The potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions

- Recognising the challenges
- Understanding the concept and approach
- Finding appropriate responses

organised by the incoming Luxembourg Council Presidency
in the framework of the IT-LV-LU Trio Presidency Programme

30 June 2015 in Luxembourg City
Centre de Conférence – Hôtel Parc Belle-Vue
5 Avenue Marie-Thérèse
L-2132 Luxembourg

The workshop is addressed at experts from the European, national, regional and local level
motivated to discuss the potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions:
- Policymakers;
- Academics and consultants;
- Representatives of administrations;
- NGOs and stakeholders;

To register please use the link: http://www.dat.public.lu/functions/subscribe/registration-urban/

The final version of the programme and practical information will be available in the Presidency section of the department’s webpage under:


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Context of the Trio Presidency

The Trio Presidency of Italy-Latvia-Luxembourg has placed its programme in the fields of Territorial Cohesion and Urban Policy under the general theme of making the objective of territorial cohesion included in the Lisbon Treaty as well as the Territorial Agenda 2020 more operational. There is a window of opportunity for this kind of debate after the launch of the ESIF programmes and right at the moment when the new Commission is taking up its work under the slogan of “A new start for Europe”.

The common umbrella theme of small and medium cities is the specific contribution of the Presidency Trio IT-LV-LU to the proposed EU Urban Agenda. Moreover, it is closely linked to the Trio Presidency’s assessment of the implementation of the Territorial Cohesion objective and the Territorial Agenda 2020, highlighting the role and development perspectives of small and medium cities in common territorial development visions.

The need to recognise the potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions

The current discussion in the context of urban policy mainly focuses on metropolitan areas and regions, which are characterised by a high concentration of population and economic activities, as well as public infrastructure and facilities. They are seen as drivers for territorial development in the European and national context. However, it needs to be recognised that about a half of the urban population in Europe lives in small and medium cities. In this context, small and medium cities refer to continuous built-up areas with less than 250,000 inhabitants that constitute the lower levels in the national urban hierarchy. This definition makes reference to both size and function, and it is flexible enough to cover the wide variety of cases across Europe.

These types of cities have their own specific challenges, but also their specific capital and territorial potential, which is at risk if not well supported by tailored policy interventions. These cities cooperating among themselves and with rural areas play a major role for the European territory as places of attraction and growth, but also as providers of services of general interest and higher ranked services for the whole region. Therefore, the common umbrella theme of the Presidency Trio IT-LV-LU is devoted to the question of how to better utilise the potential of small and medium cities.

The contribution of the Luxembourgish Presidency to the common Trio theme is to highlight the potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions. The concept of cross-border polycentric regions refers to the structure of polycentric networks that allow small and medium cities across borders to reach the critical mass for unlocking their development potential. This potential often remains unlocked due to the traditionally less urbanised and compact settlement structure of border regions and diverging legal frameworks.

The aim to further promote the potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions is a strategy towards meeting the challenge of ‘critical mass’: their limited demographic size,
economic weight and connectivity indicate a certain vulnerability that can only be overcome if they forge partnerships with cities of a similar type and size on the other side of the border. Therefore, cross-border cooperation is an indispensable strategy for small and medium cities to ensure the critical mass of resources for territorial as well as economic development.

**Aims of the workshop and best possible result**

The purpose of the workshop is to explore the challenges and potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions (CBPRs), by presenting a state of play report on CBPRs with a selection of case studies from across Europe and facilitating an exchange between relevant stakeholders.

The report on CBPRs, prepared by the research institute LISER will give a general overview on the state of play of CBPRs in Europe. The report is meant to provide an update to the results of the ESPON METROBORDER study (2009), whose aim was to analyse and map the conditions and status of the CBPRs as well as to explore ways of how to (better) use their potential.

Furthermore, the workshop should allow the exchange, via panel discussions and thematic workshops, on the following topics:

- The added value of a polycentric urban development across borders: *do European, national and regional stakeholders sufficiently recognise the potential of CBPRs?*
- Good practices and obstacles: *what are good practices around Europe and which obstacles exist with reference to the cooperation between small and medium cities across borders?*
- The current discussions on urban and territorial policies: *how can we make sure that the role of small and medium cities is taken into account and their potential is being recognised in the current debates at the European level and their potential recognized?*
- The European Structural and Investment Funds: *how do the instruments and objectives of the ESIF support the development of CBPRs?*
- The governance question: *do small and medium cities in CBPRs raise particular governance issues and how can they be involved in effective multi-level governance?*

The best possible result of the workshop would be a common understanding of the need to take the potential of small and medium cities in CBPRs into account in the context of urban and territorial development. The results of the workshop will nourish the ambitions for the actions tabled at the Informal Ministerial Meeting organised by the Luxembourgish Presidency and should lead to a political commitment from future Presidencies and European Institutions to take over the actions after the LU Presidency.

**Who should participate in the workshop?**

As the workshop has the purpose of facilitating an exchange and open dialogue on the potential of small and medium cities in CBPRs, a good mix of experts from all sectors at the European, transnational, national, and regional level (who are motivated to discuss the future of cross-border cooperation) is needed.
Invited are ...

- Policymakers;
- Academics and consultants;
- Representatives of administrations;
- NGOs and stakeholders;
- All actors at the European, transnational, national, and regional level

... who are offering to contribute to a critical debate, which can pave the way for the work of the incoming and future Presidencies on this matter.
Draft Programme

Tuesday, 30 June 2015 – Workshop “The potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions”

Chair of the day: Marie-Josée Vidal, Head of Cross-Border Unit, Department of Spatial Planning and Development, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Luxembourg

08:30 – 09:00 Registration and welcome coffee

Opening

09:00 - 09:05 Welcome
  • Frank Vansteenkiste, Director-General, Department of Spatial Planning and Development, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Luxembourg

09:05 - 09:10 Setting the scene
  • Marie-Josée Vidal, Department of Spatial Planning and Development, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Luxembourg

09:10 - 09:20 The Trio theme of small and medium cities
  • Mart Grisel, European Urban Knowledge Network

Session 1

09:15 - 10:15 Presentation of the state of play report: The concept of cross-border polycentric regions and an EU-wide overview
  • Antoine Decoville, Head of the Team Urban Development, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)

Discussion

10:15 – 10:45 Coffee Break

Session 2

10:45 - 12:30 Panel: The potential and challenges of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions
  How are small and medium cities perceived and how are their challenges taken into account at the European, national and regional level? What was the triggering aspect that led to increasing cooperation? What are the themes of cooperation? What are the challenges? How is the political process organised?
• Judit Torokne Rozsa, Head of Unit, European Commission - DG Regio
• URBACT Secretariat
• Martin Orth, Initiativkreis Metropolitane Grenzregionen (IMeG)
• Zoltán Páser, cross-border region Oradea (RO) – Debrecen (HU)
• Representative from the Eurocity Chaves (PO) – Verín (ES)
• Representative from the cross-border region Aachen (DE) – Hasselt (BE) – Heerlen (NL) – Liège (BE) – Maastricht (NL)

Discussion

12:30 - 13:45  Lunch

Session 3

13:45 - 15:30  Cross-border polycentric regions put into action (thematic workshops)

The following topics will be discussed in workshops by addressing issues related to governance, ESIF funding opportunities, and common development strategies. The discussion will be launched by impulse statements.

a) Common infrastructure projects (transport, public services, cultural infrastructure, etc.)
• Petri Suopanki, twin cities of Haparanda (SE) – Tornio (FI)
• Sören Bollman, twin cities of Frankfurt-Oder (DE) – Ślubice (PL)

b) Labour market
• Dr. Manuel Friesecke, cross-border region of Basel (CH)

c) Economic development, innovation and research
• Stef Vande Meulebroucke, cross-border region of Lille (FR) – Kortrijk (BE) – Tournai (BE)

Conclusions and closure

15:30 - 16:00  Reporting from workshops and Conclusions

• 3 rapporteurs
• Marie-Josée Vidal (LU)

16:30  Farewell Coffee