METROPOLITAN AND CROSS-BORDER FUNCTIONALITY

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Metropolitan and cross-border functionality
Definitions, examples and methodologies for post-2020 programming

The European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) joined forces with the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) to deliver a Policy Lab to and with the support of the Czech Ministry of Regional Development. This Joint Meeting took place on the 14th of November 2019 in Prague and it aimed to provide a platform for exchange of examples of the practical work and delivery of functional areas, with the view on the upcoming cycle of cross-border and metropolitan programmes.

Morning Session

Ms Marie Zezůlková (Figure 1), the recently appointed Head of the Regional Policy Department of the Czech Ministry of Regional Development, welcomed the participants of the day, coming from a variety of countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania). Ms Zezůlková stressed the importance of Functional Urban Areas and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) for the Czech Republic. She shared with the audience that, as a clear expression of that, other parallel events were taking place in Prague about that same topic within the same day. The challenges involved with territorial programming and joint planning of an area are not always easy, she admitted. She further explained:

“When I started my career, the national state still planned cutting out the territories in maps and plans that did not fit into the urban administrative borders, and in the planning process of the City of Brno. In my former job, I noticed that they excluded everything from their long-term vision that was outside the scope of the city borders. It is all about changing the mindset. We have progressed in this sense, but we are also aware that many things remain to be organised. From now on we have to properly delineate regions and FUAs and shouldn’t speak only about municipalities in the Czech Republic and in the EU in general.”

Ms Zezůlková presented ITIs to the audience as an instrument offering concrete results all across Europe. Czechia is now in the evaluation process of ITIs, including the definition and how to use this tool in the next programming period. Thus she affirmed the need to cooperate with both ESPON and the EUKN as a way
to bring evidence from other Member States, supporting the Czech Republic to use ITIs properly. Ms Zezůlková stated that:

“The European Urban Knowledge Network is an important knowledge partner for the Ministry of Regional Development. Being a Member of EUKN has offered this Ministry Policy Labs to share experiences and help define problems, just like we will do today.”

Mr Elja Diepenbrock (Figure 2), Senior Project Manager of the EUKN, followed Ms. Zezůlková’s introduction. He thanked the Czech Ministry of Regional Development for co-organising the event, the CAMP/IPR (Center for Architecture and Urban Planning as a venue of IPR, Prague’s Institute for Planning and Development) for hosting the Joint Meeting on their premises, as well as ESPON for the smooth collaboration during the preparation of the event. He recalled some of the EUKN’s aims and activities, as well as the themes of Policy Labs in Prague organised in recent years, together with the Regional and European Territorial Policy Departments of the Ministry. Mr Diepenbrock introduced some background information and food for thought on behalf of ESPON and the EUKN, including a brief overview about the revision of the Leipzig Charter, a document to be adopted under the German Presidency of the second half of 2020 with the aim of promoting sustainable and harmonious urban development. He expected FUAs and urban-rural cooperation, including the role of small and medium-sized cities and their future, explicitly to be addressed in the new Leipzig Charter. Moreover, he portrayed the current context of the European debates, which are taking place now that the European Commission deleted all notions of eligibility linked to location for the future ETC programmes. Mr Diepenbrock argued that:

“This is seen as a massive simplification and a great step towards taking a flexible approach to project selection, based on the needs and the most appropriate types of partners, rather than eligibility linked to administrative boundaries.”

Understanding functionality in metropolitan and cross-border contexts comes at a very timely moment, he concluded, reminding the audience that not only a new EP and a new
Commission are starting now, but also a new Multi-Annual Financial Framework must be agreed on in the very near future.

**Mr Henk Bouwman** (Figure 3), Secretary General of METREX and moderator of the day, thanked both introduction speakers for the observations and backgrounds offered to the participants. He announced that the morning now would continue with the scientific and practitioner’s perspective on functionality, followed by a joint afternoon discussion under the Chatham House rule. Explaining the programme, Mr. Bouwman apologised for the absence of the speaker Mr Bernd Schuh and thanked Mr Carsten Schürmann who replaced Mr Schuh.

**Ms Vanya Simeonova**, ESPON Researcher on spatial dynamics and strategical planning on behalf of Wageningen University (NL), launched the science perspective on the definition of functionality. She presented the **ESPON SPIMA project** which addresses functional metropolitan development in Europe, showing the different approaches to the definition and functioning of Metropolitan Areas.

Ms Simeonova explained how the project focused on seven different elements: delineation of Metropolitan Areas in Europe (1), urban trends and spatial dynamics (2), current challenges and institutional frameworks (3), success factors, incentives and policy tools (4) a common approach for extrapolation and typology (5), the policy implications (6) and guidelines and recommendations for cities (7).

According to Ms Simeonova, Metropolitan Areas are highly interesting examples of functionality as they show how the battle between shared governance and planning takes place day by day. Moreover, Metropolitan Areas help raise issues such as how to deal with so many municipalities in Europe and how to define the best scale of functional urban development. These questions enable to identify the most appropriate way of coordination and management of urban sprawl and sub-urbanisation, two issues linked to the rapid growth of European cities.

Explaining the SPIMA project, Ms Simeonova indicated that 10 cities have been investigated. All these cities are unique, but they might have some comparable difficulties. She emphasized that there is not a single definition of a metropolitan area and that this is especially due to the perception and differences between the stakeholders involved per area. It is crucial to understand the spatial dynamics of a metropolitan area to be able to design any kind of policies. Therefore, Ms Simeonova stressed the need to report the challenges that metropolitan areas are facing nowadays to the European Commission. Hopefully this would make it easier for the European and national levels to offer guidelines and recommendations to cities. Among the 10 cities, Ms Simeonova provided the example of **Lille**: a cross-border FUA consisting of 622 municipalities in France and 60 municipalities in Belgium. At such a scale hardly any planning exists concerning sustainable metropolitan development and relevant questions still need to be answered. How does it then work from a governance point of view? Who is the political and administrative “problem owner” of the area?

To conclude she emphasized that:

“We need to have top-down and bottom-up collaboration to find shared benefits. If people don’t understand each other in terms of culture, how can they collaborate? However, to understand each other, we should be able to find common grounds for intangible concepts.”
Mr Carsten Schürmann, representing TCP International based in Stuttgart and replacing Mr. Bernd Schuh, elaborated on the potentials of Cross-border Public Service(s) (CPS) to establish or reinforce functional linkages in border regions. He did so by concentrating on the key results of the ESPON Cross-border Public Service project.

Mr Schürmann confirmed the observation of Ms Simeonova that functional areas and functional linkages are an abstract non-tangible concept, which makes it difficult to understand for the general public. He also observed that too often FUAs - in this case CPS - are reduced to cross-border commuting, which causes lots of other linkages to be neglected. In reality, functional linkages in a border context are of course far more varied, he explained to the audience. The focus should be on enabling flows and connections between people, goods, materials and knowledge. Mr Schürmann shared with the participants that the vision of the Commission was that Functional Areas should not just be analytical spaces, or an indirect by-product of policies. The idea was to use collaboration as a policy objective and to actively establish such linkages in different policy fields, going further than the almost cliché of transport connections.

A positive element of CPS according to him was that the installment of cross-border public services often preceded a change in legislation, because CPS respond to a concrete need and usually are implemented bottom-up. Mr Schürmann claimed that the implementation of CPS can be done in many different ways. He gave the examples of networked, centralized and integrated models. To establish a CPS, one should start from a common understanding, define the tasks to be executed, evaluate the legal framework and only then define the governance and management of the CPS.

The continuation of the morning session brought in the practitioner’s view to the definition of functionality, with Ms Iona Ivanov (Associate Partner of CIVITTA Romania) Mr Jaromir Hainc (Prague Institute of Planning and Development) (Figure 4), Mr Petr Sasinka (ITI Management City of Brno) and Ms Julita Milosz-Augustowska (Westpomeranian Voivodeship) offering some concrete examples – from Czechia (Prague and Brno) and other European regions (inter alia Bordeaux, Eindhoven, Grenoble, Oradea) – about integrated urban development in practice, the main challenges to a successful implementation and their experience with instruments and funding such as ITI. Ms Ivanov for example, considered that the most successful examples of FUA collaboration are often those established before the planning period started, or the legal framework came into force, because the actors involved really were motivated to cooperate. She also raised attention to her observation that funding is key aspect for the implementation of FUAs, but that funding is not always a guarantee for a FUAs’ success.
During the afternoon an extensive discussion moderated by Henk Bouwman, chair of the day, took place. However, this discussion was organized respecting the Chatham House Rule, which implies that neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers may be revealed but also, in this specific situation, that no direct reporting of the discussion can be published. The decision to organise the afternoon session in this way was taken by ESPON, the EUKN and the Ministry of Regional Development during preparations of the Joint Meeting, in order to allow the participants and experts to freely express their ideas, questions and experiences on this topic.

Applying the Chatham House Rule, a very instructive discussion and exchange of perspectives was moderated, based on the three provocative statements and nourished by the input of three experts: Mr Martin Maštálka, Mr Zbyněk Šimánek and Mr Carsten Schürmann.

Mr Mastalka from the University of Pardubice, gave a brief presentation on the evaluation of the implementation process of ITI in Czechia. First, he mentioned the stakeholders involved in the project and explained the methods used, then he presented four negative and four positive findings that emerged from the evaluation. Mr Šimánek from the Ministry of Regional Development of Czechia, presented on behalf of Charles University the project of territorial delimitation for ITI and FUA in 2021-2027 in Czechia. He illustrated the main factors that are going to change in territorial delimitation between the current period (2014-2020) and the upcoming one (2021-2027). Mr Schürmann, who presented extensively the topic of CPS already in the morning session, joined the discussion reacting to the previous presentations and the provocative statements.

The statements, formulated by the EUKN Secretariat, were:

1. “The idea to promote an integrated investment strategy in European urban areas by means of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs), in which funding from several priority axes and programmes could be combined, was comprehensible. However, the complex structure of ITIs and the administrative burden they represent for local authorities, has severely weakened this EU policy instrument.”
2. “The lack of willingness of adjacent administrative bodies to cooperate in a FUA is a bigger problem in Europe than the absence of regulatory and financial frameworks.”

3. “Metropolitan Areas in the EU anyhow will find their way to strategically cooperate. So the New Leipzig Charter and the Post 2020 European Territorial Agenda should mainly focus on relatively small and medium-sized cities and urban areas.”

After the discussion under the Chatham House Rule was finished, Ms Katerina Jupova, Project Manager from GISAT, a remote sensing and geoinformation service company in Prague, had the floor to present the ESPON FUORE project to the participants. The ESPON FUORE project is currently developing a tool to estimate indicators on functional urban areas and regions in Europe. Ms Jupova offered some examples of the data-processing and the maps produced or enabled by it. More information is available on http://www.fuore.eu/sxcat

Mr Henk Bouwman, Secretary General of Metrex, and Mr Jiří Vlček, Policy Officer of the Czech Ministry of Regional Development, closed the discussions of the day briefly looking back to it and shared some personal observations. They both affirmed that the information shared today between all experts and participants had been almost overwhelming, but that at the same time, many questions and challenges on metropolitan and cross-border functionality remain to be explored. Mr Bouwman thanked all speakers and participants for their high commitment and noticeable enthusiasm during the day.