



ESPON/METREX

Discussion Note

A response to the ESPON dialogue
with stakeholders on research needs
for the period 2007-2013

METREX
125 West Regent Street
GLASGOW G2 2SA
Scotland UK
T. +44 (0) 1292 317074
F. +44 (0) 1292 317074
secretariat@eurometrex.org
<http://www.eurometrex.org>

Introduction

The European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) has been conducting a programme of coordinated research through a network of European institutions over the last 10 years under the EU's Interreg programme.

From 12-13 June 2007 ESPON held a Seminar in Bonn designed to explore user experience of this programme and stakeholder demand for future targeted analyses. METREX attended the Seminar and contributed to the Workshop on *Use and demand from regions and cities*.

At the Workshop, METREX identified six needs from the metropolitan perspective.

Metropolitan dimension

- Need 1 - Metropolitan data
- Need 2 - Metropolitan definition
- Need 3 - Comparative consumption
- Need 4 - Comparative services of public interest
- Need 5 - Climate change/Urban change

European dimension

- Need 6 - European spatial planning process

This note amplifies these needs and provides a basis for the discussion of research specifications. If the ESPON secretariat wishes to pursue these suggestions then METREX would be happy to meet to discuss the identified needs in more detail.

Subsidiarity and the metropolitan dimension

It is clear that, on the basis of subsidiarity, the metropolitan dimension to European affairs needs be recognised. Much ESPON research is based on the concept of Functional Urban Areas (FUA) and Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA). However, the 100 or so recognised European metropolitan regions and areas lack definition and, in consequence, the basis on which to collect data on a comparable basis. Needs 1 and 2 would address this deficiency.

InterMETREX and PolyMETREXplus (see www.eurometrex.org)

METREX has invested considerable resources in the InterMETREX and PolyMETREXplus projects, both of which have been progressed under the Interreg IIIC programme.

The outcome of InterMETREX is the metropolitan spatial planning and development practice *Benchmark*. This seeks to provide metropolitan bodies and authorities with a basis for the self-assessment of the effectiveness of their practice and the means through which to progressively improve this. Needs 3 and 4 would have direct relevance to the Practice Benchmark and its further use and development.

Need 5 is currently being progressed through the EURCO2 80/50 (metropolitan mitigation strategies to achieve the EU objective of an 80% emissions reduction by 2050) project under Interreg IVC. However, this project would benefit from related research on European metropolitan greenhouse gas emissions data.

The outcome of PolyMETREXplus is the *Framework* for a polycentric metropolitan Europe. Framework provides a metropolitan response to the challenge in the ESDP to achieve better European urban balance through a polycentric approach. It is clear that Europe need a spatial planning Vision and an integrated Strategy through which to achieve this. It needs a spatial planning process involving all relevant stakeholders. Need 6 would have direct relevance to this.

Specification for ESPON research on Needs 1 and 2

Metropolitan definition and data (contributed by IAURIF - leader of the METREX Expert group on these issues)

The need for comparable data on European Metropolitan Areas

A metropolitan area consists of a core metropolis/city and its sphere of influence. Metropolitan areas are home to about two thirds of the population and economic activities in Europe. Due to their mass and their network type of organization, they are the main structuring elements of the European space¹. Yet, despite their significance for the future of Europe, there has not been until now any comparative analysis into the situation and the evolution of European metropolitan areas. This has been due to **the absence of data**.

Many annual data on European regions are published by Eurostat or by other organizations, by Economic Development Agencies or simply by the press on the largest European metropolises/cities.

Comparing the data included in these publications shows a multitude of discrepancies not only in terms of rough estimates but also in terms of how these trends, both positive and negative, of the evolutions "observed" in the metropolises/cities. The gaps, that are sometimes quite significant, between data relating to the same metropolis/city can be explained by the absence of common definition of the geographical boundaries of metropolitan areas. Furthermore, we can seldom find in these publications an accurate definition of the geographical boundaries of the metropolises/cities that are looked into.

So far, no **comparable** data at the European level have been produced on metropolitan areas. The comparability of data on metropolitan areas implies the need for two requirements to be simultaneously.

- A common definition of the statistical data
- The definition of metropolitan territories with common criteria

This second requirement is met neither of the Urban Audit's LUZ nor for the ESPON FUA². The same statement can be made a fortiori for the Eurostat's NUTS 1, 2 or 3 level administrative regions as, except for rare cases, the boundaries of administrative regions are very different to that of metropolitan areas.

Thus, the London metropolitan area is many times over larger than the Greater London Authority administrative region. The *Brussels Capitale* Region is very small in relation to the Brussels metropolis and its catchment area. The Eurostat data on the French *département* of the *Nord* or *Rhône* are not relevant when it comes to describing the Lille or Lyons metropolitan areas etc.

It is essential to have comparable data on the European metropolitan areas for the two following main reasons.

- At the level of the European Union and at that of the Nation States, the implementation of the Lisbon-Göteborg Agenda with its three objectives (i.e. competitiveness, social better being, environmental protection) greatly depends on the way these will be delivered in metropolitan areas. Indeed, metropolises/cities are the focal points where, on the one hand, most of the challenges faced by Europe lie and, on the other hand, where are located a great deal of resources required to successfully overcome these.

¹ There are about one hundred metropolitan areas in Europe with a population estimated at over 500 000 inhabitants

² LUZ: Large Urban Zone ; FUA : Functional Urban Agglomeration

- An assessment of the most relevant structural indicators ³ at the level of metropolitan areas therefore seems necessary, as has been done until now at the national level.
- This would provide regional political decision makers with a comparative positioning of the European metropolises/cities in relation to the Lisbon Agenda objectives and would make the involvement of metropolitan stakeholders easier in so far as its implementation is concerned. Delivering these indicators for metropolitan areas obviously requires the production of data that have a corresponding basis.
- At the metropolitan level, the sound basis of policies aiming at enhancing all the opportunities of a metropolitan area partly relies on the knowledge of its economic, social and environmental positioning at the European level. Because of the ever-fiercer international competition amongst metropolises/cities, comparisons carried out within the boundaries of national territories are now quite insufficient. Metropolises/cities need comparative analyses that can identify their strengths, weaknesses, constraints and opportunities on the European scale.

The basic data required

These data should allow at the European level to establish an economic, social and environmental diagnosis of each of its metropolitan area and to compare the evolutions observed in its territories over the past few years. The fields that these data should cover include population size, labour forces, economic activities, production, research, training, poverty and environment. The point is not to produce a great number of data and indicators but only to come up with the most relevant data in each field.

Data sources that can be mobilized

In so far as socio-economic data are concerned, the European Survey on labour forces (ELFS), coordinated by Eurostat and carried out by the national statistical Institutes, is a source delivering many statistically comparable Europe wide data. So far the ELFS has been used for NUTS 2 level regions. It offers three major assets in that it is conducted on an annual basis, is statistically reliable for highly populated regions and it can be quickly used. The detailed data ⁴ of these surveys could be re-used for the past ten years within the geographical boundaries of the largest metropolitan areas (for instance with a population >1 million inhabitants).

After setting the boundaries of metropolitan areas using common criteria, using the detailed data of the ELFS concerning metropolitan areas could enable the two requirements of comparability referred to above to be met and a substantial part of metropolitan socio-economic data could be produced.

This acknowledgement leads to two suggestions.

Firstly, reusing the detailed findings of these surveys that have already been carried out could offer to quickly and cheaply access comparable data on larger metropolitan areas.

Secondly, an identification code of each metropolitan area could be introduced in future ELFS in order to facilitate its use for metropolitan areas. The production of statistically reliable data for all the metropolitan areas (over 500,000 inhabitants) would require the survey rates of the ELFS to be reviewed upwards for some territories.

In so far as the other data are concerned (GDP, research, environment), it would be possible to produce some of them by using data delivered by Eurostat for NUTS 3 level regions after identifying whole of the NUTS 3 that are the closest to metropolitan areas as previously defined with common criteria and using the *commune* as the basic administrative unit.

³ I.e. A relevant selection of structural indicators assessed so far at the national level

⁴ data at the level of households

The above suggestions have been successfully applied as part of the Interreg IIC programme for the North-West of Europe ⁵.

Defining metropolitan areas

Since the Sixties, many research projects have been carried out by university research units, by national or regional agencies in charge of spatial planning and regional economic development, by consulting firms and more recently by the OECD, Urban audit and ESPON in order to compare the performances of metropolitan regions. It has to be admitted that the comparisons developed have been limited by the absence of a common definition of what metropolitan regions are. Many countries have their own definitions and these are often very different from each other whilst other countries have no definition.

In order to compare metropolises/cities on the international scale, we have to start from the beginning! That is to say, we have to start identifying metropolitan areas with common criteria. In a recent report, the OECD has stressed that each definition used in its previous research projects has its advantages and drawbacks and that there is no reason for choosing one rather than the other. This appreciation cannot satisfy the metropolitan stakeholders who think that having comparable metropolitan data at the international scale is a matter of urgency.

A Metropolitan Area (MA) corresponds to a metropolis/city and its sphere of influence. It covers a central area with a relatively significant population density, or employment density, and whose surrounding *communes* have functional links with the core area. A metropolis/city can be monocentric or polycentric when core areas are close to each other and when spheres of influence overlap one another.

Whilst MAs are, except in rare cases, very different to administrative regions, it is clear that an administrative definition of the metropolitan areas is not relevant.

A morphological definition of MA, based on the seamlessness of the built environment cannot be suitable either because the sphere of influence of the dense core area extends far beyond the area that is seamlessly built. A MA not only includes urban *communes* but also many rural communes the economic, social and environmental characteristics of which are linked to those in the core area.

A functional definition, based on daily home/work commuting trips between the core area and the surrounding municipalities, is the one that is the most suitable. It enables comparative analyses between MA's in terms of infrastructure, labour markets, economies, living conditions of the population and relationships of the metropolis/city and its natural environment.

How can metropolitan areas be defined?

Past research works can provide the following general method.

- Step 1 is about defining the core area. It consists of bordering municipalities whose population density or employment density is relatively significant and which altogether gather a total population exceeding a threshold set in principle.
- Step 2 is about defining the outer area that is closely connected to the core area. The density of daily commuting trips between home and the workplace measures the link between municipalities of the outer area and that in the core area. A minimum migration threshold is selected (% of the working population of an outer commune

⁵ See GEMACA project, a study carried out over 14 functional urban regions of the North-West of Europe. This project is available on the Web at:

<http://iaurif.org/en/studies/cahiers/cahiers135/pdf>

working in the central area). The communes whose rate is higher than this rate belong to the MA.

Sensitivity tests have shown that the choice between the various thresholds (5, 7 or 10 per hectare for population densities or employment density; 10, 15 or 20 % for commuting migrations between home and the workplace) could modify what could be anticipated at first sight from the size of the MA in terms of population or employment.

In practice, few data are required to define MA. The latest general population census carried out in every country provides the information required at the level of municipalities, that is, size, population, number of jobs, and number of home/workplace commuting migrations. IT tools (Geographical Information Systems) can quickly identify the communes that belong to the MA.

Thanks to previous research projects, a few comments can be put forward.

- The definition of common criteria to define MAs is all the more so easy as the working group in charge of this task can include regional statisticians or academics, i.e. the future users of the metropolitan-related data subsequently delivered.
- It is more important to choose common criteria than to choose thresholds for the application of those criteria.
- The comparability between MAs is better ensured when the administrative unit selected (the basic brick) to define them is as small as possible.

Specification for ESPON research on Need 3

Comparable EU patterns of consumption (contributed by the METREX Secretariat)

The objective of this part of the research is to assemble comparative data about individual consumption expenditure in the EU member states. The purpose of collecting this information would be to identify, at the national level, significant differences in expenditure patterns and to understand the influence that these patterns have on development forms and pressures at the strategic level within each member state

In the UK, information about individual consumption expenditure by households is recorded in the 2006 edition of the United Kingdom National Accounts. The Accounts are normally referred to as 'The Blue Book', which is published annually by the Office for National Statistics, 1 Drummond Gate, London SW1V 2QQ. The expenditure categories in the Blue Book are consistent with the classification of individual consumption by purpose (COICOP) that is part of the European System of Accounts 1995.

Certain categories of expenditure are identified in the list below and are considered to be those most likely to inform issues relating to strategic planning. The categories would require to be checked for consistency with comparable data for other EU countries at the outset of the research.

The list is an abstract compiled from the categories in Tables 6.2 to 6.5 of the Blue Book. Data on expenditure on health, communications (postal & telephone services), education and miscellaneous goods and services are also included in the tables in The Blue Book and taken with the categories below comprise total consumption expenditure. Researchers may opt to undertake the research by including all of the expenditure categories.

Expenditure categories

Convenience Goods - Food; beverages; tobacco; and newspapers.

Comparison Goods - Clothing & footwear; furnishings; household goods; DIY equipment & materials; audio-visual, photographic and IT equipment; telephones; other goods for recreation & culture; other recreational items and equipment, including, flowers, gardening goods and pet supplies; and books and stationary.

Housing - Mortgages and rent; maintenance and repair; and utility costs (electricity, gas, other fuels, water and sewerage).

Transport - Purchase and running costs of private vehicles; and public transport services.

Leisure - Recreational and cultural services; and restaurants and hotels (excludes expenditure on overseas holidays).

Anyone making an analysis of the data in the Blue Book should also take account of the way in which MapInfo (a major provider of retail expenditure data in the UK) assemble the two main categories of retail expenditure (convenience and comparison).

The Blue Book also records final consumption expenditure outside the UK by UK residents. This information would require to be examined to see if it is possible abstract expenditure on overseas holidays by UK residents.

This note focuses on the data available in the UK. The research would involve acquisition of the same data for all of the EU member states. A significant element of the work would involve ensuring that all of the data was on a common monetary basis, most likely in euros at given price base. The end product of the research would be a series of tables showing expenditure by category for the EU Member states on an absolute and proportional basis. Depending on data availability, there may be merit in also presenting the data as a time series.

Prior to undertaking the research, it would be prudent to check if any of the Institutions or Bodies of the EU have undertaken similar research.

Specification for ESPON research on Need 4

Comparative services of public interest (contributed by the METREX Secretariat)

The competitiveness of European metropolitan areas relies partly on their comparative quality of life. One of the indicators of this is the standard and quality of services of public interest, that is, those core services not met primarily through the market and the private sector. Such core services include health, education, public transport and aspects of culture. These are the services that are usually substantially provided and funded through the public sector even if they are not always delivered through the public sector.

Need 4 is related to Need 3. Consumption of public services such as transport and leisure are included in Need 3. Research might address the comparative data on levels of metropolitan services of public interest for inclusion in indicators of competitiveness and quality of life.

Specification for ESPON research on Need 5

Climate change/Urban change (contributed by the METREX Secretariat)

The Prospectus for the EURCO2 80/50 project is included with this Note. The purpose of the project is to roll out the application of the Greenhouse gas Regional Inventory Project (GRIP) across the metropolitan areas of Europe. Appendix 2 of the Prospectus sets out the data needs for metropolitan greenhouse gas emissions assessments and mitigation scenarios and strategies. There is a need to research the availability and comparability of such data sources across metropolitan Europe in order to be able progress the adoption of informed and effective mitigation strategies.

The GRIP model is operated through the UK Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and need 5 could be met through joint research with the Centre.

Specification for ESPON research on Need 6

European spatial planning process (contributed by the METREX Secretariat)

Much of the research work of ESPON is based on analyses of urban areas using indicators of comparable competitiveness and quality of life. Analyses of Functional Urban Areas (FUA) and Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA) form the basis for further ESPON work on polycentricity and on Global Integration Zones (*Zoom in* report). In effect, such conclusions represent an embryonic Vision for the *harmonious and better balanced development of the European territory*. CPMR and METREX (through *Framework*) have also taken views on the same issues of polycentricity and balance.

If the European research and practitioner communities are serious about these issues then research has to move on to policy discussion and a to process through which a European spatial planning and development Vision can be identified and recognised and an integrated Strategy adopted to achieve its implementation over the longer term.

The process of subsidiarity means decisions being taken at the level to which they apply. There is no doubt that spatial planning and development decisions are needed at the European level and it is presently anomalous that there is no document that encapsulates and integrates these into a new European Perspective in succession to the ESDP of 1999. The very territorial extension of the EU alone would demand this.

Spatial Visions and Integrated Strategies are advocated for transnational and inter regional areas across Europe and yet there is no overarching Vision and Strategy at the European level to provide a coherent context for these.

It is appreciated that spatial planning and development, as such, does not feature in current EU Treaties and legislation. However, there is now a recognised territorial dimension, in addition to a social and economic dimension, to European affairs. This would seem to acknowledge that territorial cohesion is an issue and it is difficult to imagine what this could mean other than an understanding of the relationships between Europe's primary urban areas, their problems and their opportunities. A polycentric approach implies the maximisation of opportunities for cooperation, on matters of common interest, and complementarity, to develop specialisations. The need is for a European context for territorial cohesion. What would this look like in spatial terms? At the very least it could be expected to reflect an integrated approach to key strategic metropolitan, transportation and environmental issues.

Current documents that rely primarily on text and are diminished in their ability to communicate without maps and diagrams. The European spatial planning and development community needs to develop a strategic graphic vocabulary that is as powerful as language.

METREX suggests that an exploratory seminar or discussion group might be formed of the key European stakeholders (bodies, institutions, networks) that have a common strategic interest in the development of a European spatial planning and development Vision and Strategy. This might then set out the basis for an ongoing process, at the European level, through which such a Vision and Strategy might be produced, maintained and rolled forward.

The competence of nation states in this field is acknowledged but it also needs to be acknowledged that there is a primary level of stakeholders below the nation state that also needs a coherent European spatial planning context. Such stakeholders should feel free to develop this in the absence of any formal initiative at the European level. It might have no more power than can be achieved through reasoned argument and justification but this, of itself, may influence events over time.

It might certainly provide the necessary strategic context within which metropolitan Europe could move forward on a polycentric basis. This is felt to be crucial.