) have provided answers at the regional level, while all the other answers are provided at the national level.



**Table 1: Answers to the questionnaire**

Country	Department	Level
Austria	Office of the Federal Government of Lower Austria - Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Policy	Regional
	Office of the Federal Government of Upper Austria - Directorate for Regional Planning, Economical and Rural Development - Department for Spatial Planning / Regional Planning	
Belgium	General (operational) directorate for Spatial Planning, Housing, Heritage and Energy (DGO4) - Public Service of Wallonia (SPW)	Regional
Czech Republic	Regional policy and Land-use Planning sector –Ministry for Regional Development	National
Cyprus	Department of Town Planning and Housing	National
Finland	Ministry of the Environment (Regional Planning)	National
France	Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning	National
Germany	Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning - Div. I.5 Transport and the Environment	National
Italy	Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport - DG Programming	National
Latvia	Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government <sup>1</sup>	National
Luxemburg	Ministry of the Interior and Spatial planning	National
Netherlands	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment	National
Romania	General Directorate for Territorial Development - Ministry for Development, Public Works and Housing	National
Slovenia	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning - Spatial Planning Directorate	National
Spain	Diputació de Barcelona	Local (Province)
	Gobierno de La Rioja - Spatial Planning Service	Regional
	Comunidad de Madrid - Regional Planning	
	Comunidad Valenciana - Spatial Planning Directorate	
	Ministry of Housing	National
United Kingdom	Regional Planning & Transportation Division - Northern Ireland	Regional

<sup>1</sup> Consulted partners: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry for Children And Family Affairs, Riga City Council, and Valmiera City Council.

## 5.2 The issue of sprawl

Sprawl is acknowledged to some degree in every Member State that has provided an answer to the questionnaire. On the other hand, no country has stated that absence of the issue was the reason for lack of answer. It can thus be reasonably thought that sprawl is present in most if not all EU countries, even though it may affect only parts of the territory<sup>4</sup>.

Despite this, no simple and obvious definition of sprawl emerges from the answers. This confirms what comes out of the reviewed policy and analysis documents.

Features of sprawl vary widely - between and among countries - in a number of ways, notably:

- functions: besides residential sprawl (main residences - including social housing (IT) - and second residences), a large majority of answers also mention economic activities, including retail; other functions include: leisure (e.g. golf courses (ES, SI, BE), hotels (IT), reception facilities (BE)), public facilities (e.g. multimodal hubs and energy plants (IT), roads and linked infrastructure (SI)),... BE and ES note that some leisure functions, while not clearly identifiable as sprawl, may cause similar effects and furthermore act as nuclei for other forms of sprawl;
- forms: most of the time several forms coexist (linear, leapfrog, oil stain, scattered,...) according to local parameters and functions
- affected areas: not only around the cities but also along communication axes, along the coasts, in mountain areas, forest areas,...
- time dimension: in some countries, sprawl has existed for decades (AT, BE, CY, ES, FI, IT, LU), while in others – mainly new Member States - it started around 15 years ago (CZ, LV, RO); dynamics also vary in different ways over time.

### **Italy: sprawl over more than a century**

- *residential sprawl in major cities of the North started with the industrial growth (a relatively late phenomenon for Italy) at the beginning of the XX century, with the immigration of workers coming from poorer areas;*
- *residential sprawl in Rome since its becoming capital (1870), with the immigration of building workers and civil servants;*

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that in 2008 a questionnaire on urban planning, real estate management and housing has been sent by the Ministry of Regional Development and Housing to all territorial administrative units (3181) of Romania. The response rate has been of 80 %. 47 % have declared that there has been urban sprawl in their areas.



- residential and infrastructure sprawl in all major cities between the wars and especially with the economic boom after World War II;
- industrial and residential sprawl along major road connections and valleys, and/or scattered in plains, hilly areas and coasts, from the post-war period until today;
- tourism-related sprawl, especially along the coasts, from the post-war period until today;
- commercial mall developments, street junctions and roundabouts, multi-modal hubs and airports, renewable energy plants, all over Italy, in more recent years

#### **Spain (Barcelona): sprawl less intense than before**

Nowadays, (in the 2000's) the construction in low density keeps on being important but not in the same proportion as it has been during the 80's and 90's. Low residential density is moving further away from the metropolitan and more crowded core, towards the urban-rural fringe, and towns and villages in the metropolitan area are working towards a more compact and complex residential and activities city model.

#### **Latvia: accelerating sprawl**

Suburbanisation processes started already at the beginning of 1990ties, but they were seriously reflected in the balance on transformation of land usages types starting from 2000 and especially along with the increase of issued mortgages loans starting from year 2003. However, since emergence of the financial and economic crisis at the end of 2008, suburbanization process is significantly weakening.

#### **Romania: recent but rapidly evolving sprawl**

Urban sprawl in Romania has become a problem rather recently, but the velocity with which the phenomenon has evolved is worrying.

The velocity with which the phenomenon evolves in the new Member States may require a more rapid and radical policy response [than in the 'old' Member States].

#### **Cyprus: evolving sprawl**

All these factors work together to facilitate the sprawl of residential development, which started in the mid-1960s, accelerated in the 1980s, and, although it has since slowed down in urban areas, especially after 2000, it still carries on in rural and urban areas. In these areas, sprawl related to second homes in particular has appeared in the late 1990s and still goes on at a steady pace.

Combination of variations in time and space generates a huge diversity, through processes such as weakening of some type of sprawl while others are in full development, change in functions, forms, types, affected areas,... It is also possible in some cases to observe sprawl in parallel with move from rural areas to cities.



**Finland: parallel moves...**

*Urban sprawl has continued for decades. Average population density in Finnish cities is only 600 inh/km<sup>2</sup>. Urbanisation is still going on and about 2-5 % of the population will move from rural areas to towns.*

**Latvia: ... in a context of demographic decline**

*Processes of urbanization of compact city and suburbanization of hinterland operate in parallel and both contribute to the reshaping of Riga and republican cities and occurs along with the process of biggest current demographic decline in Latvia combined with economic emigration to Western countries.*

Diversity is observed at different levels, influenced by parameters that are more specific of the context at that level:

- national / regional context: political / administrative organisation, economic circumstances, cultural background, fiscal and planning systems,...
- local context: factors of attractiveness, land and property structures, land prices, accessibility,...

In addition, context parameters (e.g. economic growth) may influence sprawl in different ways according to the country.

**Finland: economic growth fuels sprawl**

*Urban sprawl (building scattered single family houses) is stronger when economic situation is good and the growth of cities rapid and prices of flats in the city and suburbs high.*

**Germany: sprawl in shrinking regions**

*Sprawl occurs more in shrinking than in solid and dynamic regions.*

This explains that specific challenges linked to sprawl vary according to the Member States, even though there are some recurring concerns, for example the link with road traffic. Reflecting this diversity of situations, sprawl is acknowledged as a serious issue in some Member States, while in other ones it raises problems only in particular cases (Northern Ireland for UK, business parks for NL).

### 5.3 Challenges

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, sprawl generates different types of challenges in the Member States. They may be classified in two categories:

- negative consequences which must be dealt with;
- causes which may be difficult to identify / to get rid of.

#### Negative effects

Negative effects are identified in numerous and various domains / sectors (all 3 pillars of sustainable development concerned):

- land/space: loss of agricultural land, open spaces, leisure areas
- nature: loss / fragmentation of ecosystems, decrease of biodiversity
- water: loss of resources, consequences of soil sealing, increased risks of floods
- landscapes (rural and urban): loss of quality/identity, cluttering of open landscapes
- energy: increased consumption (heating, transport)
- pollution: difficulty to deal with waste and waste water, effects of increased road traffic
- public infrastructure, facilities, services (notably public transport): difficulty and costs of development and maintenance
- transport: car dependency, inefficiency of public transport, lengthened daily travels, traffic jams
- social cohesion: spatial segregation, inadequacy for ageing population, bad accessibility to facilities, retail and services for some segments of population
- cultural resources: loss of identity
- urban centres: loss of economic and social vitality and of mixity, generation of brownfields
- economy: losses due to traffic congestion, negative impact on the structure of retail

These effects are not all direct: some proceed from complex causal chains, e.g. pollution generated by increased road traffic, itself generated by changes in patterns of residence with respect to job location. This has for consequences that, depending on the considered aspect, some phenomena may appear as effects or as causes.

Also it can be observed that the effects of sprawl are not necessarily negative everywhere and to everyone: e.g. local authorities, citizens, property developers, ... may take benefit from it in given circumstances. Often, the stakeholders which experience positive effects differ in many regards from those who are negatively affected, creating potential conflicts and making political decision-making difficult. For example:



- urban dwellers are negatively affected by a transfer of demographic and financial resources and of services and facilities which benefit to other areas and to other authorities
- local authorities may benefit from increased tax incomes, while regional authorities experience difficulties to provide infrastructure and services in scattered settlements.

**Spain (Madrid): different interests of stakeholders...**

*In many cases, the planning does not take into account all the different infrastructures and facilities needed in new developments areas, so later, the municipalities and the regional government have to solve problem that it has been left unsolved by the private investor. There is a short scope in the vision of the future of our cities, due to the local governments looking only in the short term, since the local government is elected every 4 years.*

**Finland: ... or false perception of interest**

*Land owners (enterprises and private land owners) around cities are quite well aware of the price of land and opportunities for development projects. They can wait for the rise of land prices for years or decades. Mainly small land owners sell single building sites. Single family houses in these sites can later prove to be harmful for the owners, authorities, planners and developers. The structure of Finnish cities and towns is already disperse.*

*Municipalities allow building of single family houses because they expect to get good tax payers to the municipality. This is often a false expectation because families with children usually cause more costs to municipalities than income. Municipalities have to arrange public services to new families. Economy of some municipalities around big cities suffers badly due to wrong land policy.*

Another problem is that negative effects of sprawl are often difficult or even impossible to revert (e.g. soil sealing, loss of biodiversity, change of cultural landscapes,...), which makes it necessary to act (often preventively) on the origin(s) rather than on the effects themselves. This makes identification of the origin and mechanisms of sprawl a challenge in itself.

**Causes**

Sprawl is the result of diverse and complex mechanisms, often of a sectoral character, sometimes with a Community dimension.

If sprawl has existed under different forms for decades, it is probably because it provides an immediate answer to complex issues. Also it largely relies on deeply rooted and positively perceived mechanisms: demographic and economic growth, increased opportunity of choice for households, aspirations for space, calm, security, and nature, broader access to individual mobility, research of quality of the workplace for firms,...



In some cases, some features of national / regional culture (e.g. image of nature and countryside, type of settlement pattern, value given to private property, weight of real estate-linked incomes in the structure of incomes, presence of / attitude toward unplanned / unauthorised developments,...) strengthen these mechanisms.

As EEA underlines, political / planning culture also plays a role.

**Slovenia: cultural factors**

*There is a traditional preference in Slovenia for living in private detached family houses in small settlements and rural areas. Life-style patterns are significant determinant of the demand of new detached family houses with large garden at the edge of a forest for residential sprawl in suburban and rural areas well accessible from urban (employment) centres.*

*More than one-third of households in Slovenia also own a 'weekend' or 'second' home in suburban and rural areas. Most these houses were constructed during 1960-1990 by urban inhabitants, or inherited as rural houses. Conversion of weekend homes in second homes or permanent residence for young families or their retired parents occurred since 1996, due to constrained housing market for rent or purchase in the inner-city areas, and higher demand for single family houses in accessible suburban and rural areas.*

**Cyprus: "overprotected" property rights**

*Another disadvantage of the Plan and the Planning System in Cyprus is the inability to contain development on land within the boundaries of existing/designated growth areas. This is primarily due to social pressures and the vested rights of the Cyprus Constitution, which overprotects property rights. The Constitution provides for fair compensation when the value of a parcel is decreased substantially as a result of a planning measure or decision. This has altered the structure of the designated growth areas (fragmented and dispersed development) and resulted in a scattered pattern of development in the urban fringe and the adjacent countryside (rural belt).*

Sprawl may also be an indirect consequence of fundamental society changes (e.g. scale of economic structures, "just in time" production,...), possibly backed up by policy choices, e.g. priority given to logistic activities which require large land lots.

**Italy: complex and evolving causes of sprawl**

*The source of the first serious urban sprawl has been the economic boom of the newly-found Italian Republic after World War II, which generated demand for new factories, infrastructure of all kinds, market housing and social housing. Besides, private transport has always been privileged by development policies, with the consequent growth of the road network, especially in the North, the*



abandonment of many regional and local railroad stretches, and the consequent vicious circle of massive use of private means of transportation, congestion of existing roads, planning of new roads, new congestion etc. Favouring private transport has meant also failing to plan developments according to accessibility to public transport, resulting in growing origin/destination distances for commuters, and low efficiency of public transport (e.g. empty, slow buses mean low environmental and economic performances).

Reasons for the most recent sprawl include the increase in the number of families (and corresponding decrease in average family size); tertiarisation of the city centres, resulting in further development of the suburbs for residential purposes; depopulation of the city centres, due to cultural attitudes related to the search for better quality of life in rural areas, and to rising housing prices; globalisation of commerce, resulting in a proliferation of huge commercial malls in the countryside; increase in air and freight transport, resulting in new transport infrastructure.

Also, a recent law abolished the obligation for the municipalities to deposit the funds coming from the development fees paid by developers into a specific account used only to fund the public infrastructures serving the developments. This means that municipalities have now found an easy way to fund any of their expenses by planning more and more developments.

Last but not least, the Italian cultural attitude sees private property as an important element for social stability: real estate revenues are a fundamental component of the upper-class' wealth, and the right to build is seen as inherent to the property right (this gave rise to unresolved debates in jurisprudence).

All this makes some causes very difficult to counter through policy measures. Other mechanisms identified as playing a role in sprawl may be more appropriate for policy interventions:

- inappropriate (ineffective or excessive) planning
- shortcomings of urban centres: quality of life, excessive price / lack of dwellings, building more difficult and costlier than in greenfield locations
- decline of the role of small and medium-sized cities
- fiscal systems favouring scattering (e.g. immunisation of travel from home to workplace) and competition between municipalities (taxes and financing system)
- governance: no structures for approaches at the level of several municipalities
- development of infrastructures fostering scattering and car use
- lack of awareness of long-term consequences
- NIMBY attitudes taking argument from environmental issues (especially in the case of economic activities that are pushed away from population nodes)



#### **Finland: effect of fiscal system and competition between municipalities**

*Some fiscal policies can affect urban sprawl. As an example workers can get deduction of taxes due to a long way to work. The aim of the regulation has been to ensure the availability of labour force for the employers in cities. On the other hand it affects urban sprawl.*

*City regions in Finland don't have own administration or economy. Municipalities compete with each other. They try to get good tax payers, work places and economic activities as much as they can. At the same time they try to avoid big costs of infrastructure and services. This does not lead to rational regional structure .*

#### **Spain (Madrid): effect of infrastructure development, and role of economic stakeholders**

*European regulation could have a perversion effect in the case of financing infrastructures; many of them have been built with European subsidies, these infrastructure promote the use of the private cars; and at the same time, people are looking for houses further of the centre.*

*[...] the building sector has produced so much money lately, that stakeholders are, in the majority of the cases, in favour to enlarge the cities. The new land development produced more surplus value than rehabilitation of the ancient cities.*

*The banks have conceded a lot of mortgages to new developments. In the last years, firms and families could obtain this money in a very easy way, at a very low interest rate; this has produced that many people buy larger houses with garden and swimming pool, and this type of houses are always in the periphery, looking for the American dream to live in a natural space.*

In addition, some causes may be specific to former socialist countries (economic restructuring, loosening of regulations on land use, shift from collective / public-rented housing to private housing, restitution of property) (LV, RO, SI).

It can be noted however that there are some trends and mechanisms that may counteract sprawl, e.g. growing concerns for public costs, costs of and time spent in daily travels, ageing, growing role of new actors, broad consensus about the necessity to act on the climate issue,... This opens other possibilities to act on the phenomenon.

## **5.4 Synthesis**

### **The many faces of sprawl**

The picture given by the variety of answers could be qualified as a kaleidoscope of issues, contexts, and mechanisms. This emphasises that sprawl is not only a challenge for policy,

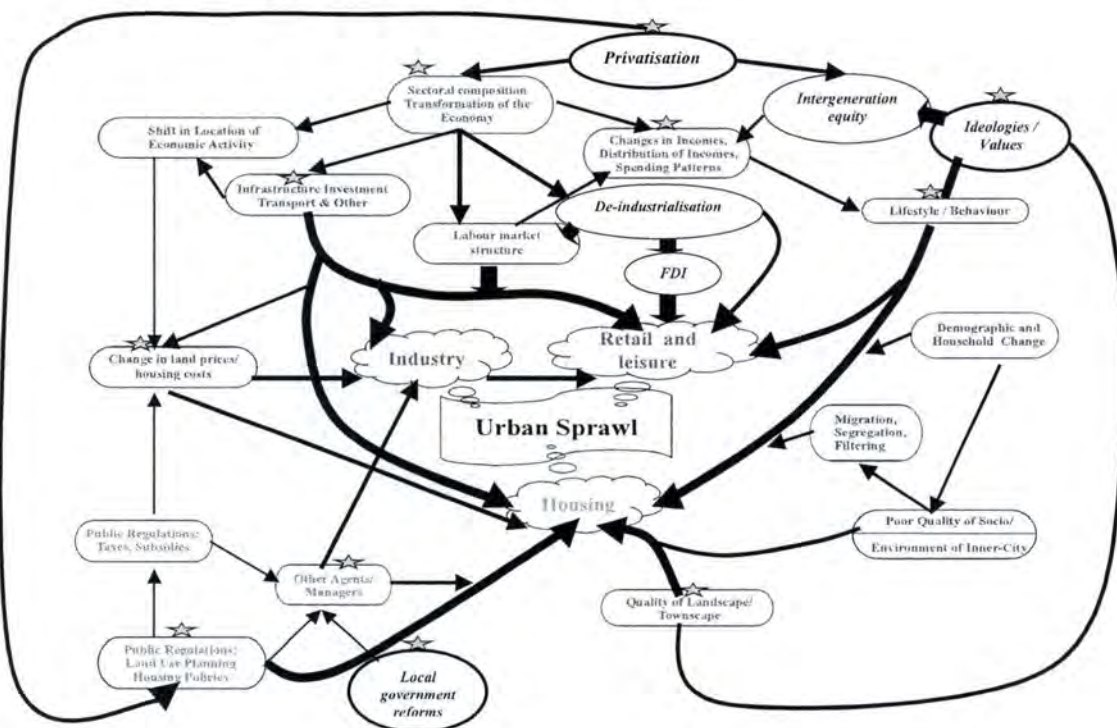


but also a challenge for a good understanding of the issue, especially when apprehended at a European level.

A first difficulty is that sprawl has no unanimously accepted definition. There are no scientific criteria that allow to identify sprawl, neither are there common policy grounds regarding sprawl. While sprawl is often presented as something to fight, urban expansion – which may or not take the form of sprawl - may have positive aspects in some regards or at some scales, as underlined by RO. It is thus a particularly complex and fuzzy concept, paradoxically so, as it deals with very concrete field realities.

If one tries to break it up in smaller components, it appears that sprawl is made of interweaved causal chains between different aspects, which themselves are dependent on elements of context. This is illustrated in an interesting way by the following outline included in the Slovenian contribution:

CAUSES OF URBAN SPRAWL IN LJUBLJANA URBAN REGION (1991-2001)



- Economic causes
- Public regulation causes
- Environmental causes
- Demographic causes
- Specific causes in Slovenia
- ☆ The most important causes of sprawl in Slovenia

Source: Nataša Pichler-Milanović, 2003; URBS PANDENS (2005)

### **Dealing with causal chains**

When we consider it as a system of interlinked phenomena, different aspects of sprawl may be located differently along causal chains. Some are more at the beginning of the chain, others more at the end. For example pollution or congestion due to increased road traffic is more at the end of the chain than land consumption.

In addition the chains are not univocal - the same effects may be caused by several different causes and a same cause may generate different effects according to the context. For example, water pollution may be due to bad functioning of waste water treatment due to scattering of settlements or to pollution due to increased road traffic (including hazards such as crashes).

There may also be loops (even vicious circles), such as the loss of resources and quality of life in urban centres which may encourage additional inhabitants to leave them, or the weakening of agriculture that fosters sprawl, which in turn causes problems for the agricultural activity. Another example of loop effects is the sprawl of various functions (residence, economic activities including jobs, facilities and equipments) which foster one another. Other loops may have effects that are difficult to predict, such as feedback effects on land prices which may make some sprawled areas unaffordable and push actual as well as potential new dwellers toward other areas.

As underlined by RO, due to the complex causal links that characterize the phenomenon, it is sometimes hard to disentangle its many causes from its effects and vice versa.

In some cases, rising land prices may have for effect to increase density in the sprawled areas and consequently to make sprawl locally less "acute" over time. In such cases sprawl could be seen as a transitory stage in the (sub)urbanisation process, especially when the public transport system and local equipments and services are adapted afterwards. When such a process is mature, formerly sprawling areas may finally appear at least partly as urban neighbourhoods, although of generally low density.

### **The many stakeholders of sprawl**

This complexity and evolving character has notably for consequence that multiple and diverse stakeholders are concerned, each with their own interests, sensitivities and priorities.

In the domain of spatial planning for example, changes in land use focus most of the attention and often sprawl is approached mostly through this angle of view. But changes in land use may be seen as consequences of demographic and economic changes, which themselves generate other consequences (e.g. increased traffic, effects on social structures,

demands on public budgets,...). Each of these "sub-issues" raises specific questions and involves specific actors, but all are interlinked.

### **Residential sprawl is only one facet of the issue**

In the scientific and policy literature concerning the issue of sprawl, the residential function generally takes the largest place. This does not really reflect what comes out of the answers.

Several Member States indeed provide analyses that are differentiated according to the function. Globally, there are many cases where sprawl of economic activities of all kinds (industry, retail, logistic activities,...) is often as much or even more a cause of concern than residential sprawl. This contrasts with a traditional vision of a sprawl mainly fuelled by the residential function.

In addition the different functions may either attract one another (e.g. residence and services) or push each other away (e.g. residence and industry or logistical activities).

This certainly deserves further investigation, as the causes, mechanisms and potential solutions may differ according to the function.



## **6. Strategies and tools in the Member States**

The answers mention a number of policies / instruments implemented in the Member States, and also provide many proposals of tools that may be envisaged or are wished for. This demonstrates interest and concern for the issue, and also shows that there is still much to experiment in its approach.

Collected material is very diversified, maybe even heteroclite when viewed as a whole. The type of information and level of detail vary, but also more fundamentally, what is presented as a tool differs sometimes according to the respondent (from concepts, frameworks and policy objectives to precise measures). Also, a same type of instrument may be presented as a tool to deal with sprawl in a country and not in another one, where it might also be implemented. In some cases, the mentioned instruments do not directly address sprawl. RO for example specifies that although most of their instruments do not directly address the issue, they have an important indirect impact on urban sprawl.

At the current stage, this material is however sufficient to allow a first inventory and to identify exploratory paths for the future.

### **6.1 Implemented tools**

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish in the answers what is actually implemented from what is rather just existing / available, intended or even merely wished as a tool. Nevertheless, as implemented tools should provide more useful information about the results, obstacles, constraints, etc., it was felt important to try to identify them as far as possible and to deal with them more in depth.

Implemented tools are presented in table 2 which allows to see which type of tool is implemented in which country(ies). A gross classification (not a typology) is used in order to structure the presentation. The main purpose is to make a link between the tools and other parameters already discussed such as causes and underlying mechanisms and consequences of sprawl. The tools may indeed apply directly to the visible and direct manifestations of sprawl (land-use), or "upstream" to its causes, or "downstream" to its negative consequences.

Inside these broad categories, a second subdivision is made between different type of tools, Due to the variations in level of detail, classification of tools into these subdivisions might be uneasy (in some cases, implementation details may help to classify in one or another

subdivision). For the purpose of the present work - i.e. showing what should be examined more in depth - this seems however a minor issue.

Illustrative examples show the diversity of approaches and tools. Their selection is by no means an appraisal of the intrinsic value of the presented tool: for our purpose, a tool that has not given the expected results may provide as much interesting information as a tool that "works" well. Furthermore, some implemented tools may actually be hardly operational (e.g. laws without execution measures). It must be noted that none of the answerers explicitly presents a tool as fully efficient.

**Table 2: Implemented tools (according to MS answers)**

	Land use					Origins and mechanisms										
	Legislative framework	Spatial planning regulatory tools	Other regulatory tools	Guiding spatial planning tools	Land management tools	Appraisal / understanding / monitoring	Awareness raising	Attractiveness of urban areas	Settlements structure	Urban - rural partnerships	Reuse of brownfields	Housing strategies	Strategies for economic activities	Transport strategies	Governance	Improvement of quality in sprawled areas
AT		X	X	X												
BE	X	X		X		X		X			X	X		X		
CY								X			X			X		
CZ		X			X			X	X		X					
DE	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X				
ES	X	X	X	X				X	X							X
FI				X	X	X									X	
FR	X				X		X	X				X			X	
IT	X		X	X				X	X							
LU	X		X	X				X	X			X	X	X		
LV			X	X	X		X	X								
NL	X	X	X	X	X				X		X		X			
RO	X	X		X				X								
SI	X	X		X				X	X	X		X		X		
UK	X	X		X	X										X	



## 1) Tools targeting land use

Many of the implemented tools target sprawl in its most immediate and visible manifestation, i.e. land consumption for developments.

This is particularly obvious when considering the tools with a formal character: legislative frameworks, regulations, plans,... most of which belong to the domain of spatial planning. It indeed reflects the classic view that sprawl is a typical spatial planning issue, but does not take into account the fact that the origin and underlying mechanisms of sprawl are far beyond the scope of spatial planning.

### a) *Legislative framework*

Legislative framework is frequently mentioned as a tool: a majority of respondents refer to laws endorsed or in preparation in their country. This category may cover very diverse realities:

- sometimes a single law is mentioned, or a set of complementary laws (NL, UK), or laws with different focuses (RO), or a Code of spatial and urban planning which gathers provisions from laws and/or regulations concerning spatial planning and related matters (BE, FR);
- the law(s) may include specific measures, or it may constitute a framework, whose implementation through other instruments (regulations, plans,...) is the main way in which it addresses sprawl; in some cases it may address a specific issue (coast of the Black Sea in RO);
- the law(s) may or not explicitly address land consumption;
- the law(s) may be of national or of regional level (spatial planning, more precisely land use, is indeed one of the competencies most often devolved to regional or even local authorities);
- a number of law(s) were adopted in the recent years (ES, LU, NL, SI, DE) but others are older (BE, UK); updating processes are under way in several countries where the suburbanisation process is ancient (NL, UK);
- while the law(s) generally belong(s) to the domain of spatial planning, there are examples of legislative frameworks in other domains which are mentioned as having an effect on land use (e.g. law on nature protection in LU, Act to improve preventive flood protection in DE, law on protection and development of mountain areas in RO).



**France: Code de l'Urbanisme)**

The "code de l'urbanisme" [code of town and country planning] considers sparing management of land as one of the aims of territorial and urban planning documents. Several provisions coming from diverse laws (law on solidarity and urban renewal, law on coastal areas, law on mountain areas) ambition to limit urbanization outside of already urbanised areas or without SCOT [schéma de cohérence territoriale = territorial coherence outline].

**The Netherlands: Spatial planning Act**

*The new Spatial Planning Act: fewer rules, less central control where possible, and an implementation-oriented approach. These are the guiding principles behind the new Spatial Planning Act which go's into effect op 1 July 2008. In structural visions, the municipalities set out the main points of their spatial planning policy and indicate how they expect to implement the policy.*

**United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**

*The relevant legislative context is provided by 2 main Orders. They are : The Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 which empowers DRD to formulate "a strategy for the long-term development of Northern Ireland". The other is Part II of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (the Planning Order.) It empowers DOE to "formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development". Part III of the Planning Order empowers DOE to "make a development plan for an area" including area plans, local plans and subject plans. Part VII of the Planning Order empowers the DSD to prepare development schemes. This is a process of land acquisition and disposal for the better planning and regeneration of selected areas of towns and cities.*

**Romania: recent modification of the law on territorial planning and urbanism**

*Governmental Ordinance 27/2008 approved by law no. 242/2009 amending Law no. 350/ 2001 on territorial planning and urbanism.*

*Some of the specific objectives of G.O. 27/2008 are to control the expansion of urban localities and to limit the effects of this expansion on surrounding areas. Several tools are envisaged to be developed:*

- *enhancing the role of the General Urban Plan*
- *consolidating the position of local authorities to manage territorial development*
- *encouraging the cooperation between various administrative units.*

Laws often state principles which express the vision of the public authorities on land-use and land consumption, or more largely on balanced and sustainable development. In this regard,



they may provide a foundation for the attitude that will be adopted toward sprawl. But as some respondents underline, they may be inoperative if they are not translated into concrete specifications, regulations and measures.

**Belgium (Walloon Region): Code wallon de l'aménagement du territoire, de l'urbanisme, du patrimoine et de l'énergie (CWATUPE)**

This Code gathers legislative provisions and regulations regarding spatial planning, town planning, heritage protection and energy management in a same document.

Different provisions of the Code play a role in the control of urban and development sprawl.

In particular the first article recommends sparing management of land and of underground resources. Unfortunately the too general wording of this article makes difficult to give it an operational character.

Other articles impose constraints on new developments. New areas can be allotted for urbanisation if they are next to a previously developed area, if they do not develop in ribbons along a road and if another area of equivalent size previously foreseen for development is reclassified in non-building land. Land reserves of municipalities may only be developed if a spatial planning document is established which fixes land use in function of the estimated needs. Building permits may be refused if the lot is exposed to natural risks, But in general the rules are not sufficiently oriented toward control of development sprawl.

**Italy: Regional town planning laws**

*At the legislative level, "traces" of consideration of the question of urban sprawl in Italy are contained in the general principles of many regional laws regulating territorial planning, which state that new developments on "free" land are allowed only in those cases where there are no other possibilities of re-using existing settlements and infrastructures. Nevertheless, these general principles are in no case transposed into concrete tools, useful to monitor or control the provisions of the single plans; in some cases the laws generally entrust local planning authorities to interpret these principles, without setting more precise limits and rules.*

**b) Spatial planning regulatory tools**

Linked or not to the legislative framework, there are regulatory tools which focus more specifically on the way land is used: regulatory land-use plans (BE, SI), building perimeters (AT, ES, UK) or their "complements": green perimeters or belts (AT, DE, NL), quotas for urban building (NL, UK), special procedures for building in sensitive areas (RO), building restrictions in areas exposed to flooding and sliding risks (RO), constraints on retail location (AT, CZ),.



**Belgium (Walloon Region): plan de secteur**

The plan de secteur (sector plan), despite its name, is a detailed land use plan. The whole territory of the Walloon Region is covered by such plans, adopted by the regional authorities in answer to the growing awareness, in the 60's, of the need to limit land consumption and dispersal of activities and functions.

Provisions of sector plans must be respected by all building and allotments permits. This has limited (but not sufficiently) dispersal of activities and functions. A negative side effect of the tool is that it can foster speculation.

Sector plans remain in force as long as they are not revised. The problem is that the process of revision is heavy and maybe contentious. Increasing possibilities of derogations tend to gradually weaken the tool.

**Romania: rules on construction in sensitive areas**

*Governmental Decision no. 525/1996 regarding the general rules of urban planning defines the types of land and forbids construction in forested areas, and in those areas with important natural resources. The governmental decision makes it compulsory for those who wish to build in protected natural areas to obtain the approval of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Regional Development and Housing. For further constructions in protected built areas, the approval of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Regional Development and Housing are needed. Furthermore, construction is prohibited in areas with high natural or technological risks.*

**Austria: regulation of the boundaries for settlements / residential and commercial areas**

*The Regulation of the boundaries for settlements/ residential or commercial areas is a spatial planning instrument trying to limit the sprawl itself. It sets the boundaries on the one hand of the settlements, but also defines the spatial extensions of agricultural areas, green corridors etc on the other hand. It's a regional plan covering the most urbanized areas in Lower Austria. It is still in use, the targeted stakeholders are the local authorities.*

**Regulation on location of shopping centres**

*This instrument tries to limit the sprawl of shopping centres; shopping centres are only allowed in defined zones within the centres of municipalities with coherent settlement structures and a minimum of 1800 inhabitants. It is still in use, the targeted stakeholders are the local authorities and the operator of the shopping centres. The construction of shopping centres is limited to the areas mentioned above; now no more shopping centres were build outside the centres (in the open countryside).*



These tools impose rules on where development may or may not take place, or may take place in specific conditions. These may be considered as the most immediately operational tools dealing with land use. They might deliver observable effects with regard to sprawl, as underlined by AT about the *Regional spatial planning programme of Linz and surrounding*, or BE with the "*plans de secteur*". On the other hand, such tools are not easy to implement, as they may face considerable opposition from stakeholders.

**Austria (Upper Austria): Regional spatial planning programme of Linz and surrounding**

The instrument of defining regional green areas prohibits further constructions in most of the areas of the closer city region of Linz. Those regional green areas are free areas of highest importance in a regional perspective.

Regulation of the federal state government of Upper Austria (1999; with an obligatory review in a 10-years-period), the instruments prohibits building land in regional green areas. It covers the closer city region of Linz (city plus surrounding municipalities) and targets local authorities.

As a result, to a large extent, the constructing development is happening apart from regional green areas.

Another problem is the update / revision of such tools, which may prove difficult to operate. Some flexibility has to be ensured through dispensation mechanisms, but the antecedents they generate tend to weaken the regulation over time.

**c) Other regulatory tools**

In some cases, the mentioned regulations do not have as main objective to limit or prevent sprawl, but rather to protect resources. This is the case of environmental restrictions and tools for protecting natural spaces (AT, DE, ES, LU), tools for protecting landscapes (AT, ES, IT, NL).

These approaches may be viewed differently from those specifically aiming at sprawl, not only because they are generally implemented by other authorities than those competent for spatial planning, but also because it may be easier for the stakeholders to perceive the positive side of what is aimed at, which may help to gather more support for the regulation (nevertheless the example hereunder shows that this is not always the case). The problem may be that, without cross-sectoral cooperation, the effects of such tools on sprawl may be unintended and uncontrollable, as they do not necessarily fit into a consistent strategy.



**Italy: Regional landscape plan of Sardinia**

*Being a very restricting and "radical" plan (especially if compared to other Italian examples), and directly concerning the strong interests of those investing in tourist developments on some of the most attractive coasts of the Mediterranean, it led to oppositions even within the political majority of the regional administration. This has recently led the President of the Region to resign.*

*Among its provisions, the Plan puts serious restrictions on building activities on the coasts, within a land strip of varying width (initially 2 km, then adjusted to narrower but also wider widths, according to the geo-morphological features of the different areas).*

*The main assumption of the restrictive policy set on the coasts is that the Sardinian landscape is an unparalleled resource being permanently spoiled each time a development is planned upon it: the "rise in value" claimed by developers will in most cases result in a permanent loss in value for the future generations.*

**d) Guiding spatial planning tools**

Some tools also targeting land-use have a less regulative character. The aim is more to give a framework and orientations if not to the citizens, at least to local authorities which are faced with demands, or to sectoral authorities which are in the position to initiate developments. In this category may be placed for example spatial / territorial strategies (AT, BE, ES, IT, LU, SI<sup>5</sup>, UK), development schemes (UK), support for local development plans (IT, LV), guidelines and orientations for land use (ES, FI, NL, UK), initiatives for metropolitan areas (RO).

The fact that this category of "soft" tools is the most represented could be interpreted as an implicit recognition that regulatory tools are difficult to adopt and/or to implement, or that their implementation is not effective enough.

**Luxembourg: Programme directeur de l'Aménagement du territoire**

The Programme directeur de l'Aménagement du territoire (guiding programme for spatial planning) is a strategy adopted by the Parliament which targets unsustainable land use at the national level. It gives guidelines for other instruments and policies and addresses national and local authorities. While it has led to an increase of awareness among concerned actors, it faces the obstacle of lack of willingness to transversal cooperation between sector policies.

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<sup>5</sup> SI also mentions the National Development Strategy which integrates sectoral strategies and fosters "balanced regional development" and "polycentric urban development".



### **Slovenia: Spatial Development Strategy and Spatial Order**

*In 2004 the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia was adopted which sets guidelines for the long-term spatial development of Slovenia, while the Spatial Order sets general standards, instruments and planning regulations. The strategy presents principal national planning guidelines for sustainable spatial development and conceptualization of the Slovene's territory, at the (inter)national and local levels. The Spatial Order of Slovenia sets the rules for spatial planning and management with the aim to provide the basis for a uniform method of urban and landscape planning in connection with the allocation of land use for activities, and in connection with the architectural and landscape design with respect to characteristic features of individual areas.*

### **Finland: national land-use guidelines**

*The national land use guidelines (since 2001) have been grouped according to the subject as follows: 1) a well-functioning regional structure, 2) a more coherent urban structure and a quality of the living environment, 3) the cultural and natural heritage, recreation uses and natural resources, 4) well-functioning communication networks and energy supply, 5) special issues of the Helsinki region and 6) areal entities of outstanding interest as natural and cultural sites.*

*The government will make a new updating decision of the national land use guidelines this year. The guidelines concerning the development of the urban structure are proposed to be more strictly formulated than before.*

*The national land use guidelines can guide planning towards more dense urban structures.*

### **Latvia: Guidance for local planning**

*In collaboration with the experts of the Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) programme project "Guidelines for planning system adjustment to regional and local level" of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) **guidelines** for drafting, monitoring and assessment of development documents on regional and local level have been elaborated. Also, **methodological guidance** has been provided to local governments for drafting development programmes in line with the principles of an integrated approach, inter alia:*

- spatial, thematic, and time dimension;*
- concentration, complementarily and non-overlapping of support;*
- maximum involvement of parties concerned.*

*Worth mentioning is the fact, that the guidelines were elaborated in close cooperation with town planners and representatives of regions. The networking with planners is being actively continued.*

*Guidelines on how to balance interests of different municipalities are included in the spatial plans of planning regions. Development Council of each planning region can evaluate de facto the compliance with plans of municipalities of the region with principles of sustainable polycentric development during their approval.*



**The Netherlands: 40% of new homes within existing urban areas**

*Areas that offer employment must also provide quality living environments. In consultation with the regional authorities, central government has identified combination areas (bundelingsgebieden) which should at least retain their share of new urban development. Central government expects that the municipalities, metropolitan/urban regions (WGR-plusregio's) and provinces will take this up in their spatial and land use plans. The aim is certainly not to create completely urbanised regions, but the emphasis will be on building new homes, workplaces and amenities, while retaining space for green areas and water. With a view to preserving nature and the landscape, the Government is pinning its hopes on urban compaction: the aim is to build 40% of new homes on brownfield land within existing urban areas. Nevertheless, the Government has taken a realistic view of the possibilities by setting a short-term target of 25%. Besides urban green spaces, green areas around the cities are important for maintaining quality of life. The (former) buffer zones have been incorporated into this large-scale green structure; the emphasis in these areas will be on recreational and leisure uses. Providing sufficient opportunities for open air recreation is one of the Government's basic quality standards.*

See also the example of Green Belts (UK) in section 6.3.

Implementation of these tools generally involves several types of stakeholders - at different territorial levels -, some of them giving general principles, others applying them to a specific context. This may give the opportunity to focus the approach more adequately on the specific needs and context. On the other hand, there may be difficulties or even conflicts linked to the different perspectives and interests of the concerned stakeholders.

Even though guiding tools are not in themselves regulatory tools, they often imply regulatory tools at the lower level, where the principles are translated. This category of tools may thus partly overlap category b) (spatial planning regulatory tools).

**e) Land management tools**

A first way to manage land-use is to monitor its evolution (DE, FI).

**Germany: sustainability barometer of urban land use**

*The "sustainability barometer" is an information and assessment instrument to support political decisions and policy evaluations for controlling land consumption by new settlements and transportation infrastructures. It consists of three closely linked components - a system of targets, a relating system of indicators, and a quantitative index generation procedure allowing for an overall decision-oriented assessment of land-use and its changes (compare figure). By different methods land-use indicators can be aggregated to a sustainability index. The appraisal approach can be applied on different administrative levels above the municipal level (counties, states, country) as well*



as for non-administrative spatial units (such as grids or landscape units such as catchment areas for water bodies or soil areas).

[[http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cln\\_016/nn\\_147036/BBSR/EN/Publications/Forschungen/2007/130abstract.html](http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cln_016/nn_147036/BBSR/EN/Publications/Forschungen/2007/130abstract.html) - link provided in German answer]

#### **Finland: monitoring**

*The monitoring System of Spatial Structure is set up by the Finnish environmental administration situated in the Finnish Environmental institute. The institute makes a couple of monitoring reports analysing the development of spatial structure every year.*

A substantial step further is for public authorities to define quantitative targets (ceilings) for land consumption (DE).

#### **Germany: quantitative target (ceiling) of land consumption**

*In the 2002 Strategy for Sustainability, we set our goal: by 2020, utilization by new housing and transport-related areas is to be reduced to a maximum of 30 ha per day. This is a tremendously ambitious goal. In 2000, the level was 159 ha per day. The latest data for 2002 show a reduction to 105 ha per day, although this is essentially down for cyclical economic factors. Nevertheless, the first signs of progress in land management are also apparent.*

[extract from Progress Report 2004 "Our perspectives for Germany - Our Strategy for Sustainable Development" included in German answer]

In FR and UK, public authorities may acquire land in order to have control over the way it is developed or to prevent it from being used for urban functions (e.g. coastal areas). In NL, a specific Act is dedicated to the question of allocation of the costs for land development. CZ mentions legislation aiming at restricting speculation on land lots, without going into details.

#### **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland): land management**

*As regards development schemes, also carried out under the latter Order [Planning Order], the Department for Social Development is empowered to acquire land and arrange for its disposal and development, after public consultation, in a comprehensive manner in accordance with a plan for the area adopted. Schemes are identified and taken into programme through a variety of sources, such as, identification by the Department of areas requiring treatment, requests from politicians, developers and planners.*



### **The Netherlands: Land development Act**

*Land Development Act: the development of the majority of new building locations is these days not carried out by the municipalities alone but in conjunction with developers and housing corporations. In practice it was evident that the existing legislative tools were inadequate. Problems arose concerning the allocation of costs and the demands municipalities could place in this regard. In 2001 in the Land Policy White Paper the Land Development Act was announced as a new regulation. The Land Development Act is a supplement to the Spatial Planning Act and is a simplified, practice-based regulation for the allocation of the costs of land development.*

New tools are currently experimented in order to develop a global integrated approach for resource-saving land use. This is the case in DE with the concept of Circular Land Use Management (see detailed presentation in section 7).

## **2) Tools targeting origins and mechanisms of sprawl**

As the mechanisms underlying sprawl are quite diverse (see section 5), so are the tools that target them.

### **a) Appraisal / understanding**

There are tools that ambition to better apprehend / understand sprawl (dedicated research, notably mentioned by DE and FI)

### **Finland: research**

*A research of urban sprawl and the economy of municipalities has also been carried out recently. A research of urban sprawl and green house gas emission will start this year.*

### **Germany: REFINA research programme**

*As part of the FONA programme ("Research for Sustainability"), the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched the programme "Research for the Reduction of Land Consumption and for Sustainable Land Management", REFINA for short. REFINA is implemented by the BMBF in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (BMVBS) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). Since 2006, the projects funded have developed innovative concepts for reducing the rate of land consumption and for encouraging sustainable land management. REFINA is intended to enable approaches for environmental protection and nature conservation, economic growth, supply of socially*



*equitable housing, quality urban development and mobility to be better harmonized. REFINA thus contributes towards the quality and quantity goals for land use laid down in the Federal Government's National Sustainability Strategy.*

[Extract from «Paths to Sustainable Land Management – Topics and Projects in the REFINA Research Programme» included in the German answer]

Another type of tool whose aim is close is strategic environmental assessment of territorial planning documents (BE), or of development plans (DE).

**Belgium (Walloon Region): strategic environmental assessment of territorial planning documents**

In application of the European SEA directive, the Walloon Region has implemented a system for ex ante assessment of the potential environmental consequences of spatial planning documents (plans , outlines). This concerns the Region as well as the municipalities. This contributes to better decision-making, but the process is not easy to implement: difficulty to define the level of assessment, to assess socio-economic impacts, to ensure a monitoring of the assessment.

**Germany: Changes of Settlement Structures in German Agglomeration Areas**

*The objective of this study is to analyse and assess the changes of settlement structures in German agglomeration areas over a period of 10-20 (1980-1999) years with a focus on the 1990's. The processes of decentralization of urban functions (esp. housing and employment) and their spatial dispersion were of special concern. The analysis improves the understanding of the spatial reorganisation of cities' interrelation with their suburbs. Parallel to the analysis of trends, the social, economic and ecological impacts of dispersion were addressed. Based on the empirical findings of this study recommendations for urban land use and regional policy were formulated.*

[[http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cIn\\_016/nn\\_147036/BBSR/EN/Publications/Forschungen/1999-2006/114abstract.html](http://www.bbsr.bund.de/cIn_016/nn_147036/BBSR/EN/Publications/Forschungen/1999-2006/114abstract.html) - link provided in German answer]

**b) Awareness raising**

In the same scope of tools, some aim at making a larger public aware of functioning and consequences of sprawl (DE, FR, LV).

**France: awareness raising**

Pedagogic approaches target elected authorities, decision makers and general public, aiming in particular to rehabilitate the notion of density (agendas 21, action of the CAUE (Councils for Architecture, town planning and environment))



#### **Initiatives of local stakeholders**

Local stakeholders (inter-municipal structures, departments, but also regional natural parks and their federation) are mobilised on the sprawl issue, compile experiences, develop networks, finance research and counselling funds and work out didactic tools.

#### **c) Increasing / restoring attractiveness of urban areas**

Many approaches aiming at preventing sprawl "from the source" focus on increasing / restoring attractiveness of urban areas. This may be done by improving availability, affordability and/or quality of urban housing (CZ, FR, IT - see also sub-section g), by improving quality of the neighbourhoods (BE, CY, ES), by restoring historical buildings (RO), by designing transport strategies (CZ, LU, SI - see also sub-section i) or more generally by applying integrated approaches for sustainable urban development (BE, CY, LV, SI).

#### **Latvia: Guidelines for integrated urban development**

*Latvia has elaborated **guidelines for elaboration of integrated urban development programmes**. A basis and an inspiration for these guidelines is Leipzig Charter.*

#### **Belgium (Walloon Region): urban renovation and revitalisation**

The Walloon Region has two specific tools for improving quality of the urban areas. Both focus on improvement of the physical environment: housing, facilities and public space (including green areas). The main differences between them is that while urban renovation is carried out by public authorities, urban revitalisation relies on public-private partnership. This is materialised by a covenant between a municipality and one or more private investors, stating that for each Euro invested by the municipality in the improvement of the public domain of a neighbourhood, the private investor(s) will invest two Euros in the concerned urban neighbourhood, one of which must be invested in housing.

#### **Romania: "Beautiful Romania"**

*The Beautiful Romania project aims to generate urban employment while initiating a process of revitalization of currently neglected and degraded historical buildings in the centres of several Romanian cities. [...] By improving employment opportunities and overall living conditions in cities it creates incentives for people to remain inside urban centres and avoid unnecessary urban expansion.*



#### **Italy: Master Plan of the Municipality of Milan**

*The Plan (currently in its elaboration phase) intends to attract back from the hinterland to the city centre 700,000 commuters, by raising the building ratios (therefore densifying) within this area.*

*The intentions of the planners about raising the density of the city centre has raised some criticism, as building more in the city centre doesn't solve those problems of affordability of houses that have pushed away the inhabitants.*

#### **Cyprus: Nicosia Local Plan**

*Nicosia has a state-mandated plan, updated every five years and designed to account for growth and development over a 10-year period. The recently revised Local Plan (2003), which is a public policy document for future development for the southern quarter of the Urban Area (Map 3), recognizes this trend and adopts a series of policies to restrain it. In case of suppression of the buffer zone, the Local Plan will be placed immediately under revision and its limits will be extended so that they include the entire Nicosia Urban Area.*

*The Nicosia Local Plan (Plan) states that the southern quarter's future must be driven by redevelopment more than new development. Redevelopment is defined as the process that is used in developed areas to rehabilitate, infill, use underutilized areas more efficiently, achieve balanced mixture of compatible uses, and/or replace developed areas by changing the types of uses, intensities or densities of the land uses, to achieve an economically higher and better use of the land. In parallel, the Plan envisions a multi-modal, efficient and operative citywide transportation system. In the present phase, one of the main components of the system is obsolete. The component is the public transport system.*

#### **d) Improving the settlements structure**

In some cases, policy measures for improvement of urban areas are coupled with or fit into a more general concept of urban structure, aiming at polycentric development (IT, SI) and promotion of small and middle size cities (CZ). This may be combined with the aim of encouraging more compact forms of development and densification of existing urban structures, which is supposed to contribute to prevent sprawl (ES, LU, NL) (the successive approaches experimented in NL are detailed in section 7).

#### **Italy: Territorial plan of the Province of Bologna**

*The Plan envisages a polycentric settlement model for the Province:*

- *giving value and accessibility to the central urban areas, re-using their former industrial areas and upgrading their residential areas; avoiding further developments except for what provided for by already existing municipal plans,*



- carefully selecting areas for new developments in the urban fringe areas, according to criteria of general sustainability and accessibility to public transport,
- assigning specialised functions to the first belt towns, in order not to put pressure on the central area, and deciding for new settlements only where there are metropolitan railway stations,
- protecting green and agricultural “wedges”,
- envisaging, for the outer towns of the hills and mountains, activities connected to fruition of environmental resources.

#### **Slovenia: Urban Development Policy**

*Spatial Development Strategy of Republic of Slovenia (2004) is promoting further polycentric development concept through 51 »centres of (inter)national, regional and inter-municipal importance« (with 64 towns and other urban settlements) and »functional areas« of 15 »centres of national importance« (i.e. regional centres). The new polycentric urban development concept (as before) highlights the improved (equal) accessibility to public goods – administration, jobs, services and knowledge, located in these »urban centres« (towns and other urban settlements) that are also important transport nodes in Slovenia and in Central Europe. At the local (municipal) level, special attention is devoted to developing the areas with an extremely dispersed population, and the areas with structural problems. A major effort is being made to provide suitable public services, and to create new jobs. Special incentives are intended for urban settlements in areas with developmental problems and in the border areas, where direct economic cooperation with neighbouring countries can be fostered. The preservation and development of towns and other urban settlements is a high priority in polycentric spatial development. Special attention is being focused on the revitalisation and renovation of the existing town centres, as well as the revitalisation of urban neighbourhoods, industrial zones, abandoned military areas and other degraded urban areas. In this respect, particular attention is paid to observing the guidelines for the protection of the environment and natural and cultural heritage, reducing the use of passenger cars, and the establishment or revival of user-friendly public transportation.*

#### **Spain (Valencia): Reglamento de Ordenación y Gestión Territorial y Urbanística (Decreto 67/2006)**

*It characterises functionally and morphologically the compact city. Aiming at that model, it establishes that urban plans shall include a regime of compatibility of urban uses; aim in general at medium and high densities; establish land use planning that strictly limit development of surrounding soil; prioritise activities on already urban soil, better using residential zones and renovating and improving the existing urban fabric.*



### **e) Urban-rural partnership**

Some approaches rely on urban-rural partnership (DE, SI). The *Guidelines for elaboration of integrated urban development programmes* in LV also aim at increasing cooperation among urban centres and surrounding areas. This fits indeed with the observation that sprawl is a typical issue of urban-rural relationships.

#### **Slovenia: Urban-Rural Partnerships**

*The connection of towns with the countryside is one of the basic principles of sustainable spatial development in Slovenia, since its implementation affects the balanced regional development. The Spatial Development Act (2002, 2007) introduces measures that gradually shift spatial development from the spontaneous concentration of population around major urban centres (suburban areas) to the revival of town centres, and the preservation of remote rural areas. It is essential that urban and other settlements are connected in an efficient network, where individual centres have special functions that satisfy the needs of a larger urban area as well as the needs of the rural hinterland. The development of small towns and other (urban) settlements that offer appropriate activities is of particular relevance in border areas. Even in the mountain and hilly areas and other less developed areas in the countryside, various measures are being implemented to preserve the population decline. This is essential considering the fact that the Slovenian countryside covers three quarters of the whole territory. The restructuring of the countryside is also one of the principal goal of the National Development Programme.*

### **f) Reuse of urban brownfields**

Rehabilitation and new use of brownfields is a regularly mentioned tool (BE, CY, CZ, DE, NL, RO), which is seen as having various positive effects with regard to sprawl: freeing space for new developments, and improving urban quality and hence attractiveness.

#### **Belgium (Walloon Region): rehabilitation and new use of "sites à réaménager" (brownfield)**

This instrument targets areas which were previously used for economic activities (industry or others) and which have been abandoned afterwards (generally following economic crises). It aims at giving them new uses (possibly other economic activities, but also other functions such as housing or public spaces, including green areas). This allows to improve quality of life in neighbourhoods by removing "stains" in the urban fabric, by providing new opportunities for economic development, by recreating dynamics and mixity of functions and population and improving quality of urban spaces.

The tool consists in the provision of subsidies to (mainly) public operators, but also to private operators. An operation can extend on several years (5 to 7 years on average).

Cities and other municipalities may use this instrument in combination with those dedicated to urban renovation / rehabilitation.



**Romania: rehabilitation of industrial sites**

*One of the activities that can be funded in the framework of the Regional Operational Programme is the rehabilitation of underused or unused industrial sites, a measure similar to the Dutch measure of dealing with the expansion of business parks by remodelling and revitalizing existing ones.*

**g) Housing strategies**

Due to the link between sprawl and the issue of affordable housing, some countries mention development of housing strategies among implemented tools, either at national / regional level (DE, LU, SI), or at local level (BE). FR mentions support to housing loans in a few inter-municipal areas, with an aim of fostering densification and avoiding sprawl.

**Romania: housing programmes**

*[...] programmes aimed at rehabilitating existing blocks of flats (either by increasing their thermic isolation and decreasing energy consumption or by decreasing their seismic risk) increase the attractiveness of existing housing and decrease the need for further construction and urban sprawl.*

**h) Strategies for economic activities**

While sprawl of economic activities is frequently mentioned in the answers, examples of specific tools for this issue are difficult to find. Apart the previously mentioned regulations on retail location, the few examples are provided by LU (sectoral plan for economic activity zones) and NL (SER-ladder).

**The Netherlands: dealing with the expansion of business parks**

*SER-ladder is a line of reasoning about how to deal with the expansion of business parks. There are 3 steps:*

- remodel old 'brown fields' (old business parks)*
- search for locations for new 'green fields' (new business parks) within urban areas*
- if 1 and 2 are not possible than it is possible to exploit new areas*

*We try to anchor this SER-ladder line of reasoning in our policy*

### ***i) Transport strategies***

The link between sprawl and development of transport infrastructures has been underlined in the previous section. Some respondents mention development of transport strategies (BE, CY, LU, SI) among implemented tools.

#### **Slovenia: polycentric concept of transport networks**

*The polycentric concept of transport networks also supports the polycentric urban development, economic competitiveness and balanced regional development of Slovenia. The road and railway networks, airports, seaports, and other transport systems interconnect urban and rural areas and other strategically or significant areas into a balanced spatial structure. Slovenia is linked to Europe through Trans-European transport corridors (TEN) V and X. For this purpose, the Slovenian **motorway cross** network is being built along the east-west (corridor V) and north-south (corridor X) directions. A systematically planned motorway network also ensures regionally balanced development, since the network is also intended for regional transport and to improve links among **urban centres** - medium-sized cities and small towns and other urban settlements. Numerous activities are currently underway to modernise the **railway network**.*

### ***j) Governance***

Governance has been mentioned as a significant issue when dealing with sprawl. However, few implemented tools are mentioned in this regard, and without much detail: joint plans for several municipalities (FI), reform of local administration aiming to create bigger municipalities in city regions (FI), review of public administration (UK).

FR mentions local emergence of contractual tools aiming at limiting sprawl and its impacts on agriculture, environment and landscape and at fostering densification: charts on landscape, on agriculture and town and country planning, axes covenants between authority in charge of organising transport and municipalities concerned by the axes.

### ***k) Fiscal tools***

Only DE provides an example of implemented tools in the domain, but also underlines obstacles encountered in implementing fiscal tools, notably conflicts with the aim of increasing tax income.



**Germany: mileage allowance**

*Within the scope of pressing forward with fiscal reform, the mileage allowance has been reduced to a flat rate of € 0.30/km. Thus this measure has also made an initial step towards reducing incentive for city-countryside migration.*

**Conflicts between levels about fiscal reforms**

*[...] on 11 September 2003, Finance Ministers of the Länder unanimously rejected a reform of tax law geared toward land consumption goals. Furthermore, this concerns an area in which reform proposals have a predominant effect on the Länder and local authorities.*

[extracts from Progress Report 2004 "Our perspectives for Germany - Our Strategy for Sustainable Development" included in German answer]

**3) Tools targeting quality of (sprawling) developments**

There are a number of possible attitudes with regard to sprawl, depending notably on its stage of progress. Most examined tools try to prevent or limit sprawl. There is only one mention of a tool (on the verge of implementation) which explicitly focuses on making existing sprawl more acceptable and more sustainable (ES).

**Spain (Barcelona): law on improvement of basic infrastructures and services in residential sprawl areas**

*[In the 80's,] urban planning made by local authorities established urban perimeters and the basic standards, on services and infrastructure, to incorporate the previous areas of residential sprawl designed and partially built up before. With Urban planning there was no more areas built up without basic services and infrastructure. The new residential planned areas, even if they had low densities, were connected to towns and villages.*

*Sprawl residential areas have had to attain the basic standards to be included as urban spaces. A few parts of the residential sprawl areas are still out of regulations and out of the urban areas services - because those areas didn't reach the basic infrastructure standards.*

*This instrument has been essential, but limited because the phenomenon is supra local and urban planning lacks coordination. There was a lack of regional or supra local planning. [...]*

*Very recently, a new draft law was presented to help to improve basic infrastructures and services in residential sprawl areas. Llei de millora d'urbanitzacions amb dèficits urbanístics<sup>6</sup>*

*This is a draft law made by regional government. It will allow local administration to have the resources (economic, technical and management) needed to develop projects to improve sprawl areas that lack basic services and infrastructure. The costs of the improvements will be paid (with grants) by the tenants and owners.*

<sup>6</sup> [http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/Sala%20de%20Premsa/Documents/Arxius/ptop\\_premsa.notaPremsa.78.ParlDef.LleiUrb1236162576329.pdf](http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/Sala%20de%20Premsa/Documents/Arxius/ptop_premsa.notaPremsa.78.ParlDef.LleiUrb1236162576329.pdf)

## 6.2 Draft / considered / wished for tools

As previously underlined, the answers mention many envisaged / wished for tools and action paths (table 3), suggesting that the actual range is generally not considered as (fully) satisfying for dealing with the issue. There are also draft tools, i.e. tools which are still in the stage of elaboration or discussion. The common point of all these tools is that their functioning and efficiency with regard to sprawl cannot be assessed.

**Table 3: Draft / considered / wished for tools (according to MS answers)**

	Land use					Origins and mechanisms					
	Legislative framework	Spatial planning regulatory tools	Other land use tools	Guiding spatial planning tools	Land management tools	Appraisal / understanding / awareness	Attractiveness / structure of urban areas	Sectoral tools	Governance	Fiscal / financial tools	Improvement of quality in sprawled areas
AT											
BE											
CY											
CZ						X					
DE				X				X	X		
ES				X		X					X
FI		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
FR		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
IT			X	X		X	X	X			
LU			X								
LV				X	X	X		X	X		X
NL				X							
RO					X				X	X	
SI		X		X		X	X	X	X		
UK											



While draft tools may be quite detailed in the answers, wished for / envisaged tools rather often take the form of general policy options or guidelines. There are some cases where tools envisaged in one country are - more or less - already implemented in another country, opening clear possibilities for exchange of experience.

## **1) Tools targeting land use**

### **a) Regulatory spatial planning tools**

FR considers to make mandatory an impact study which could lead to forbid urbanization of new significant areas without adequate public transport programme or without estimation of the loss of natural and agricultural space.

RO mentions a draft initiative of green belt. SI mentions the need to better control development and to implement appropriate sanctions.

#### **Romania: Green-yellow belt around Bucharest**

*For the city of Bucharest, an initiative ("Green-yellow belt") has existed which aimed at stopping uncontrolled urban expansion and structuring the city's periphery in a functional way, as well as preserving the agricultural land and forested areas around Bucharest. This green belt, together with the highway belt, would have contributed to imposing a set of rules that ensure an appropriate use of peripheral areas. Unfortunately, this initiative has not yet materialized.*

### **b) Other tools targeting land-use**

Several proposed tools focus on links between spatial planning and other domains:

- coordination with transport planning (IT)
- objective of mastering energy use assigned to spatial planning (FR)
- link of spatial objectives with strategies for climate (FI)

Some proposals targeting land use (and more largely spatial planning) are addressed to the European level.

- public monitoring of land consumption (FR)
- explicit objective of limiting land consumption at least in some threatened areas (FR)
- explicitly mentioning reduction of land consumption among the criteria of environmental assessment ("projects" and "plans programmes" directives) (FR)
- white paper (FR)
- guidelines for the MS (LU)
- recommendations of EU ministers (FI)

### **c) Guiding spatial planning tools**

While many draft / wished for / envisaged tools belong to the domain of spatial planning (as do implemented tools) and ambition to act on the spatial structure, they often are less "general" than the existing tools, except maybe the "Territorial Development Long Term Strategy for Romania" (RO) under elaboration. The large majority of them belong to the type of guidelines or incentives orientating land use and location policy toward urban structures that should minimize sprawl:

- strategies promoting densification (FI), promotion of more compact cities (IT)
- models of polycentric development (ES, IT)
- encouraging compact inner-city areas and other (urban) settlements with ex-ante provision of infrastructure and services (SI)
- orienting the planning of developments according to criteria of general sustainability (IT, LV), of accessibility to public transport and specialisation of functions (IT)
- densification areas (FR)
- integration in town and country planning documents of quantitative objectives regarding reduction of land consumption (FR)
- protection of open landscape (NL)
- urbanization agreements (NL)

#### **Spain (Valencia): territorial strategy**

*The new territorial strategy of the Valencia region (its first document was presented last June) would be the planning instrument to define this territorial model, inspiring the subsequent urban and territorial planning. It contains the guidelines for defining a rational and sustainable soil use. The criteria to be used include, among others, the moderation of soil consumption; the continuity with existing urban areas, avoiding dispersion; the coexistence of different activities to reduce transport needs; basing growth in objective parameters of demography, economic potential, accessibility and equipment of services and public transport.*

#### **The Netherlands: 'Beautiful Netherlands' project**

*One of the policy priorities of the Minister of VROM is the 'Beautiful Netherlands' project. Combating further landscape cluttering is one of the ways in which that priority is given substance. This involves dealing with existing landscape cluttering and preventing future landscape cluttering. Landscape cluttering occurs in various ways and people have different notions as to what it is, but one thing is certain: the landscape is too precious to allow it to be cluttered*



#### **d) Land management**

Tools are also envisaged in the area of land management, for example for fighting speculation (LV). DE refers to the concept of Circular Land Use Management, which has been explored through research projects and could be implemented.

### **2) Tools targeting origins and mechanisms of sprawl**

A large number of considered / wished for tools (in the form of instruments or in the form of policy guidelines) deal with the causes and underlying mechanisms of sprawl.

#### **a) Appraisal / understanding and awareness raising**

As for implemented tools, we notably find tools which ambition to develop knowledge about sprawl and its effects:

- awareness raising among local authorities and inhabitants about the long-term consequences of sprawl (SI)
- joint research projects (FR, FI)
- support for didactic tools at the European level (FR)
- fostering experience sharing at the European level (FR)

#### **b) Urban development and urban structure**

Similarly, many considered / wished for tools are addressing urban structure and urban development:

- strengthening the role of small and middle-sized cities (CZ)
- model of decentralised concentration (LV)
- revitalising centres (ES, FR, IT, SI)
- plan for eco-neighbourhoods initiated by local authorities (FR)
- improving employment opportunities in other urban settlements to discourage travel-to-work to inner-city areas (SI)
- support to traditional retail neighbourhood stores (IT)
- incentives for retailing and cultural facilities (SI)
- regenerating brownfields (IT, LV)
- accessibility to housing (SI)
- (sustainable) urban transport (ES, FI, SI, IT)

### **c) Sectoral tools**

Envisaged / wished for tools and action paths also concern other policies:

- strengthening some functions such as peri-urban agriculture, ecological corridors at European level (FR), protecting green and agricultural areas and promoting use of their environmental resources (IT)
- protecting areas of natural beauty and environmental value, cultural heritage and architectural identity in settlements (SI)
- transport: promotion of public transport and of environmentally friendly modes of travel (IT, SI), in particular railroads to access main towns and former industrial areas (IT)

### **d) Governance tools**

The topic of governance raises many proposals:

- establishing administrative NUTS 3 regions with responsibilities for sustainable land-use development (SI)
- supporting management capacity of local authorities (RO)
- supporting cooperation between municipalities (DE, FI, FR, LV, RO, SI), notably in order to mitigate competition for activities and dwellings (SI)
- favouring use of development fees for financing infrastructure serving the developments and not general expenses (IT)
- increasing resources of municipalities and encourage private-public partnerships to provide affordable housing (SI)
- common action of stakeholders in order to monitor and find effective ways to improve land-use decisions and regulations (LV)
- improved communication, joint databases, research and consultancy activities for the cooperation and competences between different policy, sectoral, and decision-making levels (SI)

### **e) Fiscal tools**

While very few implemented tools were mentioned in the range of fiscal instruments, there are significantly more proposals that concern this type of tools:

- appropriate real estate tax policy to motivate owners to maintain or sale their properties in real estate market (LV)
- fiscal system encouraging dense and sustainable developments (DE, FI, FR, SI)



- reorientation of local fiscal system and of fiscal and financial incentives in the area of housing and urban development toward more sustainable town and country planning which should ensure more sparing use of resources and space (FR)
- fiscal system taking into account environmental considerations (polluter-pays principle) (SI)
- promotion of a European fiscal system encouraging protection of natural spaces, in particular vulnerable spaces (FR)
- incentives such as tax discount to attract entrepreneurs to resettle their production units and commercial constructions from cities to rural areas (LV)

**Germany: envisaged reforms of fiscal tools**

*[...]On behalf of the finance ministerial conference, the Länder Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate have submitted a concept for reform which proposes calculating new land tax values on the basis of land value, supplemented by a flat-rate building value for developed properties. [...] In particular, the proposals include an assessment which considers the actual benchmark value of the land. This could provide an incentive for more economical land utilisation overall and more intensive utilisation of occupied land.*

*A further proposal being discussed is a combined land value and surface tax. The land value related components should, in particular, encourage the utilisation of building land and fallow areas. Finally a comprehensive land taxation concept incorporating environmental considerations has also been proposed, which specifically provides incentives for economical and careful use of land as well as de-sealing of already developed areas.*

[extract from Progress Report 2004 "Our perspectives for Germany - Our Strategy for Sustainable Development" included in German answer]

Another tool in the same range is the creation of a system of tradable land allocation rights (DE).

**Germany: tradable allocation rights - a model for the future?**

*Along the lines of emission trading rights, experts (for example the German Advisory Council on the Environment in its 2004 environmental report) propose linking the right of city and local councils to allocate building areas with tradable certificates. The extent of allocation of building land would be restricted in advance, therefore creating an artificial shortage. Certificates would be freely tradable. A local authority that wishes to allocate building land but does not have sufficient certificate would have to buy them. Local authorities with a surplus of certificates may sell them. In this way, a market for land allocation rights would be created, with the price of certificates determined by supply and demand. Theoretically, this would enable strict adherence to the goal of reducing land consumption. However, what appears to be so brilliantly simple in theory, throws up numerous currently unsolved questions in practice. For example, the planning sovereignty of municipalities guaranteed by the*

*German constitution sets tight limits on fixing building land quota by the Federal government. Moreover, distribution of building land allocations via a certificate trading exchange only considers economic factors. Special issues affecting spatial planning, such as environmental protection, are not taken into account. On these factors alone, tradable land allocation rights can only be considered as a supplement to existing planning regulation systems.*

[extract from Progress Report 2004 "Our perspectives for Germany - Our Strategy for Sustainable Development" included in German answer]

### **3) Tools targeting quality of (sprawling) developments**

Again this category of tools remains somewhat neglected (or raises less interest) with regard to others. Few examples appear in the answers, except for ES and LV which both emphasise that existing sprawl should be dealt with to limit its adverse effects.

### **6.3 Examples of interesting experiences**

Due to the broad diversity of contexts and experiences among Member States, it does not seem appropriate to try to identify "best practices" in the sense that such practices could be fruitfully reproduced anywhere else. Sometimes rapidly changing conditions make it even less relevant, as successful tools may not longer work - or be useful - 20 years later for example.

On the other hand, there are examples of tools or approaches that seem to have been used reasonably successfully in some contexts, and of approaches that open interesting new perspectives. The cases mentioned hereunder are there for illustrative purpose and do naturally not constitute an exhaustive list. There is definitely a scope for targeted sharing / exchanging experiences, between countries / regions / cities on basis of some common features for example.

Some answers indicate that sprawl is not (or not any more) a major issue (NL, UK). While NL makes an explicit link with use of spatial planning tools, UK does not make such explicit link, but it can be assumed that the main tool used against sprawl has played a role in this situation.



### **The Netherlands: "bundeling" [clustering]**

*Important to know is that Holland has an overall long established Spatial Policy, and because of that we don't have that much 'problems' with urban sprawl.*

*For over 50 years we promote 'bundeling'. The concept of urban compaction is a robust concept in Dutch planning. It has played a prominent role in almost every national spatial policy document, although each time in a different form:*

- *clustered dispersal (Second National Policy Document on Spatial Planning, 1966)*
- *growth centres and growth towns (Second and Third National Policy Documents)*
- *the compact city policy (Third National Policy Document 1973-1983)*
- *'Vinex districts' – the major urban extensions (supplement to the Fourth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning, 1990)*
- *concentration areas (National Spatial Strategy, 2004)*

### **United Kingdom: policy guidance about green belts**

*1.4 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. Green Belts can shape patterns of urban development at sub-regional and regional scale, and help to ensure that development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. They can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development [...].*

*1.5 There are five purposes of including land in Green Belts:*

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

*[Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green belts, January 1995 (Amended March 2001)]*

But it is not straightforward to identify the success factors of such examples, and even less obvious to fruitfully transpose them, as the context may be quite different in other countries.

In this regard, it may be interesting to explore more in depth "framework approaches" which are cross-sectoral, involve many different stakeholders and rely on a panoply of different tools. One advantage of such approaches is that they allow some degree of customisation, and may thus be adapted to various contexts.

An example of such approach is Circular Land Use Management currently experimented in Germany.



### **Germany: Circular Land Use Management**

*Circular Land Use Management is an integrative policy and steering approach investigated in the ExWoSt research field. Its central idea is a changed philosophy of land use. This changed philosophy of use can be synoptically described by the formula „avoidance – reuse – balancing“. The prior, systematic objective of Circular Land Use Management is to fully utilise all potentially available, previously used sites. In this system, the use of virgin land is tied to a very limited set of conditions.*

*The central methodology used by the ExWoSt research were experimental games where private and public sector players from five experimental regions jointly reviewed potentially usable existing instruments [...]*

*Based on the results of the experimental games, various existing and new instruments have been combined into a policy mix for Circular Land Use Management in urban contexts and urban regions. This policy mix serves to place the priority on downtown development and – in response to the respective needs in the urban region in question – to increase the rate of brownfield redevelopment, step up conversion and dismantling activities, and conserve open spaces and areas dedicated to recreational purposes. It includes existing instruments that place the emphasis on supporting the development of core areas, like*

- *regional plans*
- *multi-municipality plans*
- *the identification of space requirements (as a key ingredient for regional planning as well as preparatory and binding zoning)*
- *information instruments to influence municipal and administrative decisions on land use*
- *other neighbourhood and site plans (e.g. test plans, framework plans, master plans),*
- *the assignment of responsibilities in a Circular Land Use Management system in urbanised regions*
- *a fundamental decision on land use policies*
- *existing funding programmes*

*and additionally*

- *information instruments for land owners*
- *marketing.*

*The following existing instruments should be used to protect open spaces and areas for recreational purposes, especially in growing urban regions:*

- *concepts for areas serving the purpose of compensation for land use (areas for compensation and replacement measures), pools for compensatory areas and compensation measures*
- *definition of protected areas by the nature conservation authorities*
- *preserving and enhancing the value of: recreational spaces, special outdoor uses, greenhouse production, agriculture.*

*Shrinking regions, towns or cities need supplementary instruments to adequately counter the consequences of outward migration, vacancy, loss of functionality and excess space availability:*

- *urban restructuring*
- *financial support programmes focussing on brownfields/greyfields and C-class space.*



*In future, existing instruments should be combined with new or comprehensively reformed instruments to ensure that economic incentives are available.*

[extract from summary of article «Kreislaufwirtschaft in der städtischen/stadtregionalen Flächennutzung» (BBR), included in German answer]

## **6.4 Comments**

### ***Diversity of approaches and ongoing process***

Even taking into account the limits of the present exercise, the review of implemented as well as considered tools clearly shows a broad diversity among countries, also reflecting diverse situations and objectives with regard to sprawl. Large differences in implementation scales are observed too, from the level of the whole country to the level of given municipalities. Tools looking similar may be combined in diverse ways and fit in different strategies.

It can be observed that many implemented tools are recent, not surprisingly in former socialist countries. But even countries where the issue has been considered and where tools have been used for decades are renewing their efforts to find a more efficient approach.

In this sense, draft / considered / wished for tools fit into a continuous process that spans over all Europe, with different local evolutions, showing that the sprawl issue is as actual as ever.

While implemented tools often focus on land-use, there are more draft / considered / wished for tools which focus on preventing sprawl "at the source". This suggests that action limited to the visible and immediate aspects of sprawl does not deliver fully satisfying results on the long run. Few answers indeed refer to concrete obtained results.

Diversity and permanent evolution of the situation and of the implemented solutions makes it difficult to establish general rules or to extract efficiency criteria for future tools at this stage.

### ***Focusing on actual challenges***

The importance of economic functions in the sprawl process is only partly reflected in the implemented tools, which often implicitly target mainly residential sprawl. There are some tools that focus specifically on the sprawl of retail activities, but no example is given about other functions such as industry, logistic activities, leisure infrastructure, facilities and public equipments. This may lessen the efficiency of the approaches, as underlying mechanisms may be different according to the type of function (and even inside the residential function, between main and second residence).

### ***Beyond spatial planning***

Most tools implemented to act directly on land-use as well as to prevent sprawl mostly belong to the scope of spatial and urban planning. This is not really surprising, as most respondents work in this field. On the other hand there is a larger diversity among draft / considered / wished for tools, which often concern other domains than spatial planning. This suggests that spatial planners now recognise the cross-sectoral dimension of the issue. There are also new approaches trying to involve a broader diversity of stakeholders. There seems to be an acknowledgement that top-down spatial planning regulation is not sufficient to manage the sprawl phenomenon.

Indeed, the larger number of proposed tools is particularly obvious for the domains of governance, of fiscal regulation, and financing of local authorities. This may also indicate that these action fields are not much explored yet, probably because of the many possible obstacles.

On the other hand, there is no entirely new category of tools among the draft / considered / wished for tools. Further, some considered / wished for tools in a given country may already be used in another country. This underlines the potential for exchanges of experience<sup>7</sup>, keeping in mind though that local contexts vary widely. Assessing the possibility to transpose tools requires further targeted analysis.

In general the answers mention several tools. A number of respondents have tried to delineate the links between the different tools, but even in those cases, it is not always easy to identify how they may combine (or not) from the point of view of dealing with sprawl, if there can be synergies or conflicts. Coherent strategies seem rare, as recognition of the issue at a high level of policy making is still lacking in most countries.

### ***A matter of coordination***

Analysis of the tools confirms the complementariness between the urban and "rural" dimensions of the sprawl phenomenon. However, both aspects do not appear to be formally coordinated. While there are some examples of considering together cities and their (more or less extended) periphery in planning approaches, it is not clear whether implemented mechanisms exist for encouraging rural and urban authorities to deal with sprawl in a concerted way across areas encompassing towns and their periphery.

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<sup>7</sup> A parallel between places as far apart as Riga and Barcelona has been made during a discussion in the TCUM workgroup.



Action on the urban dimension has the huge benefit of looking "positive", constructive, in regard of the constraints imposed on land use in the peripheral areas. But still largely relying on public authorities, it is often limited by lack of financial resources.

Coordination with sectoral policies other than spatial planning appears also as a necessity to deal efficiently with urban and development sprawl. This step seems difficult to make, as many traditionally strong sectors - transport, infrastructure, economy - have their own objectives and logic. Even with the environment sector - which benefits from a better public support - the relation is not straightforward.

More generally, public financing (taxes, subsidies, financing of local authorities) appears as a core issue in the question of sprawl. This also underlines the need for coordination / cooperation between sectors, but also between levels of governance. Here again recognition at high political level of the significance of the issue and of the necessity to act emerges as a precondition.

### ***Quantitative vs. qualitative approaches***

The answers show that the general attitude toward sprawl is to try to prevent or limit it in quantitative terms. Most tools are oriented in this way.

Very few approaches target the qualitative aspects of sprawl, i.e. try to make existing or unavoidable sprawl more acceptable and sustainable. It can be thought that the qualitative aspects of sprawl (e.g. location near public transport nodes, near infrastructures and services, density of settlements, design, integration in the landscape, management of waste water,...) influence significantly its negative effects. There is apparently a wide field of investigation in order to improve coherence, quality and environmental impact of "sprawled areas".

Maybe is it difficult to admit that as LV states it, *"it is hard to control suburbanisation, as the issue was neglected for a long time and it requires understanding and willingness to do so"* and as ES (Barcelona) presents it *"sprawl, built up during the first and the second period, is here to stay and it requires strategies, policies and tools to be managed"*. Some stakeholders might interpret the fact to deal with existing sprawl as a way of giving up in the fight against sprawl expansion. But actually both approaches may complement each other, taking into account the specific context of each country and region.

## 7. Sprawl in a territorial cohesion perspective

Which mutual implications between the sprawl issue and the concept of territorial cohesion do emerge from the analysis?

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion is the most detailed official document currently available to apprehend what the concept may mean. The aim being to feed the debate with the Member States and other stakeholders, a wide margin is left for interpretation, especially for aspects that could depart from the current (economic and social) cohesion policy. In this section we attempt to see what the Green Paper offers as a conceptual support to tackle the sprawl issue more efficiently and give some very preliminary hints on aspects that should be taken into account for its further operationalisation.

The remarks that follow are to be understood as aspects that should be clarified in the process of operationalisation of the territorial cohesion concept. They do not question its relevance to help setting up a framework allowing to tackle the sprawl issue. On the contrary, the analysis indicates that the goals pursued through territorial cohesion appear like answers to the problems generated by urban and development sprawl. The reflections around territorial cohesion may offer a basis for the development of tools and strategies to deal with sprawl, provided that analysis, principles and implementation of policy are sufficiently specified.

### Sprawl in the Green Paper on territorial cohesion

The Green Paper contains one single explicit reference to sprawl:

*"This relatively dense urban network contains few very large cities. [...] This settlement pattern contributes to the quality of life in the EU, both for city dwellers living close to rural areas and those rural residents within easy reach of services. It is also more resource-efficient because it avoids the diseconomies of very large agglomerations and the high levels of energy and land use typical of urban sprawl, which will become more important as climate change, and the action to adapt or to combat it, proceeds."* (pages 4-5)

The wording of this quotation suggests that thanks to its urban structure, the EU is not really touched by the issue of sprawl. Such statement does not fit with what comes out of the analysis of the available material, and furthermore contradicts other EU policy documents such as those reviewed under point 5.

A more plausible interpretation is that the issue of sprawl could have worse consequences if the urban structure was more concentrated than it actually is. This idea raises an interesting



issue, as it implies that urban sprawl is linked to the presence of very large cities. In other words, more concentration at macro scale is assumed to go together with more de-concentration at micro scale (meaning sprawl in this case). Such interaction, possibly in opposite terms, between phenomena at different territorial scales is a reality that is difficult to grasp within "classical" approaches which focus on a given scale and on a given domain.

### **The issue of scale**

The Green Paper clearly presents the concept of territorial cohesion as valid at any territorial scale: *"Issues such as coordinating policy in large areas [...] promoting globally competitive and sustainable cities, addressing social exclusion in parts of a larger region and in deprived urban neighbourhoods [...] are all associated with the pursuit of territorial cohesion."* (page 3). This is also the case for general principles underpinning territorial cohesion such as balanced and sustainable development.

But what makes territorial cohesion different from economic and social cohesion is the territorial dimension, which in itself relies on notions such as scale, area, distance, etc. Principles with a specific territorial dimension such as concentration, dispersal, or polycentrism have to be considered at different scales, and in some cases formulated differently according to the scale.

Sprawl is in many regards a micro scale phenomenon, if one considers that even metropolitan urban areas are micro in regard of the continental scale. The Green Paper does not contain specific guidelines for the territorial pattern at micro scale. There is a text which concerns spatial concentration, but it seems to refer to a meso scale (level of countries):

*"There are economic gains from the concentration of activity, but also costs from congestion, high property prices, social exclusion and pollution. Economic activity [...] has become more evenly spread within some countries [...] but there continue to be heavily congested urban areas and other areas with untapped potential."* (page 5)

The problem is that at regional (i.e. micro) scale, applying a de-concentration principle - e.g. development of economic activity areas outside urban areas, in the periphery of cities or beyond - would be what we define as sprawl. It would definitely not be a good thing from the point of view of sustainable development, which is presented as *"implicit in the notion of territorial cohesion"*. It would also be contradictory with the quotation of the Green Paper, which presents sprawl as something which should be avoided.

This shows that the question of the territorial scale is crucial, not only for sound analysis, but also for defining principles for action. Explicit choices have to be made as to the scale where

such or such territorial principle applies, while being aware that the approaches at different scales must be consistent with each other.

The Green Paper acknowledges indeed the importance of working at an appropriate scale: "[...] *improving the governance of cohesion policy, making it more flexible, more capable of adapting to the most appropriate territorial scale [...]*" (page 4), but all consequences of such requirement are not necessarily worked out yet.

### **The issue of relevant area**

Another - linked - issue is that of the appropriate area, which is rarely coinciding with existing administrative limits such as those reflected in the NUTS classification. The Green Paper also underlines this issue:

*"To tackle [these and other problems] effectively requires a policy response on a variable geographical scale, involving in some cases cooperation between neighbouring local authorities, in others between countries [...]"* (page 7)

On that basis, the considered area could vary not only according to the issue but also according to the local context. Sprawl is precisely a case where variable and locally determined areas are concerned. Combined with flexibility of the scale (territorial entities), focus on more relevant areas should help to better apprehend the phenomenon, including the link with the cities which are losing inhabitants to the "benefit" of sprawling areas. In some cases, sprawl may also extend across national borders, justifying all the more a cooperation between countries such as recommended above.

Working on appropriate areas should also help to deal more efficiently with the negative consequences of sprawl. However, in order to deliver concrete results, such approach has to encompass governance aspects. This does not only concern the way to achieve governance of the areas themselves, but also the link between different authorities and actors of different levels and of different domains.

Commenting on the results of the debate about the Green Paper, the Sixth progress report on economic and social cohesion explicitly mentions urban sprawl among issues requiring a multilevel approach:

*"Many reactions argued that different issues (e.g. social exclusion or urban sprawl, accessibility to services or the risk of flooding) require policy responses at different territorial levels. These may vary from deprived urban neighbourhoods to metropolitan areas, from river basins to mountain areas. The need for European support and desired flexibility to*



*address problems in a functional manner should be considered in the light of the subsidiarity principle." (page 12)*

### **The issue of sectoral logics**

Another problem with general principles underlying territorial cohesion is that all phenomena do not evolve in the same way and according to the same rules. One finding from the review of answers to the questionnaire is that there are different (but interrelated) issues when looking at different functions involved in "urban" sprawl (especially housing on the one hand and economic activities on the other). Even if both types of sprawl may at some point interact and feed each other, the underlying processes are not the same.

The Green Paper indeed also makes a difference between the spatial patterns of housing and of economic activities, but does not go in depth into the consequences of the link between both. In some way, de-concentration of economic activities may bring much more (road) traffic if there is no consistency between the profile of the workers and the profile of the activities at the scale of the concerned area.

This is only one example of cross-sectoral links that are inherent to sprawl. Many others have been underlined in the previous sections of the report.

Multiple policy sectors meet on the ground, in a huge variety of manners depending of the accumulation of factors influencing what is happening locally. This underlines the need of close inter-sectoral coordination (horizontal cooperation) as advocated by the territorial cohesion concept too.

*"Coordination between sectoral and territorial policies is important to maximise synergies and to avoid possible conflicts. A debate on territorial cohesion is important in order to highlight the issues involved and to encourage more analysis of them [...]" (page 9)*

The Green Paper mentions a number of policies which have an obvious territorial impact. Several of these are of particular relevance for the issue of sprawl, in particular transport policy whose links with the sprawl phenomenon and its negative effects are underlined in many answers to the questionnaire:

*"Transport policy has obvious implications for territorial cohesion through its effect on the location of economic activity and the pattern of settlements." (page 9)*

*"[...] commuting across regional, and even national, borders often requires inter-administrative cooperation to provide solutions (e.g. public transport) to minimise the negative externalities." (page 7)*

Other policies are explicitly related by the Green Paper with the issue of land use / management:

*"Environmental policy impacts in many ways on the location of economic activity. Regulatory requirements can have a spatial dimension and influence land use planning." (page 10)*

*"The first pillar of the Common Agriculture Policy and the support it provides to farmers also has important territorial impacts through the activities and incomes it maintains in rural areas and through the promotion of sound land management." (page 9)*

While the link is less explicit in the wording of the Green Paper, energy policy also has significant interactions with sprawl, notably through impact of settlement patterns on energy use. Energy policy thus provides a possible framework for actions to deal with sprawl.

*"Energy policy contributes to territorial cohesion by developing a fully integrated internal gas and electricity market. Moreover, energy efficiency measures and renewable energy policy contribute to sustainable development across the EU" (page 9).*

One way to work towards reconciliation of sectoral logics with each other and with territorial realities is to assess their territorial impact. The idea of territorial impact assessment (TIA) was often discussed among stakeholders of spatial planning policy, but without many concrete results at European level. While the Green Paper refers in several places to territorial impact of policies, it does not specify how this can be assessed and what may be the followings of such assessment. The question thus remains quite open, but one could imagine that generation of sprawling developments could be one aspect of territorial assessment of sectoral policies, programmes or projects.

### **Diversity as a leitmotiv**

The qualitative tone present in the territorial cohesion discourse fits well with the largely qualitative nature of sprawl. The strong emphasis put on the existence and specific value of diversity of the European territory is also appropriate in regard of the huge diversity of contexts and challenges posed by sprawl.

The focus on diversity which is at the heart of the concept of territorial cohesion seems particularly appropriate when considering differentiated goals, strategies, and (combinations of) tools to deal with sprawl. The analysis has clearly demonstrated that there is no universal best model of approach and there cannot be a unique solution. But territorial cohesion could provide the Member States, their regions and local entities with a common European basis that could help them in building their own approaches.



One could consider that "residential attractiveness" (linked to climate, environment, landscape, culture, building land affordability,...) is an element of the regional potentials whose combination produces diversity and that should be valorised. This raises a tricky question: if some regions want to base their development on their residential potential, how can / could that be done in a sustainable way which avoids the negative consequences of sprawl? It would be particularly interesting to explore examples of relevant approaches to this issue.

### **Specific territories**

Linked to the issue of territorial diversity is that of territories with specific geographic features mentioned in the Green Paper. The Green Paper emphasises particularly three types of such regions: mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas. While the latter does not seem particularly exposed to negative consequences of sprawl, the two former may be more exposed to it, notably because of the attractiveness they present for leisure activities and linked developments. They also may be more vulnerable due to their specific context:

*"[mountain regions] are confronted with the challenges posed by [...] pressure linked to tourism [...]" (page 8)*

Coastal zones are also mentioned in the Green Paper, and exhibit the same exposure and vulnerabilities as the two former categories (moreover, islands by definition include many coastal zones):

*"[...] there are other regions with specific features which equally face common challenges, not least coastal zones, which are under pressure from development [...]" (page 8)*

Outermost areas may be thought as specific contexts for certain types of sprawl, due to the demographic pressure (this question remains however largely to explore).

Border areas, discussed in another section of the Green paper, are relevant for cross-border sprawl issues such as mentioned in some answers of Member States, and underline the potential for territorial cooperation when dealing with sprawl. In some cases, sprawl in a country may be caused by specific features beyond the national border: cross-border sprawl may in fact often be viewed as a result of a lack of (territorial) cohesion.

Finally there remains a particular type of region mentioned in article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty as requiring "*particular attention*" (but not as suffering "*from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps*", which may explain that it is not discussed in the Green paper): areas affected by industrial transition.

These might have specific implications when dealing with sprawl: while it is remarkable that even shrinking regions may experience sprawl, regions in industrial transition also have potential for recycling land previously used for industrial purposes. This may place them in first line of experiments aiming to prevent and/or deal with sprawl in a sustainable way.

### **Involving stakeholders**

The Green Paper raises the question of new territorial partnerships, i.e. involvement of and cooperation with different stakeholders, reaching beyond the political-administrative sphere. This question is particularly relevant in the issue of sprawl, where diverse types of stakeholders, including private stakeholders, are concerned or even actively involved, sometimes with quite different objectives and interests.

*"Many of the problems faced by territories cut across sectors and effective solutions require an integrated approach and cooperation between the various authorities and stakeholders involved."* (page 3)

In particular, one may say that sprawl is an issue where the private citizen is particularly active and must thus be involved in order to come to efficient solutions. The private economic sector (developers, real estate managers,...) has also an important role to play, and organisations of the third sector (e.g. environmental associations) are often involved.

*"[...] there has been increasing recognition of the need to promote cooperation, dialogue and partnership between different levels of government and between these and organisations and people on the ground directly involved in the development process."* (page 4)

Having said that, and even if the analysis may sometimes give the impression that public authorities are helpless to efficiently manage the sprawl pressure, they still have a major role to play.

*"Public policy can help territories to make the best use of their assets. In addition, it can help them to jointly respond to common challenges, reach critical mass and realise increasing returns by combining their activities, exploit the complementarities and synergies between them, and overcome divisions stemming from administrative borders."* (page 3)



## **8. Conclusions**

### **Specific outputs from a focussed approach**

The pan-European approach exposed in this report is acknowledged as exploratory, and by no way an exhaustive scientific analysis. It focuses on a specific angle of view, the perception of the phenomenon by public authorities belonging to different levels and sectors, and the diverse tools that are or might be implemented. In other words, a sketch of the actual state of play in the Member States - in operational terms -, which should help to assess the opportunity and possibility to take further steps at the EU level in order to lay solid bases for a more efficient approach of the issue.

The substantial contributions received from the Member States during the process demonstrate an interest for the topic but also reveal quite diverse, sometimes contradictory, expectations regarding the results. This is only natural given the broad diversity of involved actors (27 Member States, the Commission, authorities of different levels and sectors,...). This makes it all the more necessary to adopt and follow a guiding line.

The guiding line here is provided by the specificity of the TCUM framework. What can the TCUM do which could not be done elsewhere with regard to sprawl? One answer is: reflect on the contents that should be given to the expected shared European competence of territorial cohesion, and its potential to deal more efficiently with sprawl.

The fact that there are currently other thematic works on issues which are all in a way or another linked with the sprawl issue makes it possible to go a step further and produce cross-thematic recommendations which not only answer the cross-thematic nature of sprawl but allow to demonstrate the added value of the territorial dimension in concrete ways. In this perspective, the present report is only one step in a broader and longer process.

### **A widespread, growing and diversified concern**

From the answers stems the feeling that sprawl is a concern almost everywhere in the EU, in some places a serious and/or growing concern. Sprawl indeed comes more frequently than before on the agenda, notably within debates on sustainable development.

However, this common concern covers a huge diversity among Member States and regions in many regards, starting with the very understanding of the term. In some cases the focus is more on urban expansion, in other cases on spatial dispersion. In some cases, land use concerns are dominating, in other cases attention is mostly devoted to transport,

environmental or social issues. In some parts of the EU, the main concern is over areas threatened by sprawl, in others on areas already affected, sometimes since decades.

More broadly, the forms that sprawl takes across the EU, its dynamics, its context, its causes and consequences are so diverse that one could be tempted to consider it as a typically local issue, best addressed by regional and local policies and tailor-made instruments.

Does this mean that a European approach makes no sense? Clearly not. A finding of the survey is that there is a consensus about the cross-sectoral dimension of the issue. Not only do causes and consequences of sprawl belong to various sectors, but sprawl itself may affect different and interlinked functions (residence, economic activities, leisure, infrastructure,...). In many sectors, the European level plays a major role in defining orientations, regulations or in providing support. Sprawl thus needs to be taken into account at that level too. Territorial cohesion in this regard appears as a privileged starting point.

Another quite interesting finding is that the time dimension plays a major role in the phenomenon. Diversity may be considerable when viewing a snapshot of the situation, but lesser so if one considers sprawl as a process with stages that are not reached everywhere at the same moment. This offers a potential for sharing and exchanging experience between areas, based not only on currently similar issues, but also on similar stages encountered in the past or foreseeable in the future.

There is notably room for dealing with a growing concern about quality and sustainability of areas already affected by sprawl. This issue could take particular significance if new circumstances play against sprawl and push a number of inhabitants and activities back to the cities, creating new derelict areas in suburban contexts.

This emphasises the importance of a prospective vision of the possible evolutions across Europe. Current economic circumstances emphasize the possibility of rapid changes, a reality that should be considered be it only in order to avoid transposing obsolete tools. Accrued energetic and climatic constraints as well as new demographic contexts play obviously a role in the sprawl phenomenon, which underlines the interest to consider the links with these other themes studied in the TCUM context.

### **Need for a multi-sectoral toolbox**

While the diagnostic underlines the many interweaved causes and consequences of sprawl, encompassing a wide range of domains, the mentioned implemented tools mostly belong to the scope of spatial planning. Sprawl is often considered as a typical spatial planning issue,



maybe because its manifestations in terms of land use are easily observable. However, it has undoubtedly consequences on a lot of other domains. The manifestations are one thing, the underlying causes are another, and in order to achieve durable efficiency, the underlying causes must be targeted in priority.

It is now acknowledged that the issue may not be dealt with by acting with spatial planning tools alone. Although it is assumed that spatial planning has an intrinsically cross-sectoral dimension, it is definitely not an overarching sector integrating all attributes of sector policies. Many respondents prove to be aware of this, as the considered or wished for tools belong to a broader range of domains than the implemented tools. Also several answers underline that tools from other domains may - intentionally or not - have effects on sprawl.

Often mentioned links with transport, environment, housing, heritage, risks management, justify integrated approaches. A very important but sometimes underestimated link exists also with funding and fiscal provisions, which have been shown to have much impact on sprawl issues. Coordination of the concerned policies is crucial.

Although themes do not coincide with sectors, the challenging task of bringing together the results of the four thematic approaches undertaken by the TCUM subgroups in order to produce common recommendations represents an opportunity to put this discourse in practice.

### **Multilevel governance and partnerships, keys to effective approaches**

The approaches to deal with the issue of sprawl must not only be cross-sectoral, they must also apply to relevant territories, which very rarely fit with administrative subdivisions. Sprawl is generally a local issue with broader causes and consequences. Appropriate multi-level governance is thus at the heart of any durable and effective solution. The difficulty must not be underestimated, as the different levels may have contradictory interests and aims. A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is probably needed to achieve a common attitude.

Relationships between different types of areas, such as urban and rural areas, are particularly relevant when considering the link between sprawl and the evolution of cities. In this matter also, the interests are not necessarily convergent. Arbitration between them by higher authorities, through financing mechanisms for example, does not appear as the easiest option. Better results may be expected if partnerships can be built, on basis of common / complementary challenges and opportunities. This emphasizes the necessary complementarity between urban policy and territorial policy.

Last but not least, it is important to involve relevant stakeholders (notably private actors and citizens) in the search for appropriate attitudes and solutions. These stakeholders may also contribute to sustainable, efficient and equitable solutions in matter of sprawl.

### **How could a EU approach help?**

Expectations as to the role of the EU in helping dealing with sprawl emerge from several answers but are not clearly delineated yet. Not only is there no common definition of sprawl, but the objectives with regard to this issue are not necessarily the same everywhere: sprawl can be seen as a trend to fight, or a reality to deal with, or in some cases appear as a solution for some difficult problems.

Two rather obvious fields for action at European level are deepening of the knowledge of the mechanisms and dynamics of sprawl, and exchange of experience.

Better knowledge is a preliminary requirement for efficient action. A common understanding of the topic would be a big step towards building measurement and monitoring tools (common indicators). Quantitative, statistical approaches must also take qualitative aspects into account: for example, besides hectares of land built, parameters like types of households or businesses involved, affordability of housing or land and quality of life in the cities which lose inhabitants or activities to suburban areas are equally important to grasp.

Exchange of experiences can rely on the wide variety of tools revealed by the survey. However, the diversity of economic, demographic, cultural and planning contexts and of objectives makes it impossible to identify universally applicable best practices. Selected and targeted exchange of experiences between voluntary stakeholders on basis of similarities seem a more reasonable and feasible aim.

In a more specifically EU perspective, but also relying on a more accurate perception of the phenomenon, there remains much to do to integrate the issue of sprawl upstream of policy decisions in influential sectors. It could for example be taken into account in the framework of territorial impact assessment, at the level of policies as well as at the level of projects. Beyond, there could be some implications to take into account in future Cohesion policy.

Explicit recognition of the importance of the issue would probably support Member States in implementing strategies that are often difficult to impose.



## **Anchoring the approach in territorial cohesion**

Many previous considerations point toward the need for global and integrated strategies and tools. Territorial cohesion, as a European concept, aim and competence, offers a privileged framework to progress in this direction.

According to the Lisbon Treaty, territorial cohesion is a global aim to which all Community policies must contribute. It thus not only offers a basis to reflect from a territorial point of view but to enhance the links between sectoral policies.

Synthesising the results of the debate launched with the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, the 6th Progress Report underlines that: "*The majority of contributions associate territorial cohesion with an integrated approach, multilevel governance, and partnership*". All conditions needed to deal with sprawl.

Territorial cooperation (in its broad meaning, i.e. also within a same country) being a fundamental element of territorial cohesion, it could help to approach sprawl not only at a cross-border level but also notably in terms of urban - rural relationships.

Territorial cohesion as a framework may also allow to use specific tools, such as ESPON and the Urban Audit to deepen knowledge, URBACT to foster exchange of experience, the Regions for Economic Change initiative to build networks, JESSICA to implement exemplary actions in matter of sustainable urban regeneration (that could perhaps include poorly structured and / or equipped areas produced by former sprawling developments).

More generally, territorial cohesion may offer a basis to develop new truly territorial tools taking into account the extreme diversity of the territories.

## **Annex: List of policy documents**

(sorted by date)

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<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0231:FIN:EN:PDF>



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