The Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)

Testing results and recommendations

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Executive summary

**RFSC result of prior decisions of Ministers**
The Ministers responsible for urban and spatial development of the Member States in Europe wanted to strengthen the integrated approach and were convinced that a more pronounced dialogue was necessary on urban sustainability. They decided to have a practical tool created that would translate the common sustainability goals and the Leipzig Charter objectives into more practical terms for European cities. They had enshrined two key objectives in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities of 2007: integrated urban development should be applied throughout Europe and deprived urban neighbourhoods must receive more attention within an integrated urban development policy.

This led from 2008 to 2010 to the development of a common European Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC). In the Toledo Declaration of June 2010, the Ministers stressed the important contribution of sustainable urban development to the Europe 2020 strategy. They saw the RFSC as a voluntary, adaptable, flexible, non-binding, and free of access tool to stimulate sustainable and integrated urban development in European cities and in line with the Europe 2020 goals. To ensure that the RFSC meets the needs of Europe's cities and the envisaged objectives, Ministers decided to have the prototype of the RFSC tested by cities before a final version of the RFSC should be launched.

**RFSC: a ‘joint’ European initiative**
In the development and the testing of the RFSC cities and local authorities networks (such as CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions) have been working together with representatives of France, other Member States of the EU, and the European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional Policy). The ‘multi-level working structure’ was jointly chaired by CEMR, France and Directorate General for Regional Policy.

**Goals of the RFSC**
The objectives of the RFSC are:
- provide a generally accepted common framework for sustainable urban development and creating and promoting a common understanding about the benefits of integrated urban development policy approaches;
- provide practical instruments for cities that encourage and facilitate skills and capacity building to better manage urban development;
- provide a set of quality material and instruments that allow for communication within and between cities on the basis of a common format, but that can also be adapted to the cities' individual needs and priorities;
- encourage the dialogue and exchange within and beyond Europe's cities on the implementation of integrated urban development approaches at city-level and facilitating the European dialogue on sustainable urban development policies at all levels.

**Functionality of the RFSC**

The conceptual origins of the RFSC can be found in the Leipzig Charter with its political objectives of integrated urban development and specific attention for deprived neighbourhoods. The political objectives and principles of the Ministers for urban development have been translated into a list of topics, aims and actions for cities. This list of 25 'core questions on sustainable urban development' is linked to the four pillars of sustainability: economy, social, environment and governance. Cities can use the RFSC to develop and improve strategies and projects, to check the integrated approach of strategies and projects, to review policies focusing on deprived neighbourhoods, to develop or improve monitoring systems for strategies or projects or to learn from other European cities. The 'integrated approach' is visible in the RFSC by the showing of interdependencies and raising awareness about possible synergies and conflicts. The web-tool is promoted to function across different sectors (e.g. planning, environment, economy, transport etc.) and across levels (local, regional, national and European). As such, it can be used by politicians, planners, project managers, citizens and stakeholders.

**Testing phase of the RFSC prototype**

The purpose of the testing phase was to ensure that the overall targets of the RFSC are effectively met. So the testing objectives were: are the tools matching the cities' needs, are the overall goals of the RFSC met, and does the RFSC have an added value for cities?

The main tasks for the testing phase were to consolidate, test, evaluate, improve and finalise the prototype of the RFSC web-tool, and to raise the awareness for and the ownership of the RFSC amongst cities.

A pool of 66 test cities of 23 Member States was selected that reflect the width and diversity of European cities in terms of size, function, type and challenges. The test cities did a tremendous effort to give their feedback on the RFSC and this proofed very valuable to draw conclusions and make recommendations for an eventual further development of the RFSC. The effort and the motivation of the test cities is remarkable because they had to carry out the testing and provide their testing feedback in a time of financial crisis, austerity measures and budget cuts amidst local political developments. Furthermore, the prototype of the RFSC was not yet available in their own language (with some exceptions); creating obstacles to use the prototype RFSC for internal and external dialogue about sustainable and integrated urban development.
Testing feedback from the test cities

Hundreds of positive, sceptical and critical remarks of the RFSC and parts of the RFSC are made by the test cities. Also hundreds of suggestions to improve the prototype are provided.

Principal conclusions

The overall goals of the RFSC are met and the RFSC is meeting the cities' needs. Of the testers in the test cities almost 90% say that it would be regrettable if a final version of the RFSC would not be developed after the testing phase. The following value added came out of the testing phase.

The RFSC stimulates internal and external dialogue about sustainable and integrated urban development. The internal dialogue is mostly facilitated between managers and staff members (67% of the testers indicate this) and between different departments in the city administration (65% of the testers indicate this). Also the external dialogue is facilitated by the RFSC. Of the testers 70% agrees that the RFSC facilitates the dialogue on sustainable and integrated development between cities across Europe and between the city and the regional, national and/or European levels (65%).

The test cities agree that the use of the RFSC stimulates to consider new approaches in sustainable and integrated urban development (63%), improves their capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated urban development (61%) and will accelerate sustainable and integrated urban development (58%).

The RFSC helps to improve urban policies, strategies and projects through e-learning, exchange and capacity-building.

The cities can use the RFSC as a manual or checklist for their strategies and projects (didn’t I forget relevant objectives and indicators, how can I improve my own monitoring system where certain elements or pillars are not well developed with the suggestions of the RFSC, am I in line with European objectives?).

The RFSC helps to build a common understanding and language about sustainable and integrated urban development; this common understanding, language and shared key indicators permit the cities to compare different approaches and results.

Of the testers in the test cities 40% said that they do not have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated development and 32% say they have better tools (28% of the testers cannot agree nor disagree whether they have better tools than the RFSC). In the testing phase of the prototype of the RFSC it became clear that the value added of the RFSC is higher in the small and medi-
um-sized cities than in the large cities and that the value added of the RFSC is perceived at a larger degree by the test cities in Southern and Eastern Europe than by the test cities of Northwest Europe.

**Recommendations for improvements of the RFSC**

Although, in general and for a large majority of test cities, the overall goals of the RFSC are met and are in line with the cities’ needs the testing phase made also clear that important improvements in the usability of the RFSC have to be carried through. The use of the RFSC is too complicated and too time consuming. When the usability of the RFSC will not be improved probably a small number of European cities will use the RFSC in the future. When the improvements are carried through 80% of the testers (staff members, managers and politicians) state they will use (parts of) the RFSC regularly in the future.

The urgent and important improvements in usability that have to be carried through are:

− improve the **understanding** of the RFSC (more self-explanatory, present and describe an ‘ideal’ or ‘a good practice’ of sustainable and integrated urban development, demonstrate the value added of the RFSC vis-à-vis other tools the cities are using);
− facilitate the **internal dialogue** better (share information between users and departments within the city administration);
− increase the **flexibility** of use (define own objectives of sustainable and integrated urban development and give more freedom to indicate topics of interest in peer city searches);
− **customize** the RFSC (present only the tools and parts of tools that are requested by the user);
− increase the possibilities of **external dialogue** (facilitate more voluntary ‘benchlearning’, refine city profiles, make partner searches more flexible and start with enough illustrations in the final version);
− improve the functionality of the tool ‘focus on deprived neighbourhoods’;
− improve the **navigation** within the web-based tool (homepage, get started, link between the different tools of the RFSC);
− improve the **general ergonomics** of the web-based tool (readability, visibility, printing options);
− the RFSC should be available in the **own language** of all members states;
− improve the 25 core objectives/questions and the 33 key indicators of sustainable and integrated urban development.

The improvements will increase the functionality and the usability of the RFSC and as a consequence the number of small and medium-sized cities that will use the final version of the RFSC in the future. The testing phase showed that that the RFSC can be used flexibly and according to the local political and administrative procedures and cycles. Of course
the testing phase imposed time constraints that in reality would be different. Some cities had to simulate situations that in practice would have occurred at a different point in time and with a less intense frequency of use.

Notwithstanding the sometimes artificial testing situation it is remarkable that:

- 61% of the testers say that the RFSC improved their capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated urban development;
- 63% of the testers claim that the use of the RFSC stimulated new approaches in sustainable and integrated development;
- 65% of the testers agree that the RFSC facilitates the dialogue on sustainable and integrated development between different departments in the city administration;
- 68% of the testers say that the RFSC facilitates the external dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development between cities across Europe.

Considering this testing feedback one can expect that the RFSC will lead to more and better integrated policies, to improved coordination and synergies, to more efficiency and effectiveness and thus to cost-savings in the long run.
1 Introduction

**Historical background RFSC**

With the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities and the Territorial Agenda of the European Union of 2007, European ministers responsible for urban and spatial development defined key fields of action and possible solutions to sustainability issues. In the Leipzig Charter two key objectives were defined:

- integrated urban development should be applied throughout Europe;
- deprived urban neighbourhoods must receive more attention within an integrated urban development policy.

Since Ministers were convinced that a more pronounced dialogue was necessary on urban sustainability, they decided to have a practical tool created that would translate the common sustainability goals and the Leipzig Charter objectives into more practical terms. The aim was to help cities to apply the integrated approach and to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable urban development within and amongst cities. This was the starting point for the creation of a common European Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC). In the Marseille Statement (2008) the Ministers gave their endorsement to the first initiatives under the French Presidency to create a tool that assists cities in implementing the Leipzig Charter: the RFSC.

The development of the RFSC prototype in 2009/2010 marked a period of in-depth analyses, discussions and striking a balance between the different needs and interests. During the development phase around 200 existing instruments have been analyzed and tools and on-site studies in cities (surveys, stakeholder experiences) have been conducted. Further, discussions have been taken place with cities, Member States, European institutions, associations and networks, urban experts and stakeholders. These background research activities and discussions finally led to the first RFSC prototype which was presented to the Ministers for urban development in Toledo, Spain in June 2010.

In the Toledo Declaration of June 2010, the Ministers welcomed the presentation of the RFSC prototype. The RFSC has been conceived as a voluntary, adaptable, flexible, nonbinding, and free of access tool. It has capitalised on the experience of more than 70 existing reference frameworks in European cities. With the Toledo Declaration the Ministers reconfirmed the Leipzig Charter and stressed the important contribution of sustainable urban development to the Europe 2020 strategy. To ensure that the RFSC meets the needs of Europe’s cities and the envisaged objectives Ministers decided to test the version 1 of the RFSC inviting 66 cities to be a test city. The pool of test cities should reflect
the width and diversity of European cities in terms of size, function, type and challenges. The purpose of the testing phase was to ensure that the overall targets of the RFSC are effectively met. The tasks of RFSC are:

- providing a generally accepted common framework for sustainable urban development and creating and promoting a common understanding about the benefits of integrated urban development policy approaches;
- providing practical instruments for cities that encourage and facilitate skills and capacity building to better manage urban development;
- providing a set of quality material and instruments that allow for communication within and between cities on the basis of a common format, but that can also be adapted to the cities’ individual needs and priorities;
- encouraging the dialogue and exchange within and beyond Europe’s cities on the implementation of integrated urban development approaches at city-level and facilitating the European dialogue on sustainable urban development policies at all levels.

Consequently, the main tasks for the testing phase were to consolidate, test, evaluate, improve and finalise the prototype of the RFSC web-tool, as it was presented at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development in Toledo in June 2010 and to raise the awareness for and the ownership of the RFSC amongst cities.

RFSC: a ‘joint’ European initiative

During the preparation of the RFSC prototype and during the testing phase the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities has proven to be a perfect example of multi-level governance. Cities and local authorities networks (such as CEMR; Council of European Municipalities and Regions) have been working together with representatives of Member States of the EU and the European Commission (Directorate General for Regional Policy). The ‘multi-level working structure’ is jointly chaired by CEMR, France and Directorate General for Regional Policy.

Expertise and support during the preparation of the RFSC prototype and the testing phase has been provided by CERTU (France) the National Support Groups and one of the URBACT projects: LC-FACIL (6 cities). During the testing phase 60 test cities across Europe supported in the development of the RFSC with all kinds of feedback and by actual testing of the RFSC by real-life tests in real urban environments. Nicis Institute assisted in the RFSC testing phase by means of a helpdesk, providing the test cities all kinds of means to give feedback and analyse the feedback on the RFSC in this final report.

It should be noted that the test cities assisted in the development of the RFSC in a time of financial crisis, austerity measures and budget cuts amidst local political developments. Further, the RFSC as a prototype was only translated into four languages: English, German, French and
Czech (later also Polish). The test cities did a tremendous effort to give their feedback on the RFSC and this is very valuable for an eventual further development of the RFSC.

**RFSC and sustainable urban development**

The conceptual origins of the RFSC can be found in the Leipzig Charter (2007) with its political objectives of integrated urban development and specific attention for deprived neighbourhoods. The political objectives and principles of the ministers for urban development have been translated into a list of topics, aims and actions for cities. These 25 ‘core questions on sustainable urban development’ are linked to the 4 pillars of sustainability:

- Economy
- Social
- Environment
- Governance

The ‘integrated approach’ is visible in the RFSC by the showing of interdependencies and raising awareness about possible synergies and conflicts. There are also sub-questions and ‘secondary indicators’ to go into more details and to stimulate further debate on sustainable urban development.

**RFSC: a toolkit for cities**

RFSC is an interactive web-tool for cities. As one of its central aims the RFSC is specifically introduced to facilitate dialogue about sustainable urban development, both within cities as well as between cities. The web-tool is promoted to function across different sectors (e.g. planning, environment, economy, transport etc.) and across levels (local, regional, national and European). As such, it can be used by politicians, planners, project managers, citizens and stakeholders. As a specific asset, especially in times of financial crisis, the RFSC can be used free of charge.

With the RFSC cities can evaluate and develop sustainable urban development strategies and projects in a broad range. The cities can find peer cities and share experiences. They can then compare their policies and projects on the basis of a common understanding. Cities can check the integrated approach of an urban strategy or project, can build their own monitoring system (or check and revise an existing system) and use the indicators for their daily work.

**Report about testing results and recommendations**

In this report the most important results of the testing phase will be described and analyzed.

Chapter 2 describes briefly the testing phase with a short description of the goals and overall structure of the test. The test cities are listed as well as the test material/instruments, events and the support from the Member States. This is illustrated with examples, pictures and quotations from the launching event and the on-site visits and a contribution
from the external expert panel. More specifically, several test cases illustrate how the test was carried out in respective test cities with explicit attention for administrative and political involvement in the city. Chapter 3 provides the main conclusions of the testing phase and chapter 4 the main recommendations.
In chapter 5 (General parts of RFSC), chapter 6 (Networks part of the RFSC) and chapter 7 (Tools part of the RFSC) the results and recommendations are described at a more detailed level than in chapter 3 (Principal conclusions) and 4 (Main recommendations). Even more detailed are the Annexes 2 and 3 with concrete recommendations on the questioning grid and the indicators. Annex 1 provides an overview of the different types of test cities feedback. Annex 4 gives an overview of the separate technical reports which compile the extensive feedback that was obtained from test cities and Member States during the testing phase.
2 Description of testing phase

2.1 Introduction
This chapter will give a description of the testing phase from January 2011 to September 2011. Paragraph 2.2 describes the goals. The tasks of Nicis Institute during the testing phase and the overall structure of the testing phase is shortly described in paragraph 2.3. Paragraph 2.4 gives an overview of the test cities, testing tools, events and activities carried out in the organization of the testing, also by the Member States. Thereafter five concrete test cases will illustrate how the test was carried out in respective test cities, taking into account the different types of cities, the different tools of the RFSC and in particular the administrative and political involvement of the city.

2.2 Goals of testing
The aim of the testing phase was to answer the following questions:
- Are the tools matching the cities’ needs?
- Are the overall goals of the RFSC met?
  - Facilitate the development and evaluation of sustainable and integrated urban development strategies and projects
  - Foster the critical self-assessment of cities and conscious decision-making processes (internal dialogue)
  - Allow to compare different approaches and results on the basis of a common understanding (external dialogue)
  - Help to improve urban policies, strategies, projects and instruments through e-learning, exchange and capacity-building
  - Provide a tool that is adaptable to the national context and the local situation
- Does the RFSC have an added value for cities?

2.3 Nicis’ tasks in testing phase
In assisting the test cities, the Member States and Institutions Group (MS/I Group) and the European Commission Nicis Institute has carried out the following tasks.

Task 1: preparation of the test
The first step in the testing phase was the preparation of the necessary test material (such as information material, questionnaire etc.) to be delivered to the test cities. The test and therewith the according test material covered the different parts of the prototype of the RFSC. The
The test material was designed in such a way that it was easy to use for the test cities, that it allowed for an in-depth analysis whether the overall targets of the RFSC were effectively met as well as for conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the RFSC.

**Task 2: assist in the preparation and delivery of a launching event**

The Launching Event (15/16 March 2011, Brussels) marked the start of the test by the test cities. Nicis Institute assisted the European Commission in organising a launching event for the test cities, the six LC-FACIL cities, representatives from Member States and the members of the external expert panel. In total, over 150 people attended this event.

**Task 3: offer stand-by support during the test phase**

During the main testing period, Nicis Institute was constantly at the test cities', the LC-FACIL cities' and the national contact points' disposal in case they needed support or advice on how to test the RFSC. The aim was to accompany the test by the test cities as closely as possible in order to ensure the quality of the test results and to avoid misunderstandings. The newsletter played an important role to inform the test cities about the testing and to provide practical advice. For questions concerning the web-tool and its different functions, Nicis Institute could also refer to CERTU the developer of the RFSC. A close cooperation and co-ordination between Nicis Institute and CERTU was crucial and successful. Nicis Institute also ensured through on site-visits that all test cities received personal assistance. In total, 55 test cities and LC-FACIL Cities were visited, some of them separately, others jointly. All visits were organised and documented by Nicis Institute (see technical annex).

**Task 4: collect and analyse the feedback from the test**

Nicis Institute collected and compiled the feedback of the test cities, the LC-FACIL cities and the Member States. The feedback is analysed, systemized, synthesised, and described in this first interim report.

**Task 5: consult with an expert panel**

In order to ensure the quality of the conclusions and recommendations that Nicis Institute is supposed to provide for the improvement of the RFSC on the basis of the test results (see task 6), Nicis Institute has consulted an expert panel on the 28th of September in Brussels. Nicis Institute provided the external experts with the necessary information on the RFSC, the test material and the first interim report before the meeting.

The members of the expert panel have different experiences in urban development policies, sustainable urban development or in the challenges cities are facing in the 21st century.
The members of the expert panel were:
- Salvador RUEDA (Director of the Barcelona Ecology Agency, Spain);
- Maria BERRINI (Ambiente Italia, Italy);
- Christophe ROCARD (Project Manager « City - ERDF », Pays et Quartiers d’Aquitaine (PQA) Center of expertise and resources on the territorial development - Region Aquitaine, France);
- Bob CHRISTIE, (Outcomes Programme Manager Improvement Service, United Kingdom, Scotland);
- Radu BOLCHIS (Baia Mare City Hall, Executive Director, Romania);
- Dirk BERGVELT (Foundation Architectuur Lokaal, EFAP member, The Netherlands);
- Roland ZINKERNAGEL (city of Malmö, Indicator expert, Sweden);
- Prof. dr. Engelbert LÜTKE DALDRUP (Agentur für Stadtentwicklung bei UrbanPlan im Büro, Germany).

The expert panel has been asked to familiarize themselves with the RFSC and form themselves an opinion on the functionality of the tool and how the RFSC can be improved. The consultation with the RFSC focused on the difficult questions that came out of the testing (see paragraph 4.2).

**Task 6: final conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the RFSC**

On the basis of the test results and the consultation with the expert panel, Nicis Institute will draw conclusions on the test results and make recommendations for the amendment and adaptation of the RFSC in order to improve it in view of its overall aims. Nicis Institute will also propose a selection of five good test cases illustrating how the test was carried out in the respective test city and particularly the administrative and political involvement of the city. The conclusions and recommendations will be presented in the second interim report. The report will be discussed with the MS/I group.

**Task 7: ongoing assistance**

Nicis Institute has provided the European Commission with ongoing assistance during the testing phase. This ongoing assistance includes: technical assistance on an ongoing basis through e-mail and/or telephone calls, the participation of Nicis in regular coordination meetings with the Commission (Directorate General for Regional Policy), the management team and the MS/I group meetings.

**Task 8: elaborate an final report**

The final report which describes in a synthetic manner the results of the tasks will serve as background information for the RFSC.
2.4 The test cities

A wide variety of test cities have tested the tool of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC) from March 2011 to September 2011. As regards the selection process of the test cities: in every Member State the national Ministry was responsible for choosing the test cities. The number of test cities was distributed on the basis of number of inhabitants of the Member States. Therefore, Germany has six test cities in the RFSC testing phase and (for example) Estonia only one test city. The interest in the selection process differed per country. For example in Czech Republic, Greece and France more or less twenty test cities applied for participation in the RFSC testing phase. In other Member States it was more difficult to make the cities enthusiastic for a testing role (see chart).
The test cities have been geographically distributed across Europe and the RFSC have therefore been tested in Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern Europe on an equal scale. Also the size of the different test cities differed substantially. There were large metropolitan cities such as Munich and Warsaw present, but also medium-sized cities and even very small cities. This allowed to conclude provisionally on added value of the RFSC for multiple types of cities (table 2.1).

### Table 2.1 Countries and test cities by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>Test cities (x 1,000 number of inhabitants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Wien (1,700)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Brussels Capital Region (1,090), Genk (65), Seraing (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Gabrovo (75), Plovdiv (380)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Nicosia (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Brno (370), Hradec Králové (95), Litomerice (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Aalborg (192), Aarhus (310)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Jõgeva (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Helsinki-Espoo (1,000), Lahti (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Bordeaux (240), La Rochelle (150), Le Creusot-Montceau les Mines (90), Lille Métropole and Roubaix (1,300), Grand Nancy (260), Rennes Métropole (400/LC-FACIL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Arnsberg (75), Düsseldorf (90), Leipzig (520/LC-FACIL), Ludwigslugen (1,360), Trier (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Rethymnon (30), Samothraki (3), Velventos (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Szentes (30), Nyíregyháza (120), Szolnok (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Valmiera (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Luxembourg (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>San Lawrenz (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Enschede (157), Rotterdam (610), Tilburg (206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Bytom (185/LC-FACIL), Dzierzoniow (35), Sochaczew (37), Tczew (60), Warszaw (1,700)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Barreiro (79), Maia (143), Serpa (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Brăila (210), Craiova (300), Deva (70), Zalău (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Velenje (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Córdoba (330), Fuenlabrada (205), La Coruña (244), Málaga (580), Vitoria-Gasteiz (240/LC-FACIL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Gothenburg (520/LC-FACIL), Umeå (115), Uppsala (195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Belfast City (270), Glasgow City (590), Kirklees Metropolitan Council (410/LC-FACIL), Newcastle City (280), Thanet District (130), Workingham Borough (160)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 Testing tools

Launching event
The testing phase of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities officially started with a Launching Event in Brussels (15 and 16 March 2011). At the Launching Event test cities, LC-Facil cities, National Support Groups, MS/I and external experts were present. In plenary sessions and workshops the test cities could familiarize them with the objectives, structure and functionality of the RFSC.

Back office information of webmaster
During the RFSC testing phase there was many help from the back office at CERTU, and in particular from mr. David Caubel. This back office information was very relevant to prepare the on-site visits and to help the test cities further.

Page Feedback Surveys
Test cities have been asked to provide feedback at each page of the webtool RFSC. For this purpose a Page Feedback Survey was developed (figure 2.1).

At the right bottom of each page of the RFSC the testers in the test cities could click on a FEEDBACK button. Then the survey appeared that the testers could fill in. The testers could answer whether the page is clear and whether they know what to do on the specific page. Further, the testers could give suggestions for improvement.

Overall the pages are clear to the respondents. Of the in total 477 times that the various pages have been commented, 271 times (57%) the page was clear for the respondents, 167 times (35%) the page was partly clear and just 39 times (8%) the page was not clear. In total 306 suggestions (64%) for improvement were made (see technical annex).

Some general results:
- 49 cities have used the 'page feedback'-button: in total 477 times; of the test cities in particular Zalau (28 comments), Lille-Roubaix (25 comments), Belfast (25 comments) and Arnsberg (24 comments) provided many suggestions by using the Page Feedback Survey;
- Testers from 21 countries have used the Page Feedback Survey; many comments came from the large countries: France (59), United Kingdom (54) and Germany (46);

1 Eight cities were unable to attend the Launching Event: Utrecht/Tilburg (The Netherlands), Glasgow (Scotland), La Coruna (Spain), Craiova (Romania), Munich (Germany), Trier (Germany), Fuenlabrada (Spain) and Serpa (Portugal).
- Comments came from Northwest European test cities (266), East-European cities (129) and South-European cities (82);
- Most comments are made by the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’ (95 times). The comments provided by the Page Feedback Survey for the other tools: ‘Check the integrated approach’ (92 times), ‘Monitor your progress’ (46 times) and ‘Focus on deprived neighbourhoods’ (26 times).

Figure 2.1 Example of Page Feedback Survey

Remote usability test
In total 16 testers took part in a remote usability test. These sixteen volunteers came from different test cities (Umeå, Dzierżoniów, Lahti, Szolnok, Litomerice, Rennes, Maia, Zalau, La Rochelle, Belfast, Velenje, Fuenlabrada, Cordoba, Aalborg, Kirklees and San Lawrenz) and participated all in the test in the week from 20-24 June 2011. The goal of this test was to pinpoint important usability issues. By using a remote desktop program, the participants’ desktop could be examined while they performed tasks on the RFSC. The participants were asked both to show what parts of the RFSC they used so far and to perform concrete tasks. Most of the participants work for the municipality in one of the test cities of the RSFC; the rest of the participants advise the municipality in their roles as consultants.

The intensity of the use of the RFSC was very different among the testers: from only a quick look to intensive use. The test and the feedback from the volunteers gave important indications how the usability of the RFSC can and should be improved. In the remote usability test each of
the volunteers carried out all kind of tasks with the RFSC during 1½ hour. The researchers could exactly follow at distance with the same screen as the tester had in front of him/her the problems the tester encountered in carrying out the tasks. This led to 79 urgent, important and minor suggestions for improvement of the usability of the RFSC.

**On-site visits**

Nicis Institute visited 55 test cities in 32 on-site visits (see annex 1 for an overview of the test cities that have been visited). During the on-site visits Nicis Institute met the teams that were testing and in some of the test cities also cities’ management and politicians. The questions that were asked, the demonstrations that were given using the RFSC and the detailed feedback provided Nicis Institute with very valuable feedback. The on-site visits and the remarks of the test cities contribute largely to the conclusions and recommendations for future use of the RFSC.

**Notes, comments and evaluations of test cities**

Nicis Institute has asked test cities to come up with conclusions and recommendations on (parts of) the RFSC website which could then be sent in the form of notes, comments or evaluations. Nicis Institute have received the following documents from the test cities by e-mail:
- 7 findings/judgments on ‘indicators’,
- 12 findings/judgments on ‘projects’,
- 5 important and extended presentations,
- 21 notes on the RFSC in general.

**Final questionnaire**

From the beginning of July to the end of the testing phase (2 September 2011) test cities have been asked to fill in a final questionnaire. This final questionnaire was a combination of statements about the goals of the RFSC and questions about parts of the RFSC website. Testers have been asked to fill in the final questionnaire from their city perspective or from their own perspective. It was possible to fill in the questionnaire individually or as a testing team.

Different ‘routings’ have been included so that politicians (Mayors, Deputy Mayors, elected city representatives) got different questions and could fill in the final questionnaire in a maximum of 10 minutes. City managers and heads of departments got questions for 15 minutes and staff members of 20 minutes. In total 130 final questionnaires have been filled in by individual testers or testing teams of 58 test cities.

**Feedback from Member States**

Seventeen reports have been produced by the National Support Groups so far. The conclusions of the Members States are in line with the feedback of the test cities. The added value of the RFSC for the cities in their countries is:
- common understanding and language about sustainable and integrated urban development;
− stimulate internal dialogue in cities in our country;
− stimulate external dialogue;
− manual, checklist, didn’t I forget things;
− exchange of experiences, strategies and projects with other (Europe-an) cities;
− new approaches in sustainable and integrated urban development;
− improve policies, plans, projects, actions and instruments.
The Member States conclude that the RFSC and its added value are in line with national objectives.

All Member States were also very positive about the multi-level and multi-national development approach that was followed in developing the RFSC. Cities and local authorities networks (CEMR, Eurocities), France2, other Member States, and the European Commission (Directorate General for Regional Policy) worked jointly together in developing the prototype and in steering the testing phase of the RFSC. They choose a multi-level working structure with the Urban Development Group (political monitoring committee), Member States and Institutions group (MS/I group) and a Management Team (joint leadership: France, CEMR, Directorate General for Regional Policy).

2 France as leader of the development process of the RFSC prototype following the declarations of Marseille and Toledo.
Summary of feedback used to draw conclusions and make recommendations

Table 2.2 Summary of the feedback from the test cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of feedback</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Back office webmaster</td>
<td>Which parts of the RFSC are used/tested intensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Feedback Surveys</td>
<td>75% of the test cities; on average 10 remarks by city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site visits</td>
<td>32 visits to 55 test cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote usability test</td>
<td>16 volunteers in the test cities, test of 1½ hour: 79 recommendations to improve usability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes, comments and results from test cities</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final questionnaire</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports from Member States</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nicis Institute

2.6 Organisation of testing

As has been sketched in the table above there was a large variety of cities involved in the testing phase of the RFSC with different needs and testing conditions. Whereas some of the cities tested an earlier monitoring system on sustainability other cities were absolutely not that far and tried to start up a sustainable strategy in their city. The testing cities were large metropolitan cities like Munich and Warszawa, but also small island cities like San Lawrenz (Malta) and Samothrace (Greece). This section will describe the different ideas of organizing and incorporating the RFSC within the different daily practices of the test cities. We will look at:

- Involvement of testers/departments
- Complications of test cities while using RFSC
- Political involvement
- Use of the testing instruments
- RFSC and daily practice

Involvement of testers/departments

Regarding user profiles and logins the test cities followed two approaches. First, there were cities where the testers decided to use only one login and password. One after the each other experts from different departments used their knowledge to fill in parts of the RFSC. A project
leader of the RFSC then took care that every expert filled in parts of the RFSC.

In the second approach the test cities used different logins for testers from different departments. Each tester then filled in information in his or her part or for his or her project/strategy in their own time. Afterwards the team members met (more or less) regularly to exchange experiences and discuss results. The project leader then distributes the prints among the testers and the meeting focuses on elements of the RFSC.

Textbox 2.1 Organisation of testing in Germany

The Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) organised the testing of the RFSC in Germany. Six German cities – Arnsberg, Dusseldorf, Leipzig, Ludwigsburg, Munich and Trier - participated in the testing phase of the RFSC. The city of Leipzig has already been active as one of the LC-FACIL cities in the development phase of the prototype of the RFSC. Already one month after the launching event in Brussels the BBSR organised in Munich a joint meeting of all German test cities and the Austrian test city of Vienna. Germany had a headstart in organising the on-site visits. The BBSR also participated in test city meetings in Luxembourg/Belgium and France. In addition, representatives from Austria, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland had been invited for the National Support Group Meeting of Germany held in September 2011. In this way an international exchange of experiences in testing the RFSC was stimulated.

In Germany it became clear that the majority of German test cities was most interested in the indicator-based monitoring toolkit of the RFSC. The cities wanted to use this part of the RFSC to improve their own monitoring systems, to check their own monitoring system and indicators or just use this part of the RFSC. After the meeting in Munich the test city of Munich provided a thorough evaluation of all key indicators that are included in the monitoring tool of the RFSC. It proofed that the set of key indicators included in the RFSC is almost the same as the situational and action-oriented indicators the city of Munich is using.

In some German test cities many staff members were involved in the testing (e.g. Munich), while in other German test cities only a few staff members were involved (e.g. Trier). The test cities provided individually their feedback about their testing conclusions with the RFSC and also their combined evaluation was used to draw conclusions and to make recommendations for the final version of the RFSC. Some of the important conclusions and recommendations from the combined evaluation of the German test cities are:

- simplify the use of the RFSC (selection menu to present only those parts of the RFSC that are requested and that are useful, include standardized data, quick check on minimum standards, facilitate benchmarking, make the structure, content graphs of the RFSC more user-friendly);
- the RFSC should contain dummy examples of strategies/projects and (European) data that could facilitate the use of the RFSC;
- reduce on the one hand the number of RFSC’s key indicators and extent on the other hand the indicators oriented towards sustainability (integrated urban development, ecological footprint, well-being);
- the RFSC should be a dynamic tool that is able to incorporate new urban development and topics in the future.
From the final questionnaire results we now know that in 50 percent of the cities one tester did most of the testing. In a small part of the cities there was only one tester, but most of the time more people were involved. In general there were two different types of testing teams. First, a testing team where most of the testers came from one city department with a ‘broad’ focus. Examples are the Mayor’s office, the city strategy department, the ‘Department of Development and Project management’ and even the sustainable urban development department.

Other cities chose to bring experts from different departments together in a multidisciplinary team: a second type of a testing team. In an ideal type the multidisciplinary team is not only composed of people from different departments but also with a different educational background (e.g. IT, law, architect, environmentalist, sociologist etc.).

Some of the test cities also involved citizens or the university in the testing phase. Some of the cities hired a consultant (or a trainee) to fill in all information. In many Member States also the responsible Ministry was heavily involved in the testing phase by organizing general meetings and giving support to the test cities.
Textbox 2.2 Organisation of testing in Spain

The State Secretariat of Housing and Urban Actions of the Ministry of Public Works organised the testing in Spain. Four Spanish cities – La Coruña, Córdoba, Fuenlabrada and Málaga – were selected to participate in the testing phase of the RFSC. Also the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz that has already been active as one of the LC-FACIL cities participated in the testing. All the Spanish cities, with the exception of Fuenlabrada, attended the launching event in Brussels. Two meetings were organised in Spain in which the Spanish test cities together exchanged experiences and provided feedback to Nicis Institute. Due to staff changes and reorganisations - following local elections - two Spanish test cities could not attend the second combined meeting. One of the test cities even had to stop its testing activities.

All cities organized a multidisciplinary team (mostly within one department) to work with the RFSC to become familiar with the tools and to assess if the tools are suitable for their purposes. Each of the Spanish test cities used the testing phase differently. For example, one test city managed to test various projects whereas other test cities concentrated merely on one specific project (e.g. the development of a new neighbourhood or a Local Agenda 21). Generally, the Spanish test cities tested various tools although the ‘deprived neighbourhood’ tool was used less. The test cities provided detailed feedback that could be used in drawing conclusions and making recommendations about the RFSC prototype.

At the end of the testing phase the Spanish ministry delivered a detailed document with suggestions to improve the questioning grid and the key indicators of the RFSC. The main recommendations were to operationalise the integrated approach in urban development with transversal and multidimensional objectives and indicators, to use scenarios to incorporate long-term timescales, to stimulate that cities use a regional perspective in sustainable and integrated urban development and to strive for synergy with other EU indicator systems. Both the Ministry and the test cities highlighted the idea of bench-learning and the possibility to use the RFSC as a tool to exchange knowledge between European cities and to compare their results on a voluntary basis.

Complications in test cities while using the RFSC

If we look at the overall performance of the test cities it can be concluded that around 50 percent of the test cities intensively tested the RFSC (visit Launching Event, on-site visit, large variety feedback). Two things should be kept in mind to evaluate this percentage. First, cities voluntarily applied for being a test city. This could have been an extra motivation during the testing phase. Secondly, there were a lot of ‘imperfections’ in the prototype that hindered the testing and that can be changed in the final version.

These were the most striking complications in the test cities during the testing phase of the RFSC:

- language: the RFSC was only available in English, French, German, Czech and (later in the testing phase) Polish: in most of the cities not the ‘mother tongue’ languages;
- budget cuts: the testing phase of the RFSC was a process amidst a lot of economic developments within the Member States of the Eu-
ropean Union. These austerity measures also had its consequences on the city departments in the test cities: “our department is slimmed down from 55 to 23 persons”;
- local elections;
- RFSC long-term oriented;
- added value RFSC uncertain: no quick tangible output to explain added value.

Political involvement
The levels of political involvement were highly varied in the different testing cities. In a city where there was a high level of political involvement this was most of the time due to the fact that a Deputy Mayor was part of the testing team or leader of the testing team. As a result as experienced during on-site visits then also the Mayor stated to be “proud” to be involved in the RFSC and “truly believed in this network”.

In cities where there was a low level of political involvement most of the time (one of) three explanations were given for this fact:
- The political level does mainly not have the necessary knowledge of the English language.³
- RFSC is not a priority in local politics as it is mainly focused on long-term developments. Politicians are more short-term oriented.
- The level of knowledge necessary for filling in the RFSC is mostly too detailed.

Whereas some of the testing teams were more or less ‘free’ to fill in the RFSC some testing teams in test cities waited for political ‘approval’ of using projects/strategies into the RFSC. This costs a lot of time when politicians are not involved/interested in the RFSC.

Use of testing instruments
The test cities also differed in the use of the testing instruments of the RFSC. Some cities only used the Page Feedback Surveys, other cities were involved in the whole ‘package’ of Launching Event, Page Feedback Surveys, on-site visits, remote usability testing and final questionnaire.

³ During the start of the RFSC testing phase the RFSC was only available in English, French, German and Czech. Later in the testing phase also a Polish version was available.
Textbox 2.3 Organisation of testing in France

The French ministry of ecology, sustainable development, transport and housing organised the testing in France. In France 21 cities applied to become a test city. After a severe selection five cities were selected for testing the TFSC in France: Bordeaux, La Rochelle Urban Community, Urban Community Le Creusot-Montceau, Lille Urban Community with Roubaix and Great Nancy. Also Rennes Métropole – as a LC-FACIL participant – joined the testing phase.

The National Support Group (NSG) in France (composed of national administrations, local government associations, NGO and civil society, experts, test cities and other cities interested in the RFSC), under the presidency of mr. André Rossinot, President of Great Nancy and mayor of Nancy, organised during the testing phase four workshops. The topics of the workshops were: planning tools and the RFSC, local projects of urban development and the RFSC, social development, inner cities strategies and the RFSC, monitoring and assessment tools (including local Agenda 21) and the RFSC.

The workshops of the NSG resulted in clear conclusions and recommendations to improve the prototype of the RFSC, clear ideas on how the RFSC is related to other formal and voluntary tools in France (e.g. Local Agendas 21, strategic planning tools, operational planning tools), which were summarized in four leaflets about the functionality of the RFSC for French cities. The Franch Ministry and the National Support Group will soon elaborate a plan to start with the dissemination of the final version of the RFSC.

RFSC and daily practice in test cities

From March 2011 until September 2011 66 test cities have tested the RFSC. They tried to work on the RFSC next to the daily routine of working as a politician, in a city department or as a trainee. How did they incorporate the workings of the RFSC in their daily practice?

First, it should be noted that many of the cities found it ‘time-consuming’ to get to grasp with the RFSC. A large group of 79 percent of the persons who filled in the final questionnaire indicated that it took them at least two days of hard work to understand the RFSC and start to work with it (only 14 percent disagreed). Many persons also indicated that training and more guidance on the RFSC would help. According to one of the test cities the ‘lack of accompaniment for the process of using the RFSC’ was one of the weak points of the testing phase as the actions were too much limited to technical assistance. From other cities comments came that the testing phase was too short to involve all stakeholders in the process.

Despite that, testing teams in the variety of test cities started to work on the RFSC next to their daily work. The general experience was that experienced project managers of the RFSC helped in giving general directions. Some of the project managers were less experienced and worked for example for only four months within the organization: this was not very helpful and it then took a lot of time getting to grasp with both RFSC and the city departments. Regular (e.g. weekly) meetings with experts from multiple departments helped in incorporating the ‘philosophy’ of the RFSC into daily practice in the test cities.
2.7 Description of cases

In the following description of cases some examples are presented to explain how cities organised the testing, the difficulties they encountered, the results they obtained in using the RFSC and their evaluation of the RFSC. Examples are chosen from test cities of different sizes and from different countries. Critical remarks about the RFSC are included in the description of the case because they are most useful to improve the RFSC.

2.7.1 Communauté d’Agglomération de La Rochelle (FR)

Organisation of testing
La Rochelle considers itself a frontrunner in sustainable development. So it is logical that the Communauté d’Agglomération de La Rochelle (La Rochelle Urban Community) solicited to be a test city in France. Their ideas about the added value of the RFSC, before they started the testing, were that the RFSC could be helpful:

− to stimulate the cooperation and communication between different departments (which is not always easy);
− to develop the regional plan of spatial development for the next fifteen years (SCOT: Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale)⁴;
− to use the RFSC for evaluation because evaluation is not always a good habit, yet;
− to monitor progress; in particular in a systematic way over all aspects of sustainable and integrated urban development

In the “test city” La Rochelle Urban Community many managers and staff members of different departments and a few politicians (in charge of this theme) participated in the testing of the RFSC. In total some twenty persons were, in different degrees of intensity, involved in the testing. During the testing phase La Rochelle Urban Community even made a contract with a trainee that could devote all his time to the organisation of the testing and the testing itself. Presentations were made at management and political levels about the progress of the testing and the testing conclusions and results obtained.

⁴ The purpose of the SCOT is to delineate the major spatial development priorities for the La Rochelle Urban Community over the medium to long-term. SCOT’s are comparable with the structure plans at county level in the UK. The whole process is carried out on a collaborative basis involving the various level of government in the region. Interesting elements of these plans are the Schéma Régional de Développement Économique (SRDE), contrats d’agglomération (focusing on city centres and larger towns), Zones de revitalisation rurale (ZRR) and Zones de redynamisation urbaine (ZRU). The two latter are development areas that offer a range of tax breaks and grants.
Testing of many parts of the RFSC
In La Rochelle Urban Community the following projects of different departments were tested: Agenda 21, Maison du Développement Durable, Schéma de biodiversité, Quartier Yélo, PLH, Éco Quartier Bongraine, Hôtel d’entreprises Énergies Renouvrables ou la Sirène. The following department were involved:
- Environmental,
- Employment and higher education,
- Mobility and transport,
- Housing,
- Urban development,
- Spatial development and heritage.

The testing team of La Rochelle Urban Community provided also detailed comments about the key indicators of the environmental part of the questioning grid, the team participated in the remote usability test and all levels (politicians, members of council, managers and staff members) provided feedback by the final questionnaire.

Testing results and conclusions of Yélo District project
The results of testing the project ‘Yélo District’ (belonging to the urban cohesion contract) with the RFSC were very interesting because two departments were involved in the project and thus, asked to evaluate it (see graphs).
The conclusions from La Rochelle Urban Community were that the RFSC is very educational and highly instructive. The RFSC shows with its spider diagram that the evaluation of the same project from the angle of two different, specialized departments, appear very close but that there are some differences. After analysing the results and after the discussions between the two departments, it appears that the RFSC stimulates the evaluation of the same project from different points of view. La Rochelle Urban Community concludes that the RFSC is a tool for the management level to stimulate dialogue and communication between departments.

Testing results evaluating the Bongraine eco-district project
The department in charge of the eco-district project was sceptical at first sight about its evaluation with this tool. The RFSC did not seem operational enough. The questions of the questioning grid express good intentions and are not very precise at an operational level. Nevertheless, the RFSC makes it possible to engage in a true dialogue between stakeholders and departments. In a dialogue with the elected representative in charge of the eco-district project the RFSC made it possible to deepen the dialogue and to stimulate new ideas in the communication about the eco-district project (e.g. by organizing site visits and explain the issues of sustainable construction or sustainable materials). The RFSC is an instrument that can support or strengthen existing tools, such as the questionnaire on national eco-district. The RFSC is considered by La Rochelle Urban Community as a good support tool and a good guide of best practices.
The Bongraine eco-district project

Testing results and conclusions Agenda 21

La Rochelle Urban Community was rather positive about the results of the RFSC evaluating its Agenda 21. The RFSC was considered relevant, especially on strategic aspects. The tool is educational and, as such, enables a true dialogue between stakeholders or different departments, which is an essential process for a project such as Agenda 21 which calls for increased governance with the cooperation, participation of all stakeholders (institutions, private citizens, departments, etc.). In addition, thanks to the scope of the RFSC, all the topics covered by an Agenda 21 can be discussed. From this perspective, RFSC is best used upstream or when reviewing the project.

In addition, graphics on the priorities and impacts of the project are interesting since they can enable better communication between elected representatives and technicians or project manager in charge of the Agenda 21. The graphics resulting of the testing of the Agenda 21 illustrate well the project objectives (see graphs). Even with an Agenda 21 still under development, the results of the testing well represent the "good intentions" that surround the project. In this context, it would be interesting to compare the graphics in a midterm review, and, in that case, re-evaluate the project.
RFSC results Agenda 21 La Rochelle Urban Community

Final evaluation
Positive elements for La Rochelle Urban Community:

- to be pro-active and to adapt to the objectives of the European cohesion policy for the next programming period;
- to optimise and to improve the projects of La Rochelle Urban Community;
- the RFSC makes it possible to check in an instructive way the integrative approach of strategies and projects;
to improve the communication about sustainable and integrated urban development as part of the strategies and projects of La Rochelle Urban Community;

- the RFSC provides several instruments of high quality (questioning grid, monitoring system, indicators and good practices);
- the RFSC is supporting or complementary to existing tools (reference framework Agenda 21, grid ÉcoQuartier);
- it stimulates a common culture about sustainable development and a global and integrated vision;
- it offers a platform for European exchanges (indispensable today);
- to participate in the testing of the RFSC shows that La Rochelle Urban Community is interested in European projects and in projects of the French ministry MEDDTL;
- the test of the RFSC permitted to raise awareness on how a real integrative approach can be time-consuming: consultations must be organised, ideas have to be explained, discussed and digested.

Critical remarks:
- the RFSC and its instruments have to be adapted to the local context;
- the dimension of time to reach your objectives is not well incorporated in the RFSC;
- for operational projects ‘the good intentions’ in the questioning grid are not precise enough;
- the RFSC stimulates the dialogue between different departments and between the staff and the political level but this dialogue has to be stimulated regularly;
- imposed as a tool, the RFSC can be difficult to understand without training (how to use it, what do these concepts mean, what are their scope, etc.) or without coaching and animation. It requires time to be “digested” before being proposed.

2.7.2 City of Warsaw (PL)

Organisation of testing
The organisation of the testing of the RFSC was very complicated for the city of Warsaw. You could involve 40 departments with their own strategies and tasks, and 18 districts with their own mayors, policies, strategies and documents. Some hundred documents of strategic importance had a relationship with the RFSC. Because of the complications to organise the testing in a large city as Warsaw a small team of two persons from the Researches, Analysis and Strategy Unit did finally all the testing. They tested systematically all tools and parts of the RFSC (characterize your city, develop your strategy, check the integrated approach, monitor progress) from the perspective of Warsaw. It took them approximately 120 hours. The testing team could provide many concrete examples to improve the usability of the RFSC.
Content of the testing
They decided to test the Development Strategy for the City of Warsaw until 2020 with the RFSC. To develop the Strategy there were intensive consultations with the local community and dialogues between departments. The Development Strategy has five strategic objectives and three to six operational objectives within the strategic objectives (see figure below).

Objectives of Warsaw’s Development Strategy until 2020

The conclusions of the testing team is that the priorities in their Development Strategy are not the same as the priorities in the RFSC and that their system of monitoring, based on specialized indicators, differs from the ones proposed in the RFSC. Also the areas that are included in the Development Strategy do not coincide exactly with those suggested in the RFSC. So to evaluate, check or improve Warsaw’s Development Strategy with the RFSC you have to adjust areas, city priorities and monitoring indicators.

Critical remarks
- The first level questions of the RFSC were too general and there were problems with understanding what information should be considered in each of the proposed themes (characterize your city).
- The information about the different city characteristics and first level questions had to be found in different city departments. This is a huge amount of work for one person. This was also due to the fact that in the prototype of the RFSC each person had its own unique login and set of information. In the testing phase they were obliged to print screens and pages and sent it to the different departments and specialists. These specialists sent back documents in Polish to the testing team and they had to go over all these documents.
- Most departments of the City of Warsaw have their own documents of strategic importance and it was necessary to look through them to get the necessary information. So the process of gathering data to use the RFSC is too time consuming and asks too much energy.

- In the tool develop your strategy of the RFSC the main objective (first level question) could be the same as the main objective of Warsaw’s Development Strategy. But the second level questions and actions do not match the priorities of the city. The field ‘add comment’ was not used “to adapt” or “to explain” the chosen interpretation of the actions.

- The tools ‘Develop your strategy’ and ‘Check the integrated approach’ should be linked.

- The RFSC is more useful for cities that have not yet an approved strategy and that are in the stage of developing a strategy. The RFSC is also more useful for testing general strategies (with a holistic approach like the Development Strategy for the city of Warsaw) than for sectoral strategies and projects. E.g. the labour market is not necessarily a priority when you prepare a transport strategy for the city.

Positive aspects of the RFSC
- the RFSC could save you time in communicating between departments in developing a strategy.
- sharing experiences with cities that have the same concerns;
- list of illustrations of other cities;
- colours, layout, icons and charts;
- list of indicators which can be useful in monitoring the strategy or other measures of city development;
- possibility of adding own indicators and sharing them with other cities.

2.7.3 City of Velenje (SI)

Organisation of testing
The city of Velenje is the 5th biggest Slovenian city with approximately 30,000 inhabitants and a municipal staff of 120 persons. The city is newly created in 1959 around a coal mine that was opened for exploitation. The last years the city of Velenje has made tremendous efforts to re-cultivate its ruined and polluted landscape because of coal exploitation and turn its handicap into an advantage (district heating and cooling system, transformation to renewable energy). Velenje obtained in 2010 two Slovenian awards as most energy efficient city and as greenest municipality.

The city is very active in European projects and has created a special unit (Development and Investment Office) of six people to acquire and to manage European projects. The six staff members have different backgrounds and specialisations. A core team of two persons from this unit took the lead in organising and coordinating the testing of the RFSC
and this core team did most of the testing. In working with other departments the core team did most of the testing. In this way the testing was not too burdensome for the staff members of other departments.

The motivation for Velenje to participate in the testing of the RFSC is that the municipality wants to be in the frontline of sustainable development and want to test it own programmes and projects of environmental rehabilitation and recovery. Velenje was for some decades ago one of the most polluted and ecologically devastated areas in Slovenia. In 1993 Velenje adopted a rehabilitation/recovery environmental program to solve its environmental problems. Although, at this stage not fully implemented, the most important ecological problems have been solved. The ambition of Velenje to improve substantially the quality of living in Velenje and to shed the consequences of the past burden explains also its participation in testing the RFSC. They wanted to test their programmes and projects with the RFSC webtool in a simple and transnational way. Velenje is also well aware of the importance of implementing the European and national legislation in the field of health and environment protection and tackling them in an integrated way.

The core team organised after the launching event a RFSC working team of four staff members from different departments of the municipality of Velenje. The RFSC working team had regular discussions and meetings about the testing information that was provided by the core team. During the on-site visit it became clear that the core team had tested all parts of the RFSC intensively and had discovered stepwise almost all functionalities of the RFSC.

Content of testing

The testing team of Velenje decided to test two projects: their Local Agenda 21 and a bicycle project. Velenje have to renew next year its Development Strategy for the coming fifteen years. They had planned to use the testing of the RFSC as a first start in the actualisation of their plan. They see as a potential advantage of the RFSC to test the sustainability of existing documents, programs and projects. It seems a good tool to measure the initial phase and end results of a program and project (e.g. establishing an eco-region and measuring the CO2 footprint). Because of the language difficulty in using the RFSC with other departments Nicis Institute advised to postpone using the RFSC for this goal until the final version of the RFSC is available.

The graph of testing their Local Agenda 21 with the RFSC tool shows a tendency to focus on environmental development and governance, while the economy and social aspects are slightly excluded. The results are thus very interesting, especially in the sense of better understanding of mentioned document, better cooperation and communication between departments (RFSC working team). We can use the results obtained to upgrade the Local Agenda 21 within the “Environment Action Plan of the Municipality of Velenje” that is being developed.
Testing results of Velenje’s Local Agenda 21

**Positive elements of the RFSC for Velenje**

- The RFSC presents an opportunity to exchange information and to share analysis, practices, know-how and experience in EU projects between other participating European cities and also with stakeholders concerned.
- You become aware of the impacts of your strategy and sustainable (and development) projects (possible conflicts or synergies with main sustainable objectives).
- You can improve the weakest points of your sustainable documents (Local agenda 21, EU projects, strategic development documents of Municipality Velenje).
- Possible renewal of development documents in a relevant way and sharing an assessment of sustainable projects with stakeholders.
- Mutual exchange and learning between the participating cities (especially with peer cities).
- By using RFSC tool the work group went deeper into local development strategies, documents, projects and thus the understating and usage of those documents was increased.
- Monitoring of the follow up on our development strategy or projects (national, EU) concerning sustainable development.
- Better and deepened communication about results in our strategy or results of our projects and thus quality implementation of sustainability projects in local and regional area.
Critical remarks

- You have to use one password and login within the municipality and with the stakeholders to work efficiently with the prototype of the RFSC;
- Are people honest in providing information and are they really doing what they say they are doing? There is a strong responsibility for the user of the RFSC.
- In Velenje they are learning very much from other projects of the EU Central Europe Program. Can the peer city facility of the RFSC achieve that also?
- One person cannot answer all the questions and actions of the RFSC. Even not for a small municipality as Velenje. You need other experts form other departments. But they have to be motivated to participate in using the RFSC.

2.7.4 City of Gabrovo (BG)

Organisation of testing

Gabrovo is the regional capital of the Gabrovo Region in North Central Bulgaria. The population is 64,000 inhabitants and declining. Gabrovo’s goal is the development of a sustainable city environment with interregional cooperation and the creation of an attractive physical environment in the city through integrated measures of urban regeneration and development. Gabrovo’s motivation to participate in the testing is to work accordingly with European standards, adjust to European policies, re-adjust their thinking and speak “the European language”. They want to find an innovative approach to improve the city environment, to increase the administrative capacity of Gabrovo Municipality and to solve urban development and environmental problems. More specific Gabrovo wants to improve the municipal plan for sustainable development (in a time of reductions in the public spending and a challenging global economic climate), to test the integrity and sustainability of projects, to monitor the progress of projects (in order to achieve the goals defined by the Municipal Development Plan), to improve the strategic planning (by defining objectives and creating appropriate instruments to guarantee the sustainable development of the region), find regions, facing similar challenges and problems and share good practices and experience.

Under the lead of the Deputy Mayor Gabrovo the testing of the RFSC was organised in a very structured way and an expert team was formed of representatives of different departments. Five qualified experts from different departments tested – as an expert team - intensively the RFSC. The experts do have different educational backgrounds (economy, engineering, management, public administration and EU integration). All of them have both IT and language skills in English. An action plan was made to give concrete tasks and project to the experts of the testing team. The experts worked with the colleagues in their own department to gather specific information, summarize, systemize and pre-
sent the results to be entered into the RFSC. Once a week the experts of the expert team came together to share their experiences and pose questions to each other concerning the RFSC. Politicians from Gabrovo Municipal Council were involved during the testing phase.

Content of testing
The expert team started to work on the RFSC by filling in Gabrovo’s profile and city characteristics and concerns. As a next step they tested Gabrovo’s Development Plan using the tools ‘Develop your strategy’ and ‘Check the integrated approach’ and two specific projects. Firstly, the project ‘creation of attractive physical environment of Gabrovo through integrated measures for urban regeneration and development’ (funded by OP “Regional Development” 2007-2013). Secondly, the project ‘Protected home for provision of alternative social care for children, leaving homes for children, deprived of family care’ (funded by Phare).

The expert team with young experts of different backgrounds for which the English language is not a problem discovered all the functionalities of the RFSC, they understood the RFSC and they could work without problems with the RFSC.

Results of testing
The expert team regretted that you could not share information within the team using the RFSC. To be able to share would save time and also minimize the risk of presenting the city through many people’s different points of view (which may in turn lead to a misinterpretation of the city’s profile by others).

The level of commitment and the values of key indicators are chosen based on an individual expert evaluation which may lead to biased results of the RFSC. Based on the discussion with the expert team we concluded that there should be an option to choose from the indicators that apply to your specific city projects, only. Also, it was understood that a specific project is not expected to show excellence in all indicators. For instance if the project is eco-oriented, it is not necessarily expected to be highly graded in the social sector. However, other projects will compensate, therefore it is unnecessary to strive for excellence in all key aspects of a particular project, as it would lead to unrealistic results. But it could be an idea to provide an additional functionality in the RFSC that gives the opportunity to summarize all projects and results, and assess the global integrity of the whole project portfolio of the city.

The European reference values of indicators in the indicators table should already be filled in. Also, it would be more user friendly to fill in the values directly through the website, instead of downloading the excel file on our desktops. In this way, there would be a single copy and a more accurate point of reference, instead of a number of downloaded copies on everyone’s individual PC.
Testing results of Gabrovo’s Municipal Development Strategy

This graph is useful for politicians as a communication means because it is a summary of the city’s municipal plan. The politicians can send their comments and with their comments the plan can be improved.

Some suggestions to improve the usability of the RFSC for Gabrovo:
- improve the city profile so that investors could become interested in the city;
- increase the number of topics to find peer cities about;
- link the share functionality of the RFSC with city characteristics and more concrete city data;
- the RFSC is most useful when you have no strategy or no plan, yet; when you have already a strategy the questioning grid lacks flexibility;
- the definition between the different levels of commitment are not clear; using the prototype too much subjectivity can be introduced;
- to use the RFSC practical training is necessary.

2.7.5 City of Umeå (SE)

Organisation of testing

In Umeå the testing was organised in a working group of around ten staff members. The working group consisted of staff members of all relevant city departments and was assigned by the city’s City Manager’s group. The coordination was in the hands of the Development Division. In all stages the political levels was involved.

The final questionnaire in Umeå was filled out by one person (the project coordinator) on behalf of the Umeå RFSC working group. The working group final report (and thus the final questionnaire answers) has also been confirmed by the City manager’s group at their meeting at the end of September. The conclusions of Umeå’s RFSC working group final report have also been presented to the politicians in the City Council Executive board. The political level in Umeå is not been actively in-
volved in the testing of the RFSC website, but is very interested in the policy context of the Reference framework for sustainable cities and future implications of EU urban development policies.

Umeå’s testing team decided to focus on the tool ‘monitor progress’ of the RFSC. The Heads of Unit are currently revising Umeå’s monitoring system. A group of staff members from different departments – including Umeå’s statistical analysis unit – evaluated how their monitoring system fits into the RFSC and how their monitoring system could eventually benefit from the suggestions of the RFSC. The testing was divided in two stages. In the first stage – from May to June – they evaluated the 33 key indicators. Are these indicators defined for Umeå, are there specific difficulties with the indicator, what is the EU added value of city-to-city comparisons of the indicator? In the second stage – June to August – they evaluated the relevance of the RFSC indicator for the local political objectives (11 City council budget objectives), which key indicators can be excluded (relevance in Umeå and other EU cities), should the set be complemented for added relevance to Umeå and broad implementation in European cities and what are the cost of the indicator for maintenance and updates compared with current indicators maintained and updated for the city. In the evaluation of Umeå’s City Council objectives vis-à-vis the key indicators of the RFSC they concluded e.g. that the city council’s objective ‘The city and its organisation shall be recognised by openness, user and citizen orientation’ can be linked to key-indicators K4, K8, K9, K10, K27, K32 and K33.

**Relationship between Umeå’s local objectives and RFSC’s key indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City council objectives for Umeå’s development</th>
<th>RFSC indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation across all borders to create long-term social, economic and ecological sustainability, high attractiveness and growth with the ambition to reach 200,000 inhabitants by 2050.</td>
<td>K1, K5, K14-15, K20-25, 26, K28-29, K31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We shall strengthen our position as cultural city, &amp; successfully manage Umeå as European Capital of Culture in 2014.</td>
<td>K16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The city and its organisation shall be recognised by openness, user and citizen orientation...</td>
<td>K4, K8, K9, K10, K27, K32, K33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and men shall have the same power to influence society, as well as their own lives. Gender equality shall be reached and implemented...</td>
<td>K5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone, regardless of ethnicity, belief, disability, sexual orientation, and social background, shall have equal rights, opportunities and obligations...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We shall continue to strengthen our position as one of Sweden’s leading innovation and quality cities</td>
<td>K2, K3, K30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We shall contribute to good health conditions &amp; care services ...</td>
<td>K10, K13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We shall develop the knowledge city Umeå with good education and a life long learning...</td>
<td>K11, K12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We shall strengthen our position as an energy conserving city...</td>
<td>K7, K17, K18, K19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of testing

Umeå made also a table with their evaluation for each of the key indicators (see part in table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original RFSC indicator suggestion</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Status &amp; Trend</th>
<th>Define</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>EU added value</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy – Social – Environment - Governance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1 - Net migration (in-migration minus out-migration) – shrinking/growing city</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Should be complemented with Net birth rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2 - R&amp;D intensity</td>
<td>Utv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://rfsc.tomos.fr/indicators/2.pdf">http://rfsc.tomos.fr/indicators/2.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K3 - Percentage of households having access to high speed internet of above 30 Mbps</td>
<td>Soc/Sk IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research investments in schools 3,45 MSEK/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4 - Satisfaction with level of city's promotion/support for local and/or sustainable production</td>
<td>Ja</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternatively Proportion of purchased ecological certified food? Umeå 18 %, average for cities in Sweden 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5 - Employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 (with reference value of 75%)</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not measure youth unemployment, varies with economic climate, Umeå 73,5 % men, 71,6 % women 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K6 - Employment rate per activities sector (as indicator for economic diversity)</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Separated by business sector, could also be divided by gender and sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K7 - Percentage of trips by private motorised transport (ECI, USI, by car and motor cycle – UA)</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Travel survey (RVU) performed 1998 and 2006, perhaps split it up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K8 - Satisfaction with level of public transport services</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost already covered by public transport company, 60 000 SEK/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K9 - Cost of a monthly ticket for public transport for 5-10km – average for several zones if applicable, build ratio with average citizen income/cost of living in the city</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to define and compare with other EU cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K10 - Satisfaction with level of social services, nursery, primary and secondary schools</td>
<td>DGi/JB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Own surveys to parents in schools – 90 %+ satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K11 - Percentage of early school-leavers</td>
<td>JB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>233 total movements/year, 1 % left school 2009/10 in secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K12 - Share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education with reference value of at least 40%</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61,6 % 2010 in tertiary education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Positive conclusions of RFSC’s added value for Umeå**

- The limited number of overarching indicators that have to be followed up and that can be used to visualise sustainable development; in particular for the political level (City Council) and for management (City Managers’s group).
- The indicators clarify connections between local City Council objectives and EU objectives (EU 2020 etc.).
- Good and simple indicator background material on the RFSC site (pdf files).
- Potential for comparison with other similar European cities.

**Critical remarks and suggestions**

- Many tools in the RFSC in the current version are not considered to be of any value for Umeå (develop your strategy/project, check the integrated approach, focus on deprived neighbourhoods).
- The monitor progress tool in the prototype has rigid data reporting (manual work) and old-fashioned visualisations (‘smilies’ in Excel document).
- Organise and stimulate national and European co-operation on an interactive database with relevant and auto-generated city statistics.
- Procure a modern time-resolved visualisation tool (e.g. Google).

**2.7.6 City of Hradec Králové (CZ)**

The city of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic) proved to be a specific case especially in their constructive way of making one of the graphs of the RFSC better after criticism of the Mayor. Hradec Králové had a recent focus on sustainable development (Aalborg Charter and Agenda 21) and a current strategic plan on sustainable city development. The update of the strategic plan of the city has been planned for 2011 and the original idea was that the RFSC could help with this update.

During a presentation of the first results of the RFSC to city council and Mayor, the Mayor of Hradec Králové found the graphical presentation in ‘Check the integrated approach’ very unclear. The 25 core questions on sustainable urban development and the four pillars were not explained in any legend. Therefore, it was not possible for the Mayor to understand the graphical output.

*Figure RFSC graphical output  Hradec Králové improved graph*
The people of the testing team of Hradec Kralové working with the RFSC worked one whole working day to make a more clear example of the graphical output of the tool 'Check the integrated approach'. To compare with the earlier graph: it is not much more clear for someone who does not work with RFSC on a daily basis what the graphical output means. The testing team of Hradec Kralové has therefore largely contributed to a development of the RFSC, not only by signalling problems with the graphical output but also with detailed suggestions to improve the graphical output. In the testing the team of Hradec Kralove has cooperated with another two Czech test cities (Brno, Litomerice) and the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic during the whole testing phase. They had several meeting where they presented their remarks and recommendations for the improvement of the RFSC tool. These remarks were compiled into the final report which was sent to the Nicis Institute by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic.

2.7.7 City of Vienna (AT)

Organisation of testing
In the testing of the RFSC of the Municipality of Vienna the following departments were involved: Office of the Executive City Councillor for Education, Youth, Information and Sports, Vienna Business Agency and the Departments for the Environment, Housing, Urban Development and Planning as well as EU Strategy and Economic Development. Two workshops were organised and in between the testers were asked to familiarise themselves with the tool.

Content of testing
The testing team in Vienna tested the following tools of the RFSC: 'Develop your strategy/project' and 'Check the integrated approach'. The other tools were explained and demonstrated, but the most interest was in using the abovementioned tools. The testing was carried out in a meeting room with computer and beamer so that everybody could see the screen. Using the feedback button proved to be too slow, so observations were written down on flipchart and later used to prepare a note that was sent to Nicis Institute.

The test was structured in three phases. In the first phase a presentation and discussion on the RFSC was conducted. In the second phase the technology centre project ‘Aspern IQ’ - where construction will start in summer 2011 - was assessed using the tool 'check the integrated approach'. In the third phase the planning ideas for a 100 ha development zone in the south of Vienna 'Rothneusiedl' were assessed using the 'Develop your strategy/project' tool.

Testing results and recommendations
The main feedback in the first phase was that the motivation to work in a more integrated manner by involving and consulting various sectors
was welcomed. Even the convening of the Vienna testing session resulted in the establishment of interesting cross-sectoral contacts. Nevertheless, there were serious doubts if the broad integration of all different aspects of urban life reflected in the 25 questions is efficient. It can lead to bad results if many people are forced to discuss many details they are not in charge of. The result may be very integrated, but little is achieved.

The second phase produced the following feedback. One of the potential testers in Vienna who knows the Aspern IQ project was asked to participate and to provide information. This potential tester declined to be part of Vienna’s testing team because he saw no added value testing this project. There was even fear that an evaluation of an already half-finished project would lead to more work, more demands and delays. Another member of the testing team who had prepared the case Aspern IQ for the workshop found using the tool intuitive and easy. In the discussion among the members of the testing team some doubts were raised that all tasks had been understood correctly and been dealt with the adequate level of sophistication by the test user. The user requested that it should not be possible to fill out the default project as this could not be saved and work was lost. It was not always clear enough in which part of the tool we were currently working. Answering the questions was hard and raised considerable discussions, e.g. what timeframe of the effects should be counted in? Is a building ever good for the environment or are all projects harmful? Is an office building that could house an environmental research lab good for nature? What if other tenants end up using it?

Users found discussing the topic along the 25 questions interesting and relevant, although cumbersome and time consuming. It was questioned whether it makes sense to use this tool at any given point in time. Some guidance on this would be beneficial. It was considered impossible if not useless to go through all of the 25 questions on a relatively small and limited in scope project like the Aspern IQ. It could be helpful to be able to unselect certain questions if the assessors arrive at the conclusion it is not relevant. The design also makes people invent very creative answers to rather irrelevant questions just to make sure they are filled in. Consequently, the team arrived at the conclusion that the tool is not suitable for all kinds of projects and strategies as suggested. There would either need to be certain types of projects or a way to better tailor the tool the specific project being assessed. It was remarked again and again that this tool seems to have a very narrow scope. The testers could hardly think of a situation in the planning process when the tool could be used in a beneficial manner. The tools were seen as being too general for urban development and real estate projects. A more specific tool could provide more specific and relevant criteria.

The tool check the integrated approach seems relevant in the phase where a development brief is conceived or when an urban design or
masterplan is being drafted. The amount of time and resources to work with this tool is considered significant and takes time away from established procedures already in place. It was seen problematic to convene the "right" people for the discussions. By definition there will always be some topics which are of little or no interest to some participants. If the amount of idle time becomes too high, high ranking people will not be willing to participate. There is some added value in an integrated approach, but the cost might be too high. The tool has its merits as a checklist, especially in more complex projects, so that nothing is left out, on purpose or not.

In the third phase the last stage left all testers puzzled. What is the meaning of all these graphs? What is the context to settings made in other parts of the tool? We looked at the explanations, but still could not come to a conclusion that seemed to justify all the efforts going into this tool.

2.7.8 City of Maia (PT)

*Organisation of testing*

From the start, the city of Maia has worked hard on the RFSC. First step consisted of the formation of a testing team from different departments of which one department took the lead. The testing team followed a very structured work plan. One important element within the testing phase was to bring the RFSC under attention of a broad group of employees within the municipality. For example, presentations were held to the leadership and politicians of the Municipality, to the department that is coordinating the testing phase and the other departments that collaborated with the team of the project. But the city of Maia was also involving some external entities in testing the RFSC so they can follow up the project and help sharing the common vision of the city. Last but not least, the city of Maia was also involving the local university (i.e. Research centre CITTA) in the testing activities.

The city of Maia took the testing very seriously; for example, the senior management of the department - that was in charge of testing the RFSC - was involved in characterizing the city, in the settlement of a common vision of the city, in the definition of some strategic guidelines and in the selection of a project to be tested within the RFSC’s tools

*Content of testing*

The city of Maia was in particular interested in testing the parts ‘Characterize your city’ and ‘Check the integrated approach’. The project that has been tested is about the de-pollution of a river and the improvement of the quality of the water, and the choice relates with the comprehensive and horizontal nature of the project. The RFSC has a particular relevance as for bringing forward ideas how to recover the quality of the water and how to upgrade the shores.
Conclusions of testing

The city of Maia can be considered as one of the cities that has worked most enthusiastically on testing the RFSC. This is shown, for example, by the fact that the city participated in all testing phases and instruments. Moreover, it is one of the cities that is most positive about the functionality of the RFSC.

Generally, the city of Maia is of the opinion that the RFSC, and in particular ‘Characterize my city’ has stimulated the internal dialogue of the vision, characteristics and problems of the city, which is seen as (until now) the greatest achievement of the project. The final database of illustrations is also considered as a very important part of the RFSC and doubtless an added value for the city. The city of Maia is satisfied about the usefulness of the tools, with one exception: the 3rd tool “focus on deprived neighbourhoods” that only reveals the actions that were taken into account and the actions that were forgotten, but nothing more (no advice, recommendations).

2.7.9 City of Belfast (UK)

Background

From the start, Belfast City Council regarded the RFSC as a tool that could assist the Council in forming partnerships and developing closer cohesion among various government departments and public bodies in pursuit of a more sustainable city. This was considered necessary because of the specific complex political and governmental arrangements which exist today in Belfast (and Northern Ireland). The organisation of government in Northern Ireland shows a very fragmented picture with a total of 12 government departments, 15 Ministers, at least seventy public bodies and twenty six local authorities for a population of less than 1.8 million.

Due to this complex arrangement of governance, Belfast City Council is in a unique and unusual position both within the EU and UK with respect to the limited responsibilities it has control over.

Organisation of testing

The city of Belfast formed a testing team with representatives from various city council departments. In comparison to other test teams, the testing team consisted of a relatively large number of managers and directors of various departments. In total, five testing sessions were planned, which included one session with political representatives.

As noted before, the Belfast City Council has used the RFSC web tool extensively over the past six months in order to progress several projects. The web tool was used with the following groups and individuals across six departments of the Council for the following activities:

- with the RFSC cross-departmental working team to scan the existing Corporate plan;
- with the RFSC cross-departmental working team to help develop the new Corporate Plan and complete the radar diagram for feedback;
- with the Development Department to develop the new 'Culture Strategy';
- with politicians in the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to help prompt innovative thinking and plan for the 'place shaping' agenda and new Corporate plan;
- with individuals and groups involved in corporate planning, performance management, project monitoring, developing indicators, and sustainable development.

Positive results in testing the RFSC

Generally, Belfast City Council found the web tool to be extremely useful for initiating dialogue on the issue of sustainable development amongst Council departments. In particular, the web tool was useful in provoking more integrated thinking, both amongst politicians and within departments. The tool has encouraged politicians, policy makers and programme managers to explore more thoroughly the social, economic, and environmental and governance impacts of their decisions, and to consider the longer term implications of decision making.

Participating in the testing phase of the RFSC has facilitated an opportunity for better exchange of information and communication across departments. This “out of silo thinking” would most certainly not have happened without the pilot. It has also stimulated dialogue and exchange of best practice with other UK and European cities which face similar challenges with regard to sustainable development. This experience and exchange of knowledge has been very valuable. It has been particularly helpful in developing approaches to solving issues in deprived neighbourhoods and addressing the climate change challenge.

Three aspects of the tool were particularly valuable:
- **Check and evaluate the integrated approach**: the function on the web tool, which enables representation in radar form of the level of commitment that the city council attaches to social, economic, environmental and governance priorities, is valuable. This assessment method demonstrates visually the extent to which the corporate planning process is addressing each of the four tenets of sustainable development. It was obvious to the working group that whilst Belfast City Council has placed particular emphasis on progressing social and economic issues, there were other issues associated with governance and environmental aspects which might need more focus and scrutiny.
- **Case Studies**: the case studies made available on the ‘Networks’ section of the toolkit were also considered particularly valuable, signposting the city council to other cities which have successfully dealt with issues which it finds challenging, e.g. addressing issues such as energy security and demographic contraction. Belfast City Council is in a unique and unusual position both in the EU and UK with respect to the limited responsibilities over which it has control. These include issues associated with education and health provision, urban planning and transport infrastructure. With the reform of local government in Northern Ireland, however, some of these responsibilities will be transferred to the council and so it is useful to have an easily referenced collection of case studies from which to draw down for future planning.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: the capacity to monitor and evaluate progress towards sustainability within a city is particularly valuable. In this respect, the toolkit did provide a function which incorporated a range of inbuilt performance indicators and target values derived from European policy and legislation which could be easily used to identify progress. This set of indicators was examined by our performance management and corporate planning teams with a view to incorporating them into the Council’s performance management processes. These collective functions will enable the Council to monitor its progress towards sustainability and to compare its performance directly with other European municipalities and benchmark accordingly.
Critical remarks

Although Belfast City Council is generally positive about the functionality of the RFSC in its present form, it has some serious critical remarks regarding its usability. For example, it was the consensus of the groups and individuals that the web tool does need some form of manual. It was felt that the site was not easy to navigate and although it contains several useful tools, many were found only by trial and error. Alternatively, the existing user guidance on the site could be more obvious and contain better instructions, signposting the user to distinct areas on the website for more information. In addition to this, the English narrative on the site is not good. Poor translation and grammar render the web tool less attractive and not user friendly. Also, the lack of clarity of explanations on specific issues, in particular the interpretation of the bar charts under ‘Develop your strategy’ renders the web tool less user friendly.

2.7.10 City of Seraing (B)

Organisation of testing

Seraing is a city of 63,000 people. It is situated next to Liège and is composed of one third of industry, one third of residential activities and one third of forests. The economy of the city is based on the industry; a lot of people work in this field but there is also a non-negligible unemployment rate. In the municipality there is also a wonderful forests full of trees and with a rich biodiversity that is classified as a zone Natura 2000.

The municipal administration of the city of Seraing is working on an Agenda 21. The document has to be validated by the city council by the end of 2013. The project is in the diagnosis phase. An Agenda 21 is based on the sustainable development. It was clear for the city of Seraing that this project would be perfect to test the RFSC. The test city of Seraing tested the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’ and ‘Check the integrated approach’ of the RFSC.

Results with tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’

The ideas of actions to develop a strategy (first and second level of questions) are rather extensive and not always concrete. However, the city of Seraing experienced that the questioning grid of sustainable and integrated urban development of the RFSC provided some new insights for your strategy. The usability of the RFSC would improve if some other themes could be added in the future.

In the testing team there were discussions on how to interpret ‘priority’ and ‘level of commitment’. You can define an action as a priority, it

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5 It must be stressed however that the more familiar the users became with the tool, the easier it was to navigate and the more willing they were to use it.
could be necessary to carry out the action at rather short notice; but that does not always mean a high level of commitment as the action is relatively easy to implement. The selection between “initiation”, “commitment” or “maturity” suggest that that the action has already begun. But what to do when the project still has to be developed.

Our Agenda 21 consists of actions in each of the four pillars: economic, social, environmental and governance. Because, Seraing is still at the diagnosis stage of developing their Agenda 21 it is difficult to say which actions will be selected. At this stage Seraing’s objectives are not yet clear. Nevertheless, the testing team selected the actions that might play an important role in the future of our city. The second step of the Agenda 21 will define our objectives and after that some more specific actions.

**Results with tool ‘Check the integrated approach’**

The evaluation of the testing team in using the tool ‘Check the integrated approach’ is that they would prefer that first level questions are not presented again if they are not selected in the first step ‘Develop your strategy/project’. The testing team recognised that not all aspects should have a high priority. The main goal is to evaluate all four aspects of sustainable development systematically. The goal should not be to obtain a perfect circle. That wouldn’t be the reality of our project and would not be honest either.

**Results of Seraing for Agenda 21**

The control of the impact of our actions is showed by a note between +2 et -2. The interpretation of the testing team was that they do not see the logic of evaluating an objective as negative. Why select an ac-
tion/objective that is costing time and money and that scores negatively on one of the objectives of sustainable and integrated urban development? The aim is to make the situation better. In the development of Agenda 21 Seraing’s testing team is not inclined to select actions that have a negative impact. All impacts have to be positive. Therefore, Seraing’s final graph of their Agenda 21 tend to be a square.

Results of Seraing for Agenda 21

The graph above shows a positive impact in every category for our project. It is a bit lower in Economy but that doesn’t matter in this diagnosis stage. That their Agenda 21 scores positively on each of the domains is a good first sign.

The testing team of Seraing concluded that they have to remain realistic and that they have to list their priorities regarding the current situation and the impact the action would have. Therefore, it would be interesting to select the impact before listing our priorities. Having a vision of the impact – before the priorities are selected – would stimulate the dialogue about the project and would be a more efficient procedure to improve the project. In using the RFSC they selected the priorities regarding the advancement of their Agenda 21 project. The selected priorities might be modified in the future, and of course, some others will be added.

Results with tool ‘Monitoring progress’

The testing team saw as an advantage of this RFSC-tool that they can use this tool every year and evaluate their progress. The usability of this tool will be improved for Seraing as examples are provided (e.g. in the PDF-leaflets) and as the indicators are easy to calculate. An indicator like ‘number or percentage of people using the bus’ is easy. But indicators like quality of life and satisfaction with level of social services are less easy. The latter type of indicators are based on surveys and these are usually not reliable. They will use the tool ‘Monitoring progress’ to monitor progress regularly with rather simple indicators.
The testing team appreciated the interdependencies. The interdependency part in the RFSC is really important in the process of an Agenda 21. Every aspect of the sustainable development has to be present in every action. This part of the tool makes the people think in a sustainable way.

**Final evaluation of the testing team of Seraing**

During the testing activities, the city of Seraing noticed a few things that would need some improvement. Their remarks are the following:

- the tool as it is now needs to be updated and rethought in order to be useful for cities;
- the printed version of the results is not clear and some graphs only appear partly;
- the different parts and pages of the tools should be printable in a PDF format;
- a “downloading” section should bring all the downloadable files together;
- a forum should be available on the website in order to give the opportunity to people to ask and answer some questions. The “share” section in “Networks” is a good way to find peer cities and is important but the functionality is limited to create links between cities. A forum is more interesting and an easier way to find directly answers to your questions with the help of other cities.
- people should be able to work on the same project with different logins and on different computers; in this way each one could see what their colleagues do and we wouldn’t need several meeting to work on it;
- the evaluation of the impact has to be rethought;
- the examples in the monitor progress have not an appropriate size and even by zooming it is not possible to read them clearly.

The city of Seraing is of the opinion that the RFSC represents a tool that can be useful to create an Agenda 21. It gives ideas and guides people through some part of their project. However, it cannot be used as a leader but only as a bonus. The goal of the RFSC is to help cities with their project and to orientate them to more sustainable development. In the case of Seraing, testing the tool has been useful as it gives some ideas to work on the Agenda 21. The priorities and some ideas of actions might be right and some of the indicators could be used in the monitoring phase. The testing team in Seraing is pleased to have tested the RFSC and is looking forward to see what the RFSC will become in a near future.
3 Principal conclusions

3.1 Introduction
This chapter answers the three main questions of the testing phase:
- are the overall goals of the RFSC met? (par. 3.2)
- what is RFSC’s value added for the cities? (par. 3.3) and
- are the tools of the RFSC matching the cities’ needs? (par. 3.4).
In paragraph 3.5 we summarize the information of the testing phase to estimate and evaluate the future use of the RFSC (RFSC’s future).

3.2 Are the overall goals of the RFSC met?
The RFSC is a set of tools for evaluation, dialogue and discussion about strategies and projects that aim to enhance city’s sustainable and integrated urban development. ‘Dialogue’ can be either internally between departments in the city administration and externally with stakeholders involved in sustainable urban development. The RFSC is a place to exchange and share experiences and lessons with other European cities. With the tools of the RFSC cities can stimulate a more sustainable and integrated urban development. With the RFSC the cities can:
- in dialogue evaluate and develop strategies, actions and projects of sustainable and integrated urban development;
- compare city’s policies and projects;
- find peer cities and share experiences;
- create a community of European cities.

Are these goals of the RFSC met according to the test cities? Overall, the goals of the RFSC are met (table 3.1). Though, some of the functionalities of the RFSC could not be fully exploited by the test cities. This concerns in particular find peer cities, share experiences (illustrations) and creating a community of European cities. Nevertheless, 38% of the testers discovered already relevant peer cities among the 66 test cities.

The RFSC stimulates internal and external dialogue. The internal dialogue is mostly facilitated between managers and staff members (67%) and between different departments in the city administration (65%). Between the political and management level the internal dialogue is less stimulated by the RFSC (45%). Also the external dialogue is facilitated by the RFSC. Of the testers 70% agrees that the RFSC facilitates the dialogue on sustainable and integrated development between cities across Europe, between the city administration and the regional, national
and/or European levels (65%), between the city administration and stakeholders (47%), between the city and neighbouring cities (49%), and between the city administration and citizens (35%).

The test cities also agree that the use of the RFSC stimulates to consider new approaches in sustainable and integrated urban development (63%), improves their capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated urban development (61%) and will accelerate sustainable and integrated urban development (58%).

**Table 3.1 Are the goals of the RFSC met according to the test cities (n=97-130⁶)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The objectives of the RFSC are clear to me</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The RFSC facilitates the <em>external</em> dialogue on sustainable and integrated development between cities across Europe</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The RFSC facilitates the <em>internal</em> dialogue on sustainable and integrated development between managers and staff members</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The prototype of the RFSC we tested fulfilled the expectations⁷</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The use of the RFSC stimulates us to consider new approaches in sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The RFSC improves our capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The RFSC will accelerate sustainable and integrated urban development⁸</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We discovered relevant peer cities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire

Whether the RFSC stimulates the creation of a community of European cities could not be tested in the testing phase. However, Nicis Institute observed already during the launching event that some test cities in neighbouring countries decided to keep in contact with each other during the testing phase of the RFSC. Further, the National Support Groups in the different countries created active national communities around the testing of the RFSC.

⁶ N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.

⁷ N=58, not filled in by staff members, trainees. Only by politicians, city managers and testing teams as a whole.

⁸ N=58, not filled in by staff members, trainees. Only by politicians, city managers and testing teams as a whole.
3.3 RFSC’s added value for the cities

The added value of the RFSC for the test cities is in line with the objectives of the RFSC:

− First, to exchange experiences, strategies and projects with other (European) cities;

− Secondly, the RFSC stimulates internal and external dialogue about sustainable and integrated urban developments, strategies and projects; during the testing phase mainly the internal dialogue was stimulated. As regards external dialogue there were (with a few exceptions) not so many steps taken by the test cities.

− Thirdly, to improve urban policies, plans, projects, actions and instruments and to experiment with new approaches; the RFSC helps to improve urban policies, strategies, projects and instruments through e-learning, exchange and capacity-building.

Sometimes the wording of the test cities is somewhat different than the official goals of the RFSC. The test cities see as an added value:

− to be able to find peer cities for European projects;

− to use the RFSC as a manual or checklist for their strategies and projects (didn’t we forget relevant objectives and indicators, how can we improve our own monitoring system where certain elements or pillars are not well developed with the suggestions of the RFSC, is our city in line with European objectives?);

− to build a common understanding and language about sustainable and integrated urban development; this common understanding, language and shared key indicators permit the cities to compare different approaches and results.

Already during the testing phase the test cities draw some remarkable conclusions (table 3.2).
Table 3.2  The functionality of the RFSC according to the test cities (n=97-130\(^9\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Testing the RFSC improved the dialogue between our city departments</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- During the testing I spoke with departments I had never been in contact with before about projects and strategies</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We do not have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development(^10)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire

The value added of the RFSC is higher in the small and medium-sized cities (less than 200,000 inhabitants) than in the large cities (more than 200,000 inhabitants) (table 3.3).

As regards some of the aspects of the RFSC there is no large difference between the opinion small and medium-sized test cities and large test cities. Both types of cities agree that using the RFSC requires at least two days of training (64% on average), that the RFSC should contain an ideal or good practice of sustainable and integrated urban development (79% on average), that without examples and illustrations the RFSC is of little use for them (57% on average), that the interdependencies are a useful and interesting part of the RFSC (70% on average), that during the testing of the RFSC the tester had contact with other departments he or she had never had contact before (30% on average) and that they do not have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development (40%).

\(^9\) N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.

\(^10\) Of the testers 29% neither agree nor disagree that they have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development.
Table 3.3 Added value of RFSC for test cities by size of cities; percentage ‘agree’ (n=97-130)\textsuperscript{11,12}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>&lt; 200.000</th>
<th>&gt; 200.000</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prototype RFSC fulfilled expectations\textsuperscript{12}</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of RFSC are clear to me</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC is easy to use in daily practice</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC improves our capacity for s&amp;i-ud</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC stimulates us to consider new approaches in s&amp;i-ud</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC facilitates dialogue about s&amp;i-ud between departments within the city</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have not better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on s&amp;i-ud</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We would regret if there would no be a final version of the RFSC after the testing phase</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are sure that we will use (parts of) the RFSC regularly if a final version is available</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire. Legend: s\&i-ud = sustainable and integrated urban development

The perceived value added of the RFSC in the test cities in Southern Europe and in East Europe seems larger than in the test cities of Northwest Europe (table 3.4).\textsuperscript{13} Again there are aspects of the RFSC where the opinion does not differ very much by the geographical location of the test cities. Examples are:

- testing was not a priority (59% on average)
- the RFSC should contain an ideal of good practice of sustainable and integrated urban development (79% on average)
- without examples and illustrations the RFSC is of little use for us (57% on average)
- during the testing of the RFSC the tester had contact with other departments he or she had never had contact before (30% on average)
- the RFSC is useful if we are able to compare our project with projects of other European cities (88% on average) and

\textsuperscript{11} N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.

\textsuperscript{12} N=58, not filled in by staff members, trainees. Only by politicians, city managers and testing teams as a whole.

\textsuperscript{13} South Europe includes: Spain, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus and Greece. East Europe includes: Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Latvia. Northwest Europe includes the test cities in: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France.
the RFSC should make it possible to compare our strategies and projects directly with other European cities (74%).

Table 3.4 Added value of RFSC for test cities by geographical location; percentage 'agree' (n=97 - 130)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prototype RFSC fulfilled expectations (^{15})</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of RFSC are clear for me</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of language problems it was difficult to include enough people in testing the RFSC</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC is easy to use in daily practice</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the RFSC requires at least two days of training</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC improves our capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC stimulates us to consider new approaches in s&amp;i-ud</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFSC facilitates internal dialogue about s&amp;i-ud between departments within the city</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without practices, examples and illustrations of other cities the RFSC is of little use for us</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC will accelerate s&amp;i-ud (^{16})</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are sure that we will use (parts of) the RFSC regularly if a final version is available</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire. Legend: s&i-ud = sustainable and integrated urban development

3.4 Are the tools matching cities’ needs?

The tools of the RFSC are by and large matching the test cities’ needs. One third of the testers in the test cities (32%) say that they have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development. That percentage is lower in the small and medium-sized cities (27%) than in larger cities (43%). A larger part - 40% of the testers in the test cities - disagrees with the statement that

\(^{14}\) N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.

\(^{15}\) N=58, not filled in by staff members, trainees. Only by politicians, city managers and testing teams as a whole.

\(^{16}\) N=58, not filled in by staff members, trainees. Only by politicians, city managers and testing teams as a whole.
they have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development. More testers in small and medium-sized cities disagree with this statement (44%) than testers in large cities (30%). Of the testers 28% neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement that they have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development.

An indication for that the tools are matching the cities needs are the opinions about the results and graphs in the RFSC. Although many important improvements are suggested, a large majority of the testers states that the spider diagram (in the tool ‘Check the integrated approach’, Chapter 7) is very useful to them. Also the other summarising results and graphs are positively described by the majority of the testers (table 3.5).

Table 3.5 The usefulness of the results of RFSC according to the test cities (n=97 – 130\(^{17}\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The graphic ‘results of priorities’ (spider diagram) in the tool</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘check the integrated approach’ is very useful for us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The graphic ‘view of results’ (dashboard) in the tool ‘check the</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated approach’ is useful for us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation summary of your choices in the step check the</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance of your choices in the tool ‘develop your strategy or project’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is very useful for us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire

When the recommendations to improve the prototype of the RFSC are implemented (see chapter 5) the tools will match the cities’ needs even better. The improvements will increase the functionality and the usability of the RFSC and as a consequence the number of small and medium-sized cities that will probably use the RFSC.

Nevertheless, one needs to remain realistic. Strategies of sustainable and integrated urban development are not developed on a daily basis, communication and dialogue with staff of several other departments are very hard to organise (in particular in large cities) and cities are not looking very frequently for peer cities and good practices of other cities. Still, the availability of a tool such as the RFSC is probably an asset in a large amount of European cities. It is nice to have it around (easy to use, not too complicated) when you need it. This probably explains why

\(^{17}\) N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.
almost 90% of the testers and test cities want a final version of the RFSC and stipulate that they will surely use it.

### 3.5 RFSC’s future

*Test cities state that they will use the RFSC in the future*

89% of the test cities stated it would be regrettable if a final version of the RFSC would not be developed after the testing phase. A likeminded large group (82% of the test cities) stated they are sure that in the future they will use (parts of) the RFSC regularly, if and when a final version would be made available.

The future use of the RFSC will mainly be:
- learn from other cities’ projects and strategies (81%)
- find other cities as potential partners (75%)
- learn more about indicators (75%)
- discuss about potential synergies and conflicts (66%)
- develop and evaluate projects in a few departments (54%)
- build monitoring systems for some of our projects (54%)
- develop and check sustainable and integrated urban strategies (50%)
- build monitoring systems for our city-wide integrated strategies (50%)
- improve our city’s policies and actions for deprived neighbourhoods (34%)
- and be less opportunistic, less inconsistent and less short-sighted in the selection of our priority projects (32%).

*Even for large cities the RFSC can be useful*

Even large cities (with their own sophisticated tools) see some advantages in using the RFSC. They can check their strategies and projects. The ‘interdependencies’ part of the RFSC is an asset in the tool that large cities used systematically during the testing phase. The large cities can improve parts of their monitoring systems and also for them it is useful that cities in Europe use the same key indicators because this facilitates mutual learning processes.

*Member States support the RFSC, with some considerations*

The Member States confirm that the objectives of the RFSC are coherent with national objectives. Both Member States and test cities recognise the potential of the RFSC to achieve these objectives. The critical remarks of some of the Member States are important to consider and to include in the recommendations. Some of the Member States and National Support Groups stress that:
- the prototype is too complex and time consuming;
- it is not clear that the benefits of the RFSC outweigh the costs and time that cities should invest in using the RFSC;
the added value of the RFSC vis-à-vis other instruments should be made more evident;
the RFSC should be enough flexible to adapt to local institutional situations;
the common understanding of the integrated approach is not yet translated into the questioning grid and indicators;
the RFSC could be too complicated for most users (medium-sized cities) and provide insufficient output for advanced cities (large cities);
the RFSC should stimulate bench-learning; “in order to avoid the risk of the RFSC being just ‘another’ system or set of indicators, the real added value should be sought in voluntary bench-learning at European scale and this could turn the RFSC at the end into the most popular European set of indicators”;
commitment and incentives of management, the political level, the Member States and the European Commission are needed.

For the further development one of the Member States and National Support Groups stresses that creating a useful debate at local level around a checklist of questions is the essence of the RFSC; not using a webtool as such. Taking this as a starting point one should concentrate the further development of the RFSC on giving cities clues and support on how to organise this debate (video examples, methodologies etc.) than to develop a very sophisticated web tool. “The more sophisticated the web tool becomes, the less useful it becomes for creating the conditions for a real debate”. “A good checklist and methodological debate orientations may probably be more useful instruments to create a debate between city politicians, technicians, stakeholders and citizens than a very sophisticated web tool whose increasing complexity invites to use it in isolation”.

Estimation of future use of the RFSC
The future use of the final version of the RFSC is difficult to estimate. One should not take the very optimistic statements of the testers in the test cities at face value. The test cities are not a representative selection of European cities; they were for different reasons motivated to use the RFSC. One should also consider that in answering the questions about future use of the RFSC the testers might have shown strategic behaviour and that in being positive they might have intended to qualify for European support, money or a better European image. Last but not least there is always an important gap between intentional behaviour (80% stated that they will use the RFSC in the future) and factual behaviour.

Notwithstanding these restrictions, in the testing phase some testing teams were able to use all parts of the RFSC without any additional information. They discovered with the user guide, the pop-up menus and trial and error all functionalities of the RFSC and they could work with the RFSC without large problems. In these cases there was a highly motivated team, with a good project leader, strong political commitment,
enough time and no language barrier. For cities where these conditions are available it is not strictly necessary to improve the prototype of the RFSC considerably.

For the average European small and medium-sized cities these conditions are not available (all the time). For these cities the recommendations of the next chapter should be carried through to provide the conditions that they can and will use the RFSC.

Some cities want a more open system to learn, exchange and compare with other European cities their strategies, projects, actions and monitoring systems. Improving the functionality of the RFSC in this way will increase the number of cities that will use the RFSC.

In the prototype of the RFSC not all functionalities are discovered and tested by all the testers and test cities. One of the reasons for this is that the usability of the RFSC was for many testers not easy. For the prototype RFSC 64% of the test cities are of opinion that the RFSC requires at least two days of training before you can start using it. Large (53%) and small and medium-sized cities (71%) have the same opinion, but especially small and medium-sized cities need more training. Therefore, one could estimate that training and coaching of future users of the RFSC will stimulate the use of the RFSC (table 3.6).  

18 If examples of virtual cities, city characteristics, strategies and projects are included in the RFSC, if guidelines (what to do, how to improve) are part of the final version of the RFSC and when demonstration films show the use of the RFSC the need of training and coaching of future users will be less urgent. In organizing the training and coaching the Members States and test cities could play a leading role.
### Table 3.6 Eclectic estimation of future use of the RFSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of cities</th>
<th>How to improve prototype RFSC</th>
<th>Cumulative % of cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly motivated team, strong political commitment, good project leader, time, priority, no language barrier</td>
<td>No considerable improvement needed</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The average European city</td>
<td>Carry through the important improvements of chapter 4</td>
<td>25–30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self selected European cities applying for more voluntary benchlearning</td>
<td>Make the RFSC a more open tool to learn, exchange and compare more intensively</td>
<td>25–35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The average European city lacking capacity</td>
<td>Training, coaching, workshops, conferences</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Nicis Institute

The future use of the RFSC will probably be even higher than the maximum of 50% in table 3.6. You could expect that even cities that are not using the RFSC explicitly will use the questioning grid and the indicators of the RFSC to develop and improve their strategies, projects and monitoring systems. This is the experience of many award schemes. Cities are using criteria of award schemes to improve themselves even when they do not apply or do not yet apply for the award. In this way - with enough publicity, conferences and publications – “all” European cities can potentially benefit from the RFSC.
4 Main recommendations

4.1 Introduction
A large majority of the test cities see the following benefits of the RFSC:
- exchanging experience, strategies and projects with other (European) cities;
- improving urban policies, plans, projects, actions and instruments;
- building a common understanding and language about sustainable and integrated urban planning;
- stimulating dialogue (in the test phase mainly between departments within the city administration);
- experimenting with new approaches;
- having a manual or checklist for sustainable and integrated urban actions;
- finding peer cities or partners for European projects.

The testing phase made clear that urgent and important improvements of the prototype are needed to increase its functionality and added value for the cities and to enhance the use of the RFSC by a large number of European cities. The main recommendations are summarized in this chapter of the report. Before the recommendations made by the test cities will be presented, paragraph 4.2 will first give the conclusions and recommendations made by the expert panel. As the expert panel emphasizes the added value of the RFSC for politicians, extra attention will be paid to the question how politicians themselves look at the usefulness and relevance of the RFSC. This will be done by using the results of the questionnaire. Subsequently, the recommendations proposed by the test cities will be given. These recommendations are both to improve the structure (par. 4.3) as well as the content of the RFSC (par. 4.4).

4.2 Recommendations made by the expert panel
The findings from the testing phase and the conclusions drawn from the test cities’ and the Member States’ feedback were discussed and consulted with an external expert panel. The advice and observations of the experts were taken into account when making concrete recommendations for the improvement of the structure and the content of the RFSC. The experts’ discussion and contributions were grouped around six main batteries of questions:
Objectives (questions) and indicators for sustainable urban development

According to the experts, the overall objectives for sustainable urban development that are formulated in the 25 main questions of the RFSC are generally suitable to allow for setting-up an integrated urban development strategy or project and also for a critical self-assessment in view of the integrated approach. However, the experts consider that some questions related to sustainable and integrated urban development are missing and should be included in the questioning grid (either by formulating new questions or by extending or specifying the scope of existing questions). In particular, questions related to spatial planning should be taken better into account.

Concerning the indicators and especially the key indicators the experts see no need for a radical overhaul either. Yet, the experts stress the fact that the data to measure the indicators need to be available at local level. Therefore they consider it also too ambitious to include more complex (synthesized) sustainability indicators in the set of recommended key indicators. Such data would only be available in a few cases. Still, a few of these advanced indicators could be included in the set of secondary indicators especially for the use of more ambitious cities or bigger cities where the necessary data could be available and where there would be interest to exchange on these indicators.

The experts stress that the questions and indicators should not only measure the intentions, but that especially the key indicators should also help to steer a city’s course of sustainable and integrated urban development towards the right direction and relevant target values. Therefore the experts propose to include in the spreadsheet of the RFSC monitoring tool automatically the relevant European and/or national reference values for the indicators; they also recommend a clear link with the Europe 2020 objectives in this respect.

The experts suggest to look for synergies with the Informed Cities initiative (a European project funded by the 7th Framework Program of the European Union under the name PRIMUS – Policies and Research for an Integrated Management of Urban Sustainability; the project is coordinated by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability).

The experts also put forward the idea of permitting some more flexibility for the cities and to offer the possibility to add their own first level questions and their own key indicators in the RFSC. Users could for example receive five “wildcards” to add their own first level questions and key indicators. The advantages would be that the RFSC would be more adaptable to national and local situations and that it might become more interesting for politicians. Moreover, the “wildcards” could help to avoid the effect that many cities simply copycat the same objectives, strategies and projects. The experts find it important that the RFSC does not (not even indirectly) reduce the diversity between European
cities. More flexibility would also mean more room for adding sustainability questions/indicators, questions/indicators bridging the four pillars, or questions addressing specific issues of the integrated approach. The experts would nevertheless expect that the core of the first level questions and the key indicators will continue to stimulate the common understanding of sustainable and integrated urban development. They assume that most cities would be satisfied with and use the 25 first level questions and the key indicators; yet, a bit more flexibility might help to avoid some frustration for those cities that find the fixed proposal at the first level questions and the key indicators too rigid.

Another proposal from the experts is to explore the possibilities of having a more simple framework of first and second level questions and key indicators for smaller cities and a more complex and sophisticated tool for more advanced and larger cities, as some issues are less relevant or problematic in smaller cities than in large cities (e.g. public transport, air pollution).

**Main target cities of the RFSC**

The experts consider that the most need for guidance and for exchange and mutual learning on sustainable and integrated urban development exists in small and medium-sized cities and that there is a particular backlog in Southern and Eastern European cities. Therefore they assume that the RFSC is most valuable for small and medium-sized cities. Especially the small and medium-sized cities need support as they often lack the staff and the capacity. They are also more open to and more dependent on networks than larger cities and are looking for an “umbrella” to which they can tie in. Similar observations can be made in the case of the Aalborg Charter or the Covenant of Mayors. Larger cities tend to have their own networks, tools and peer cities and therefore might be less attracted by the RFSC. Therefore the experts recommend to take especially the needs of small and medium-sized cities into account and to simplify the RFSC (and especially the wording) in a way that it can be more easily used by this target group.

At the same time, the experts recommend that the RFSC should not exclude larger or more advanced cities. Larger and more advanced cities can be frontrunners and trailblazers for the ‘average city’ and smaller cities can learn from the experience of larger cities. In addition, even larger cities can benefit from the RFSC. As in large cities the internal dialogue is much harder to organise than in smaller and medium-sized cities, the RFSC can launch and/or facilitate internal coordination processes. The experts also imagine that in a more open process of exchange, learning and comparing between cities (“bench-learning”) especially larger cities could be interested to use the RFSC also as a tool for voluntary benchmarking, whereas smaller cities would probably look more for mutual learning, networking and partnerships.
According to the experts, providing more flexibility in the RFSC by adding first level questions and key indicators (see point 1.) could also be a way to adapt the RFSC better to the different needs of larger and smaller or medium-sized cities.

**Scope of the RFSC: Strategies and projects**

The experts believe that the challenge for cities lies not only in elaborating sustainable and integrated strategies for urban development, but also in setting up sustainable projects which implement these strategies in line with the overall objectives and in an integrated way. Therefore the experts consider it necessary to stimulate a more integrated approach also at project level and recommend improving the RFSC in view of the use for individual projects. The RFSC is in principle designed to help cities also at project level; however, the current functionality seems to have more added value at strategy level or for large complex projects than for smaller, sectoral projects. Yet, the experts advocate for keeping the smaller projects in the tool “Develop your strategy/project” and for improving this functionality. This part of the RFSC could be very relevant to help cities to find synergies and to overcome possible conflicts in particular with view to more sectoral or smaller.

Also in this respect, the experts suggest to explore whether a more flexible or open way of defining the first level questions on sustainable and integrated urban development could help addressing this specific need. Some examples could be helpful to show that the RFSC is useful also for small and sectoral projects.

**Relation between the different tools of the RFSC**

The experts favour to have the possibility to use the different tools of the RFSC independently. However, more links and relations between the tools should be elaborated in order to make the RFSC more user-friendly for cities. For example, in the part ‘City characteristics’ and in the separate tools the same 25 first level questions on sustainable and integrated development reappear. If cities use several tools (e.g. ‘Develop a strategy’, ‘Check the integrated approach’ and ‘Develop a monitoring system’) for a certain strategy or project, they have to answer several times the same 25 questions on sustainable and integrated urban development.

At the same time, the experts appreciate that a variety of viewpoints are reflected in the different tools of the RFSC. For example, ‘City characteristics’ focuses on the current state of affairs, actions, concerns and reasons for concerns; ‘Develop your strategy/project’ looks at the actions, priorities and their relevance; ‘Check the integrated approach’ helps to list the priorities and to show the impact on sustainability issues with a graphic view of results; ‘Develop a monitoring system’ helps to select key indicators and secondary indicators linked to first and second level questions. The different tools and different points of view...
stimulate that the information is reevaluated and discussed again frequently and at different stages of the process. Some examples could illustrate these complementarities and the importance of different viewpoints for the internal and external dialogue depending on the actual need and the status of the proceedings. The experts also suggest to take into consideration that in the testing phase the test cities had to test the different tools in a rather short time period. This could have led to the feeling of a certain overlap. In the future – in real live situations – the user and the city will probably select only the functionality of the RFSC that is most useful for him or her in a given situation.

In order to improve the usability of the RFSC, the experts suggest making clearer that in developing a strategy or project some logical steps need to be followed. In a first step, the actual situation needs to be analysed – ideally with the help of indicators. Only in a second step, ideas should be developed about possible actions related to the actual situation.

The experts also recommend reinforcing the possibilities to share information within the city administration and among colleagues. Ideally, the RFSC should provide the name and department of the person who has filled in information earlier. In this way the RFSC could play an even more important role in stimulating internal dialogue and conscious decision making.

**Voluntary bench-learning**

The experts stress that voluntary “bench-learning” would be an important functionality of the RFSC. “Bench-learning” would be possible if the RFSC would be a more open system for exchange and learning through offering the possibility to compare strategies, projects, actions and monitoring systems with other European cities. With the cities that discuss and compare different approaches and results a “bench-learning” community could be created which could exchange on specific issues or also on a more regular basis. Moreover, “bench-learning” and comparing developments on the basis of indicators are drivers for more internal dialogue, communication and coordination.

However, the experts stressed that cities and individual users should have the freedom to decide with whom they want to share information: internally as well as externally (with other cities or even with a wider public) – internally also because staff members should feel free to start working on strategies and projects on their own. In addition, the culture of openness in city administrations can vary widely. Therefore the experts advocate for maximum freedom in “bench-learning”. Cities should be able to compare and learn about actions, priorities, projects, strategies, and monitoring results. This process should not be steered but left to the discretion of the cities.
The experts see no major complications or risks in going into the direction of voluntary “bench-learning”. If the function is voluntary, only those cities that are really interested will use it for an active exchange. Others might use it to check the results of other cities and compare them with their own performance without sharing the results and exchanging information; still, they would profit from the “bench-learning” in an indirect way and take it as an incentive to improve their own performance. The experts neither see a big risk that the “bench-learning” could lead to “self-promotion” by certain cities and expect that such a misuse would readdress itself within the “bench-learning” community.

Value added of the RFSC

The experts consider the broad and holistic approach of the RFSC as the main added value. There are not many broad tools that stimulate a broad dialogue across all sectors and levels, a critical self-assessment in view to overarching objectives and the exchange on sustainable urban development objectives on the basis of a common understanding. The RFSC covers in a holistic way the shared European objectives and principles for sustainable and integrated urban development. At the same time, it ties in with the overarching targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. In that sense, the RFSC is complementary to other, more sectoral initiatives (e.g. Covenant of Mayors, Aalborg Charter, Local Agenda 21, Global Reporting Initiative) and goes further. The RFSC gives a more complete picture and can create synergies with other initiatives. The experts therefore suggest showing the added value of the RFSC in a very simple and user-friendly way; all details for specialists, experts and specific staff members could be put in a textbook for further information.

According to the experts, the RFSC is of particular benefit when cities are in the beginning of developing strategies and projects. It often happens that in the starting phase of a strategy or project there is not enough time spent on identifying and discussing all relevant aspects. New aspects often appear later during the project development and execution. This regularly adds substantial, unnecessary costs to the project. Discussing social, economic, environmental, and governance aspects of a strategy or project with a broad perspective at the very beginning of the process can significantly improve the quality of the strategy or project and can reduce the risk of conflicts and unforeseen cost increases at a later stage. Asking the right and relevant questions at the very beginning is therefore crucial. The RFSC “forces” the cities to reflect whether they did not forget anything crucial. According to the experts, this is one of the main added values of the RFSC.

The second important added value of the RFSC is its functionality to measure whether goals are achieved. The RFSC is not only a text which consists of good intentions (as many charters or initiatives do). With the monitoring tool of the RFSC, cities can prove what they are actually
achieving. This is another main benefit of the RFSC according to the experts.

In comparison, the experts find the RFSC less “unique” as a method of thinking about the future of the city or to develop a strategy as there exist already many other, sometimes more specific instruments. Nevertheless, it is useful that the RFSC offers these functionalities as well, as it therewith offers a full range of tools, which is particular relevant for small and medium-sized cities that do not have such specific instruments yet.

The experts also stress that the RFSC could be of help to improve participatory decision making with citizens. In some countries, this aspect becomes more and more important. The active involvement of citizens as from an early stage – also through the internet and web-based tools – becomes more and more a “pre-condition” for the successful development and implementation of an urban development project.

The experts highlight the added value of the RFSC also from the viewpoint of local politicians and decision makers:
- the RFSC is a tool for politicians who want to implement sustainable development;
- the RFSC helps politicians to improve the efficient delivery of their politics through better coordination and better preparation of the actions;
- the RFSC facilitates discussions and also the communication about what they are aiming for and about what they are achieving;
- the RFSC facilitates the dialogue with stakeholders and citizens and stimulates the critical self-assessment whether all relevant aspects have been covered (some illustrative and concise examples could clarify this aspect for politicians);
- the RFSC stimulates better cooperation between different departments, which for most politicians and decision makers is a major challenge in the internal work organisation;
- the RFSC is a tool for communication and public relationship; at a later stage, it could also become a means to facilitate participatory decision making.

Beyond this background, the experts expect that politicians could be motivated to stimulate the use of the RFSC when the positive effects on the efficiencies in and effectiveness of city policies are depicted in the RFSC. Therefore, this type of cost-benefits should be included in the text of the possible interdependencies identified in the RFSC. The RFSC should make clear that cities can save and earn money when thinking about possible synergies and conflicts already at the very beginning of strategies and projects. These possible benefits of an integrated approach also in monetary terms (less duplication, more efficiency, smart-
er solutions) are probably the most relevant aspect for politicians and decision makers.

**Opinion of the politicians themselves**

As the expert panel stresses the added value of the RFSC for the politicians, the politicians themselves have very high expectations and they observe several opportunities to benefit from working with the RFSC. Table 4.1 shows this. For example, it can be seen that for 83 percent of the politicians - who filled in the questionnaire - the prototype of the RFSC fulfilled the expectations whereas for all respondents this is considerably lower (63 percent). All politicians who filled in the questionnaire believe that the RFSC will stimulate the creation of a common understanding in Europe on sustainable and integrated urban development; of all respondents of the questionnaire 76 percent believes this. Remarkable is also that a relatively high percentage of politicians - at least clearly higher than for all respondents to the questionnaire - agree with the proposition that ‘to develop, implement and monitor integrated urban policies is very difficult in our city’.
### Table 4.1 Results all respondents v.s. politicians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Politicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The prototype of the RFSC we tested fulfilled the expectation</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable and integrated urban development is a high priority in our city</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop, implement and monitor integrated urban policies is very difficult for us</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The objectives of the RFSC are clear to me</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For politicians the RFSC is a tool to better highlight their policy priorities</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC will stimulate the creation of a common understanding in Europe on sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC will accelerate sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC helps define our priorities of sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC stimulates inclusion of more European objectives of sustainable and integrated urban development (Leipzig Charter, Europe 2020) in our cities strategies and projects</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC helps to create synergies and to avoid conflicts across sectors. It can thus help to create cost-savings in the long-run</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have better tools than the RFSC to facilitate the dialogue on sustainable and integrated urban development</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RFSC makes clear what the Leipzig Charter and sustainable and integrated urban development is all about</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to be able to find partners, peer cities and comparable projects, all our data inputted in the RFSC should be visible and accessible to all European cities, using the RFSC</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the RFSC we must be able to select the cities we want to share information with</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be regrettable if a final version of the RFSC would not be developed after the testing phase</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire

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10 I.e. politicians included
4.3 Structure of RFSC

The following urgent improvements are needed to enhance the usability of the RFSC. We included in this chapter only the urgent and important recommendations. The main recommendations are grouped by improvements in:
- navigation
- understanding
- internal dialogue
- flexibility
- customisation
- external dialogue
- and by the tool 'Focus on deprived neighbourhoods'.

In the next chapters more suggestions for improvement are put forward.\(^{20}\)

4.3.1 Navigation

The RFSC should be more self-explanatory, user-friendly and simpler. This starts already with the home page. The rolling screens that explain the RFSC, the coloured blocks economy, social, environment, governance, the tools presented as icons only and the buttons ‘Tools’ and ‘Networks’ are not self-explanatory. The RFSC does not “sell” itself from the start and the homepage guides the user insufficiently on how to work with the RFSC. What is behind the buttons ‘Tools’ and ‘Networks’ is not clear. The homepage should contain information about and provide links to content that is available in the ‘Tools’ and ‘Networks’ sections. The homepage contains too much text, without offering an actionable starting point towards the rest of the website. With limited prior knowledge, visitors continue to either ‘Tools’ or ‘Networks’ without understanding the relationships, or the lack of relationships, between these sections.

The crucial functionality of starting a strategy or project before you start using the tools of the RFSC should be made more clear. Now this functionality is “hidden” in the tools. To simplify the RFSC the distinction between ‘get started’ and ‘add new project’ could be skipped. Keep the most simple way to start a project: ‘add new project’. At the place where you start a new project you should also be able to change the name of a strategy/project and to delete a strategy/project. Also the readability and visibility of the strategy/project you are developing and evaluating with the different tools should be improved. The default project can be eliminated in the final version of the RFSC.

\(^{20}\) For even more detail the reader could ask for the separate technical background reports.
In general it is not well understood that all tools can be used independently. A better explanation of the RFSC, a better visualisation, customisation, examples of city characteristics, city strategies and projects and demonstration and instructions films could make this more clear for the user. But, even when this will be more clear for the user of the RFSC not all usability problems are solved. When cities fill in their themes, characteristics, actions, concerns and reasons for concern of the 25 first level questions on sustainable and integrated urban development in city characteristics they have to go through these same 25 first level questions in ‘Develop your strategy/project’ and ‘Check the integrated approach’ again. For the test cities it looks that the RFSC obliges them to do the same thing over and over again. One of the recommendations is that information about city characteristics, strategies and projects using the 25 first level questions (characteristics, actions, concerns, priorities, impacts) reappears for users at a later moment or in using another RFSC tool. Ideally, it would be clear also to state who put this evaluation information of the city, strategies or projects already in the RFSC. The feeling of unnecessary duplications could be reinforced because of the testing phase. In a short time period the testers used several tools of the RFSC because they took up their testing role. In a sense this is somewhat artificially and will be less the case in real life situations using the final version of the RFSC. Also, in explaining the added value of the RFSC it should be made more clear that each tool provides a certain point of view regarding the development and evaluation of strategies and projects. And that these different points of view stimulate internal and external dialogue.

When cities link a monitoring system to a strategy or a project there should be a linkage between the tools. This functionality is now not available in the prototype. When you select the relevant first or second level questions of sustainable and integrated urban development in ‘develop your strategy/project’ or ‘check the integrated approach’ and as a next step you want to build a monitoring system for this strategy or project only the relevant indicators should be suggested.

In the prototype of the RFSC the tools can be used independently and therefore the user encounters the same 25 first levels on sustainable and integrated urban development several times when he or she uses different tools. The only exception where parts of the tool are indeed interdependent is the link between city characteristics and the step ‘Check the relevance’ in the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’. When all concerns and reasons for concerns of the 25 first level questions are evaluated and discussed in city characteristics this information is reused to check the relevance of a strategy or project. For not selected actions linked to the 25 first level questions of a strategy or project a warning appears “You didn’t take into account this challenge by picking up actions” even if you wrote information in the characterisation of your city.
During the on-site visits we found out that the potential usefulness of this link and these warnings are recognised by the cities. Unfortunately many test cities did not find these link by themselves. Only by demonstrations during the on-site visits this functionality became clear to the testers in many test cities. The linkage between city characteristics (concerns and reasons for the concern) and check the relevance should be made more clear. Examples, of virtual cities and virtual strategies and projects could demonstrate this potential useful linkage.^[21]

'Your results’ provides a summary of all strategies and projects. This is the place where strategies and projects can be deleted. But names cannot be changed (yet). This summary of strategies and projects in the prototype is placed under the button 'Networks’. This should be changed by for example provide an overview of ‘Your results’ on the homepage after login access. The remaining content of ‘Networks’ can be split into two navigation items: a) networks (with share and illustrations) b) your city (with profile and characteristics).

If, in the final version, the functionality is kept that there is a link between ‘concerns’ in city characteristics and ‘check the relevance’ in ‘develop your strategy/project’ – and there is no reason not to do so - then the user could be obliged to start with its profile and characteristics. In line with this recommendation is the idea to follow in the main navigation the order: Your city, Add new strategy/project, Summary of your strategies/project (Your results), Tools and Networks.

The navigation will be further improved when:
- important elements do attract more attention (add new strategy or projects, save buttons, interdependencies, highlight concerns);
- it is always clear where you are (which page, tool, project) and what the colours, icons^[22] and scales mean;
- the navigation cross works intuitively;
- ‘home’ is added in the main navigation (in the prototype it is unclear how to return to the home page);
- a button 'go to next step/page’ at the bottom of the page is included;
- after using the 'select all' and 'clear all' buttons a confirmation is asked; in the prototype it is too easy to delete everything;
- non-clickable elements look not clickable and clickable elements look clickable.^[23]

^[21] The example in the second newsletter didn’t seem to be read or understood widely.

^[22] Two examples can illustrate this point. In the leaflet of illustrations very clearly the colours and the names of the four pillars are explained, in the graphics in check the integrated approach the colours are not explained. In Tools the tools are named, but in Your results the icons of the tools are not explained. With a hover text this can be solved.
4.3.2 Understanding

With the improvements in navigation the usability of the RFSC will improve. But with the following recommendations the (content-wise) understanding of the RFSC can be further improved.

With examples of a virtual city, virtual strategies and projects and virtual results and graphs the understanding of the functionality of the RFSC can be improved. 75 percent of the test cities state that the RFSC should present and describe an “ideal” or “a good practice” of sustainable and integrated urban development. This makes it also possible to demonstrate what cities could put into textboxes (add comment) and what use this could have in the communication, dialogue and evaluation of strategies and projects. With demonstration and instruction films of teams using the different tools the understanding of the RFSC could improve further.24 The examples make it also possible to explain how to interpret the results achieved and may even provide guidance on how to improve strategies and projects.25

The understanding of the RFSC would improve if the added value of the RFSC vis-à-vis other tools the cities are using is demonstrated and explained with concrete examples. It should be made obvious or plausible that the benefits of using the RFSC are larger than the costs (time, energy, organisation). For example, it could be stressed that the added value and the benefits are the links with European objectives and principles of sustainable and integrated urban development, that the difference with other tools is that the objectives in none of the four pillars are dominant and that the integration of several tools can enhance the sustainable and integrated urban development in cities.

A short manual and user guide with less text could also improve the understanding of the RFSC. In general lengthy texts in the user guide and in the pop-ups menus are barely read. The goal should be for the user guide to explain (in non学术 language) with examples from daily practices in European cities how to start working with the RFSC in five minutes.

23 Two examples can demonstrate this possible improvement in usability. In the pop-up text explaining the functionality there is often a text next step. Users expect that in clicking this text they can go to the next step. In the level of commitment (initiation, commitment and maturity) it is not clear that the definitions are clickable to find more information.

24 An indication for this need is the question asked several times to Nicis Institute: how do we have to organize the internal dialogue with the RFSC?

25 Improvements are advised in the graphs and results for better understanding: add legends, explain colours, add hover texts to the number 1 to 25 in the spider diagram, explain the scales (what do mean the differences in level of commitment, how to understand the scaling from -2 to +2, what do the different grey colours and the scaling 1-8 mean in ‘check the relevance’?) and be transparent in the calculation and weighting in obtaining the dashboard (profile of your strategy/project in check the integrated approach).
With few illustrations in the RFSC the functionality that you can learn from other cities in picking your actions of sustainable and integrated urban development does not become clear. So enlarging the number of illustrations in the RFSC is important to improve the understanding of the RFSC. Almost 60% of the testers say (even when this functionality was limited in the testing phase) that without practices, examples and illustrations of other cities the RFSC is of little use for them. This opinion was shared by large as well as small and medium-sized cities.

The two way approach in the search of peer cities is not well explained and understood in the prototype. In the first step a user city indicates for which topics it wants to be a peer city for others (I want to be a peer city for other cities about ....). The second step highlights the topics the user is looking for peer cities about (I am looking for peer cities about .....). The text does not explain these two steps and their functionality clearly.

4.3.3 Internal dialogue
The main recommendation to improve the internal dialogue is to let more people share their inputs in using the RFSC. Now each user, with its own login and password, can only see its own information and not the information of his or her colleagues. “It is important that you can share the data in the RFSC with colleagues. What is otherwise the value added of a tool that wants to stimulate discussions and dialogue?”. Also with better printing options, better graphs and visualisations and the possibility to make a word/pdf file of the results of a tool the internal dialogue will be made easier.

4.3.4 Flexibility
The usability of the RFSC is improved when users have the possibility to change names of strategies and projects and when at the same logical place in the RFSC you can add a new project and you can delete a project. This improves the flexibility in using the RFSC.

Another recommendation of the test cities is to provide users with more flexibility to define their own second level questions of sustainable and integrated urban development. When you ‘Develop your strategy or project’ you have to select actions at the second level of questions that are not well describing your actions. Of course, with the text field ‘add comment’ you can give an interpretation of the second level questions that fits better the actions of your strategy or project, but that is mainly a trick to overcome a certain (and possible unnecessary) barrier in the usability of the tool.\textsuperscript{26} This problem is not as urgent for the 25 first level questions because at this level the questions of sustainable and integrated urban development are formulated at a more abstract level (table 4.2).

\textsuperscript{26} See example in second newsletter, p. 9.
Table 4.2 Example of first and second level questions of sustainable and integrated urban development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st level</th>
<th>2nd level</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reinforce the economic attractiveness of the city/region/territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide training and assistance to staff of local administration and other relevant partners to develop competence and improve skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Highlight the strong points of your city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote cooperation with businesses and research institutes to generate, disseminate and apply knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general it is for the test cities not complicated to indicate that a strategy or a project contains actions that reinforce the economic attractiveness of the city, region or territory (first level). But many relevant actions to achieve this goal are not always well described by this limited list of three second level questions.

The flexibility can also be improved to enlarge the number of challenges in finding a peer city and to refine the description of the city overview in city profile. In particular the specific characteristics of the city (e.g. seaside or lake waterfront, mountains, border(s), island and none of these) are a strange and restricted list of options. Also some test cities do have a different situation in their country than being a capital city, regional capital, city region etc.

The flexibility could also be improved when there are two versions of the RFSC. First, a shorter and simpler tool for small cities, less advanced cities or daily use. Secondly, a more complex tool for advanced users, for large cities and for large, complex and integrated strategies and projects. Some test cities and Member States came up with this suggestion.

4.3.5 Customisation

For many test cities the RFSC is too complex and too time consuming to use. These cities do not see immediately the functionality and the added value of the tools and they are confused by the number of different tools and steps. With the prior recommendations some of these usability problems can be solved.

Another type of solution is to provide the users only with the tool(s) they actively need and request. We call this recommendation: customisation. When the RFSC starts with the question what do you want to do with the RFSC: find a peer city, learn from projects of other cities, develop a strategy, develop a project, check the integrated approach of a strategy, check the integrated approach of a project, evaluate my policies on deprived neighbourhoods, develop a monitoring system for a
strategy, develop a monitoring system for a project, etc. the RFSC can provide only the tool the user requests. You could even ask whether there are economic, social, environmental or governance aspects involved and provide only the questions that are related to these aspects. This is in line with the suggestion of a test city to provide a button that gives you the choice to indicate that the question is irrelevant. With the interdependencies the RFSC could examine if important elements are not left out.

In this way the RFSC provides only the tools and parts of the tools that are requested and by this customisation the feeling that the RFSC is too complex and the use is too time consuming could diminish. All the tools and parts of tools that are not requested by the user could be in the background and out of view.

The functionality of the RFSC for integrated strategies and for large, complicated projects is larger than for smaller projects.27 For a smaller project probably only some of the 88 second level questions (pick the actions) are relevant in the tool 'Develop your strategy or project'. The result is that 'Check the relevance of your choice’ provides a lot of warnings that are often not well understood. For a smaller project in the tool ‘Check the integrated approach’ only a part of the 25 first level questions are probably relevant. The graphic ‘results of priorities’ consequently shows a spider diagram with many objectives of your project profile empty. Also the graph ‘graphic view of results’ will provide a limited dashboard of the project profile. Nevertheless, the recommendation of the external expert panel is to keep strategies as well as projects in the RFSC. Until now a sustainable and integrated approach is more focused and used for strategies and strategic planning and less for projects. The next step - and the actual challenge - is to stimulate a more integrated approach at project level. The RFSC is designed to help cities in making this next step. The use of the RFSC for the development and evaluation of (simpler) projects can be stimulated by including examples of projects. This gives also the possibility to explain that a spider diagram in which many of the 25 objectives of sustainable and integrated are missing is not a bad project per se. And that the usefulness of the RFSC is that even for smaller, simpler projects the user is stimulated to discuss and evaluate if not more objectives can be addressed.

4.3.6 External dialogue
Some test cities did not understand why in the prototype of the RFSC all information (with the exception of illustrations) is only visible for them.

27 Although in the final questionnaire more testers do disagree with the statement that "the RFSC is not useful for the pre-operational planning of simple, sectoral projects" (33%) than that testers do agree with this statement (28%). Thirty percent of the testers neither agrees nor disagrees and nine percent of the testers does not know how to answer this question.
"We - as a city - know this already so what is the use if we cannot share it with other cities". These test cities want to share with other European cities: their profiles, city characteristics, actions, concerns, strategies, projects and monitoring systems. In this way they can learn from each other, share experiences, compare results and better identify relevant partners (e.g. for European projects). We summarize this suggestion under the heading "bench-learning". Privacy is for many test cities not an important issue. "Our urban plans are already public documents, so there is nothing secret about them". Also in the final questionnaire it becomes clear that there is a 'niche market' for higher functionality in "bench-learning" in the RFSC (table 4.3).

Table 4.3 A higher functionality of RFSC: strengthen bench-learning (n=97-130)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- It is useful if we are able to use the RFSC for comparing our project with the projects of other European cities</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The RFSC should make it possible to compare our strategies and projects directly with other European cities</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In order to be able to find partners, peer cities and comparable projects, all our data inputted in the RFSC should be visible and accessible to all European cities using the RFSC</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It is not that important that the RFSC guarantees the secrecy and privacy of all data that we fill in and that no data is disclosed to other persons and cities</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Final questionnaire

Besides the important minority of the test cities that disagrees about the statement that it is important that the RFSC guarantees the secrecy and privacy of all data that we fill in and that no data is disclosed to other persons and cities (34%) there is a larger group that agrees with this statement (43%). Around this average there is a remarkable difference between large and small/medium-sized test cities. In the small and medium-sized test cities 51% agrees with the secrecy and privacy guarantee and in the large test cities 30%. In the large test cities a majority (58%) disagrees with this needed guarantee, a minority agrees (30%) and 13% neither agrees nor disagrees.

The test cities, Member States and experts of the external expert panel that call for a higher functionality of bench-learning in the final version of the RFSC want to do this on a voluntary basis, for the strategies and

28 N=130 for the questions in the final questionnaire which have been filled in by all people, testing teams in the different categories. N=97 for all questions where the politicians and city managers were excluded in the routing of the final questionnaire.
projects and cities they select. Cities and testers should have the freedom to decide with whom they want to share information: internally as well as externally. Internally also, because some staff members should feel free to start working on strategies and projects on their own and the culture of openness in city administrations can vary widely. The experts argue that external benchlearning will be an important driver for more internal dialogue, communication and coordination. In discussing and comparing results a benchlearning community will be created. However, there should be maximum freedom in the benchlearning. Cities should be able to compare and learn about actions, priorities, projects, strategies and monitoring results. Benchlearning should be up to the cities; the RFSC should not be restrictive or guiding in that respect.

In the discussions about the need of more widely and intensive sharing, learning and comparing between European cities some testers doubted that city actions, concerns, priorities and evaluations of strategies and projects can be communicated publicly in all sincerity. In particular when strategies and projects have negative impacts on some objectives of sustainable and integrated urban development (interdependencies) it could be difficult for politicians to be open and honest about that. "A danger is that politicians are very sensitive about the image of the city and thus try to influence the answers and scores in a more favourable way". And in particular the discussion within the administration and with stakeholders about the positive and negative trade-offs are important to make progress in sustainable and integrated urban development. The experts of the external expert panel see no complications in going into the direction of voluntary benchlearning. "We should not fear too much self-promotion. Misusing the RFSC for self-promotion will readdress itself".

The other important recommendations to improve the external dialogue are:
- increase the number of illustrations;
- refine the city profile (better description of context and situation, do not display 'none of these' in the peer city results) or provide (with some examples) more open categories to describe the city profiles;
- enlarge the number of challenges in finding peer cities or give, with some examples, freedom to describe the challenges;
- provide access to the peer city and its good practices, examples and profiles and not only the e-mail address.

4.3.7 Deprived neighbourhoods
The functionality of the tool 'Focus on deprived neighbourhoods' in the prototype is limited. For the test cities this tool is of least added value as it is now. The ad-hoc group on deprived neighbourhoods of the MS/I
group has already ideas for considerable improvement. These ideas could be implemented in the final version.

4.4 Content of RFSC

Some of the content improvements, that are linked to recommendations about the improvement of the structure of the RFSC, are already mentioned in the earlier paragraphs: better explanation of graphs and results, improve the functionality and content of the tool 'Focus on deprived neighbourhoods, give a more clear role for interdependencies, increase the number of illustrations at the start of the final version and improve the user guide.

The remaining urgent recommendations for the content of the RFSC are described in this paragraph.

4.4.1 General ergonomics

The main recommendations to improve the general ergonomics have to do with the navigation improvements. In particular how to start working with the RFSC and understand the functionality and added value of the different parts and tools of the RFSC at first sight. Another important recommendation is to improve the readability and visibility of the content of the RFSC. Important elements do not attract enough attention, the small pastel coloured letters are difficult to read, e.g. in presentations for groups of people to discuss together about strategies and projects using the RFSC the discussion stops in some test environments because parts of the RFSC are not readable. In general the colours are appreciated but the visibility and readability should be made better.

4.4.2 Language

It became very clear in the testing phase that it is very important to be able to use the RFSC in its own language. To improve sustainable and integrated urban development is a complicated task in which many people from different departments and different stakeholders should work together. The RFSC can help in this internal and external dialogue. But the RFSC can only help if language is not creating a barrier. For this purpose also the texts of interdependencies and may be even the leaflets about the indicators should be translated in the languages of the Member States. In particular, the interdependencies are not well tested because the foreign language made it difficult to understand its functionality.

29 The improvements recommended by the MS/I group and the ad-hoc group on deprived neighbourhoods are included in the MS/I group activity report on the testing phase.
Also in the main English version the (English) language of the questioning grid and the wording of different parts, actions and buttons of the RFSC (illustration, interdependency, level of commitment, impact) should be checked.

4.4.3 Questioning grid

The functionality and usability of the questioning grid is not contested by the test cities. Nevertheless, important suggestions are made to improve, rephrase, combine, eliminate or add questions in the questioning grid of sustainable and integrated urban development and concrete recommendations for improvements can be made (see annex 2).

To improve the functionality and usability of the questioning grid, two main adaptations should be made.

Firstly, to give the freedom to test cities to add some (not more than five) own first and second level questions. In this way the RFSC is more adaptable to national contexts and local situations. This makes it also possible for some cities to add more sustainable type of questions, add questions that bridge the pillars or add questions about the common understanding of the integrated approach. This option keeps the structure of the questioning grid intact and does not ask for a time consuming adaptation of the questioning grid. Of course, the freedom to add some own questions destroys the link between the questions of sustainable and integrated urban development and the indicators that are now available in the RFSC. Or, one could argue that cities that want to use the freedom to add some own questions have to think themselves about the indicators that go with their own chosen questions.

Secondly, while keeping the structure of the questioning grid as it is, adding, reformulating or opening up questions about urban planning, sustainable mobility, social themes (equality, exclusion, health care, safety), etc.. In the structure of the questioning grid this obliges to choose new indicators.

Other additional recommendations to improve the usability of the questioning grid:

- improve the phrasing and wording of some questions;
- provide for each question a pop up menu with an explanation of its relevance, its link with European policies and examples;
- number the second level questions as in the list of objectives that define the European sustainable city;
- be consequent in the order of the questions.

4.4.4 Key indicators

The test cities provided many detailed comments about the key indicators which allows for concrete recommendations for improvements (see annex 3). In general a large majority of the key indicators are useful for the test cities. Only three of the 33 key indicators could be dropped,
because in a lot of test cities there are no local data available for these indicators. For 11 key indicators no improvements are needed.

The other recommendations are:
- For six indicators more information is needed before decisions can be made about a possible improvement.
- For 12 indicators improvements are suggested. These improvements concern the text of the leaflets, combining two key indicators or re-considering the second level questions.
- For one key indicator an alternative could be considered.
- Where applicable, national and European reference values should be included automatically in the excel-sheet.
- Only those secondary indicators should be shown which are related to the previously selected key indicators.
- The explanations of all indicators should be provided in one printable document.

Of course, changes in the key indicators and the questioning grid should go hand in hand.
5 Testing results: General parts of RFSC

5.1 Introduction

When the users of the RFSC login to the website of the RFSC the first thing they see is the homepage and the possibility to read more ‘about this framework’. It is also possible to click on the user guide.

This chapter describes the feedback of the general parts of the RFSC, namely:
- home page and login access
- about this framework
- user’s guide

The different sections of this chapter will deal with these general parts by looking at their functionality and usability. Further, there will be general conclusions and recommendations on the different general parts of the RFSC website.

5.1.1 Home page and login access

Functionality and relevance

When first visiting the web tool RFSC at the website http://rfsc.tomos.fr the testers had to login to use the RFSC website. Individual testers and testing teams received a personal login and password. According to the
respondents of the final questionnaire, however, only 28 percent used his or her own login and password. This points to a situation in which testing teams preferably used one login.

After logging in the homepage of the RFSC website appears (see figure above). Nine different slides explain how you can use the RFSC. At the upper left users can read more about the history of the RFSC in ‘about this framework’. Also at the upper left users can click on the ‘user’s guide’ to learn how to use the RFSC. At the upper right of the homepage users can change the language and switch to the different TOOLS and NETWORKS parts of the RFSC. At the bottom right of the page testers can fill in their tester profile (only during the testing phase).

The homepage as such was not very much explicitly commented upon by the different test cities. However, many cities are missing important things at the RFSC website such as a general overview and a ‘how to start’ manual. These possible improvements can at its best be placed at the homepage.

Usability

Many testing cities used multiple login codes in the same test city. They were sometimes surprised that they could not see the information of their colleagues in the same administration. “When the logic of the RFSC is to stimulate dialogue and discussions you should be able to see what your colleagues filled in” according to one of the testers. When using different logins a lot of prints are needed to share information. This leads to the suggestion to improve the quality of the layout of the prints. A further comment regarding login from some test cities was that it is strange that they cannot change their password, especially because the ‘test passwords’ are very difficult to remember with different punctuation.

When asked to give their impression of the homepage during on-site visits and the remote usability tests, testers are generally positive about the look and feel of the homepage. They like the colours and pictures that are used and say that the RFSC logo is attractive. However, as came out of the remote usability tests, the homepage does insufficiently guide the user how to use the RFSC toolbox. The homepage does contain a lot of text with, for example, nine slides of general introduction but does not offer an actionable starting point.

With limited prior knowledge many testers go automatically to the TOOLS and NETWORKS sections which are most remarkable on the homepage. The colours with the different sustainability ‘pillars’ (economy, social, environment, governance) are also generating attraction but these are not clickable. However, it is incomprehensible without reading that a link exists between ‘Characterize your city’ and ‘Develop your strategy’. These kind of linkages are not explained at the homepage.
“It is not nice to read a lot from the computer, there is too much info to be read at the home page”

The nine slides with general information are informative for the different testers but the time to read (10 seconds) is very little, especially for non-native speakers. Further, it is not visible at other pages of the RFSC tool how to ‘return’ to the homepage.

Conclusions
Different login codes in the same city made it difficult to exchange views beside general meetings. This could be one of the reasons why in around 50 percent of the cities most testing was done by one tester that filled in all information in the tool. As regards the homepage the image and feeling is positively described by the different testers. However, the usability of the homepage is not sufficient as it is not a good starting point for the rest of the RFSC website. The homepage is one of the pages of the RFSC website which should be drastically changed in a future version of the RFSC.

Recommendations
- Make a ‘how to start’ manual on the home page
- Add ‘home’ in the main navigation
- Let users with different logins share their information about the same city
- Show a clear introduction on the homepage
- Add a possibility to change the password

5.2 About this framework
Functionality and relevance

The figure above shows the part ‘about this framework’ on the RFSC website. The part ‘about this framework’ gives a general overview on the historical background of the RFSC website. The context of the RFSC is sketched by means of a reference to important and recent ministerial conferences such as the Leipzig Charter (2007), Marseille Statement (2008) and the Toledo Declaration (2010). Further, a vision of a European sustainable city is given (in the framework of RFSC) and other documents are made available in this part such as national documents and expert contributions. However, the ‘vision’ is merely explaining the RFSC and its development, thus the title does not correctly describe the content. Further, it is mentioned that only Leipzig is mentioned as one of the LC-FACIL cities where also Vitoria-Gasteiz, Kirklees County, Göteborg, Bytom and Rennes Métropole were LC-FACIL cities and tested the RFSC.

During the testing phase there were no ‘other documents’ available yet. During the on-site visits there was almost no reference to the information in ‘about this framework’, whether useful or not. Some cities missed a short document with the ‘overall philosophy’ of the RFSC which could be a short version of ‘about this framework’.

Usability

As regards the usability it is often noted that the section ‘about this framework’ is a bit too long. “The main goal with sub-goals (mission statement) of the RFSC should be instantly spotted, without having to go through the text” according to the report made by one of the Member States. Also the benefits of using the RFSC should be more positively and shortly sketched in ‘about this framework’. The ‘shortening’ and ‘simplifying’ of this part has been echoed in a couple of other test cities. Further, it is not explained in ‘about this framework’ how the 25 first-level question have been arrived at. According to one of the test cities the ‘integrity’ of the 25 objectives is important, but it is not explained in ‘About this framework’. Also, cities expect to have information on linkages with other sustainability assessment mechanisms/tools/legislative requirements but this information is currently not present in this section.

Conclusions

While the section ‘about this framework’ gives a lot of information on the RFSC it is often not fully read by the test cities because it is too time-consuming to read and the texts are difficult to read for an outsider. Especially in small and medium-sized towns the requirement of very solid English for this part has proven to be difficult.
Recommendations
- Shorten/mark sections of the text in ‘about this framework’
- Simplify the text in ‘about this framework’
- Give ‘check the list of the objectives that define the European sustainable city’ a prominent place; this list provides in 1½ page (in small print) all first and second level questions of sustainable and integrated urban development.
- Explain the ‘road to’ the 25 first level questions

5.3 User’s guide

Functionality and relevance
In the ‘User’s guide’ an overview is given of the different functionalities of the RFSC website. The users’ guide is organized chronologically with ‘how to start? – the first time you log in’ and thereafter ‘how to continue?’. It is more difficult to determine where relevant information about the different tools and the network section is located.

The user guide have been read by 75 percent of the respondents of the final questionnaire. However, the statement ‘only after reading the user guide you are able to efficiently use the RFSC’ is not widely endorsed. Only 51 percent (strongly, moderately) agrees with this statement and 32% disagrees with 17% without any opinion. A lot of people answer that they would like to have a ‘better user guide’ in a future version of the RFSC. The user guide proved to be an important subject of the RFSC in the on-site visits as there were many reactions on it.
Usability

One of the general criticisms on the user’s guide which have been picked up in almost all of the on-site visits is that it is has not been possible to print the user guide in pdf/word. Testers have especially been interested in the different tools and would like to get an overview of these in the user guide.

The user guide is structured chronologically and the information within the different sections is hard to scan. The same as for the section ‘about this framework’ is thus also true for the user’s guide: it is too time-consuming to read and the texts are difficult to read. The chronological setup of the user guide is one of the reasons why testers only scan the text briefly and do not take the time to study the texts. Another comment: “there is no illustration, which would be very helpful to understand how a user should use the tools”. Further, multiple cities had the remark that the description of ‘Network-Your Results’ is missing in the user guide.

“The user’s guide should have an executive summary and searchable index”

Many test cities would like to have two documents: one general short (2/3 pages) document to start with the RFSC and a more extensive ‘user guide’ for the different parts of the RFSC website. The summary document could then clearly describe the overall philosophy of the RFSC and the user guide how to work with the different tools and sections in the framework. Further, a lot of cities would appreciate an illustrative and ideal ‘step-by-step’ example how to work with the RFSC.

Conclusions

One of the test cities best summarized the overall feeling about the ‘user’s guide’ with the following quote: ”the user’s guide is good to navigate, but not to fully understand the RFSC tool”. Besides more practical criticisms, such as the impossibility of a user guide in pdf/word, also more fundamental criticisms came up in the different test cities. These fundamental criticisms can however be quite easily solved with an addition of an overall and short ‘how to start’ document of the RFSC, accompanied with a user guide more focused on the practical elements of the RFSC.
Recommendations

- make it possible to download the user guide as a pdf;
- accompany a more practical user guide focused on the different elements of the RFSC with a short document how to start with RFSC (eventually with an overall philosophy based on ‘about this framework’);
- the User guide should have an executive summary;
- rename the different chapters in the ‘Users guide’; Offer a separate ‘get started’ with the first steps that are recommended; use the other chapters to give information on ‘Tools’ and ‘Networks’.
6 Testing results: Networks

6.1 Introduction
In the NETWORKS part, the testers find four main parts where they are supposed to fill in information about their city, or where they find information about other cities:
- Your city profile (information not shared to all users);
- Your results (the results of the uses of the four tools - not shared to all users);
- Share - find a peer city;
- Illustrations - catalogue of illustrations (shared to all users).

The first two parts are related to the city or projects of the user; the latter two have the purpose of finding peer cities or sharing and finding examples of projects about sustainability.

6.2 Your city profile and characteristics

Functionality and relevance
In the section ‘your city profile’, users can add and edit information about their city. “Your city profile’ consists of two tabs. The first - ‘your profile information’ - contains basic information about the user’s city. The second tab ‘characterize your city’ contains more strategic information about the city which can be defined in a schedule. The information is divided over four tabs which refer to the four pillars of the RFSC.

The ‘city profile’ and ‘city characteristics’ have been used extensively by the testers. From the administration of the webmaster it is clear that half of the cities fully filled in ‘characterize your city’, that 80% of the test cities did use the tool find a peer city and that the test cities evaluated 154 projects. For these strategies and projects 63% of the testers used or tried the tool ‘check the integrated approach’, 57% used or tried the tool ‘develop your strategy/project’, 35% used or tried the tool ‘monitor progress’ and 29% used or tried the tool ‘focus on deprived neighbourhoods’.

During the on-site visits it became clear that both parts of the RFSC stimulated the internal dialogue. On the one hand there are cities who believe that filling in all the information may help to centralize information about their own city. These cities find it very important to collect all the information in one place to get the ‘full picture’ about their town.
Some even state that it may also be very useful information for potential investors and for potential newcomers about the urban area.

“When all the information into ‘city characteristics’ was filled in it felt like looking into the mirror”

On the other hand there are cities who find the amount of requested information too extensive. These cities believe that filling in all the requested information is too much work for limited added value.

Usability
During the on-site visits it became clear that generally the test cities find it very time-consuming to fill in all information. It was also unclear how much information was supposed to be filled in by the cities. In particular the large cities were claiming that they could easily list over 20 actions per item. But were they supposed to do that? More guidance would be appreciated. Cities were also critical about the nature of the questions. Some of the questions leave room for different interpretations which made some cities wonder whether they answered the questions correctly or not. For example, for several test cities it was not clear what was exactly meant by ‘permanence of the economy in a changing environment’ but other phrases caused discussion about its meaning as well. This led in some cases to discouragement to fill in the chart.

When a theme is considered important in terms of city goals, it can be highlighted in the overview of ‘characterize your city’. This can be done by clicking the relevant cell in the third column ‘tick the cell’. During the testing phase many cities reported about the problem that the cell could not be ‘un-ticked’. Some testers also noted that the title of the column ‘tick the cell’ describes what the tester could do but not why it should be done. Also the purpose of the fourth column ‘comment the concerns identified’ is not clear to several test cities. It is also missed that it is not possible to make a distinction between various levels of concern.

Some other comments that were made:
- The overview under the tab ‘characterize your city’ is appreciated but it is not completely clear how detailed the description of the city characteristics should be. In other words, it is vague what the desired level of detail should be.
- It is disappointing that all information to be filled in is only for internal use.
- In the ‘city overview’ of ‘city profile’ the tester has to indicate whether the city has any of the following characteristics. Institutional characteristics of the city (capital city, regional capital etc.)

30 This problem was due by the use of one of internet explorers.
and the specific characteristics (seaside and lakeside waterfront, mountains, border(s), island, none of these). The option “none of these” should be eliminated.

“To what detail should I describe everything? I could write many pages about public health in my city but I don’t think they expect me to do that”

Some cities experienced difficulties with the ‘link’ between city profile and ‘develop your strategy’ as this link was considered ‘weak’. For some cities it was not clear that there is a link between both parts of the RFSC.

Conclusions
The ‘city profile’ and ‘city characteristics’ have been used intensively by the test cities. The experiences of the test cities are mixed. One group of test cities believe that it may be a valuable tool to ‘collect’ the main characteristics of a city – from the point of view of sustainable and integrated urban development – and to discuss about it internally and externally. Another group of cities doubt whether the amount of work that needs to be done weighs against potential benefits.

Recommendations
- To clarify the desired level of detail (in the description of ‘characterize your city’), an example text should be given.
- Change the title ‘tick the cell’ to ‘important in our city goals’.
- ‘Un-tick the cell’ should function irrespective of the kind of internet explorer that is being used.
- In case the choice for a more open RFSC is made, 10–15 basic indicators could be selected that are visible for each city to make it possible to make comparisons with other cities.
- Instead of ‘none of these’ it would be better to add an ‘open field’ or to add more specific characteristics so that each city may recognize itself.
- More detail in city profile or a free format.

6.3 Your results

Functionality and relevance
‘Your results’ shows an overview of the different projects added by the user and the tools that have been used under this project. The user finds direct access, per project to:
- main PDF of each usage of each tool;
- direct access to each tool.
The user also has the possibility to delete a project that has been entered in order to test it or to assess it through one or more tools.
Very few cities have explicitly commented on this part of the RFSC.

**Usability**
Perhaps the main comment on this tool is that the location is wrong; 'your results' should be in the Tools part – and not in the Networks part were it is now – since it gives an overview of the test results of the tools.

Some other comments that were made:
- The icons used in the overview (of the results) are unclear. The first icon shows an arrow pointing down while the second icon shows an arrow pointing up.
- The hover text of the second icon – 'go tool' – is shown only in the last column (which is inconsequent).
- The hover text of the first icon is 'download results' while the purpose of this icon is actually to print the results of the matching tool and project. In other words, the description does not fit the functionality now.
- Although in ‘your results’ there exists the possibility to delete a project that has been entered in order to test it, it may be also useful to have the possibility – in 'your results' – to rename the strategy or the project.
- The tools are only presented as icons and not explained in words.

**Conclusions**
Very few test cities explicitly paid attention to ‘your results’ in the Network part of the RFSC. This can be seen as a sign that the added value of the part of the RFSC is not observed. However, the seemingly lack of interest may be explained by the wrong location of 'your results'. Besides, there is much room to improve the interpretation of the icons.

**Recommendations**
- The icons should be made easier to interpret. That can be realized as follows:
  - the opportunity should be offered to download in the form of a PDF-icon;
  - the landing page of the icon leading to a tool to the last page of the tool that has been filled in - has to be changed;
  - the ‘go to tool’ icon should be showed as an arrow pointing to the right.
- Because the hover test is inconsequently displayed, it is recommended to always show a description above the icon when it is hovered.
- Make sure that a description fits the functionality (e.g. as for the first icon).
- Replace 'Your results' from the Networks-part to the Tools part.
6.4 Share

Functionality and relevance
An important function of the RFSC is to learn from what other cities have done. 'Share' is about finding peer cities with similar concerns about sustainability. During the on-site visits it became clear that for most cities it is of great importance to compare their actions with similar municipalities. Also the results of the questionnaire show that a clear majority (62 per cent) of the respondents is of the opinion that in the RFSC they must be able to select the cities they want to share information with. This tool may help them to find similar towns from all over Europe, with whom they can share best practices and learn from it. The cities expect to increase their knowledge and find out new ideas which they could use in their municipality.

Some cities want to go further. They claim that strategic planning is about co-operation and therefore they would like to include initiation groups, key partners, co-operating organizations and communities. However, it is not possible for these groups to see the RFSC as they do not have a login code.

The results of the questionnaire show that the percentage respondents who did not discover relevant peer cities (51 per cent) is higher than the percentage of respondents who discovered relevant peer cities (38 per cent). However a majority of respondents from South- and East European cities discovered relevant peer cities. Especially North- and West European cities and large cities often did not discover relevant peer cities. This is understandable because only at maximum 65 peer cities are the end of the testing phase could be found.

Usability
Some test cities noticed that the number of challenges the city faces could be increased. This could improve the matches. When a city name in the 'peer city' results is clicked, a new mail message is opened. For testers this is not the expected effect. They expect to see more information about the city before they contact this city. Some cities also notice that - after a relevant peer city has been discovered - it would be better to get access to the city (the city profile) and in particular to its best practices

Some other comments that were made:
- The third column 'city characteristics' in the overview of possible peer cities is misunderstood. The information is unclear especially when users have selected 'none of these' in their city profile.

31 12 per cent of the respondents did not know whether relevant peer cities were found.
- The category name ‘share’ is confusing. When testers want to look for a partner city, their first reaction is to click on ‘networks’.
- Increase the number of challenges by giving the cities the opportunity to add their own (specific) challenges. As the users also have to denote which challenges the city faces in the previous part of the RFSC – i.e. city characteristics – a link could be created between both parts.
- Explain better the two way approach in finding peer cities. I want to be a peer cities for other cities about some challenges (step 1). I am looking for peer cities about the following challenges (step 2).

“It is not better than searching for a peer city in Google“

Conclusions
The tool ‘share’ is considered an important tool. Most cities want to compare their actions with the actions of similar municipalities to learn from it and perhaps to co-operate where feasible. However, the results of using the ‘share’ part can be called somewhat disappointing; most cities did not discover a relevant peer city. Renaming the tool and extending the number of challenges could improve this part of the RFSC considerably.

Recommendations
- Change the category name ‘share’ to ‘find/become a peer city’.
- The third column ‘city characteristics’ in the overview of possible peer cities should not display the city characteristics ‘none of these’.
- The testers want more information about a possible peer city before they decide to contact it. It is therefore recommended to link the city name to the profile page of that city (and to illustrations of that city), to display a link to the website of a city in the overview of peer cities and to make the email address of a contact person accessible on the profile page of a city.
- The ‘share’ button could be used to search for possible partners to co-operate with in European programmes like Urbact, Interreg etc.

6.5 Illustrations

Functionality and Relevance
The illustrations part is where cities can share project cases and find cases that have been added by other cities. Generally, learning from other cities is for most cities an important goal. The results of the questionnaire show that 58 per cent of all respondents is of the opinion that without practices, examples and illustrations of other cities, the RFSC is of little use for them. Participants from South-European cities believe this most strongly (68 percent). Nevertheless, just one third of the respondents claims to have submitted an illustration to the RFSC. This
ranges from 22 percent of respondents from North- and West European cities to 52 percent of respondents from East European cities.

**Usability**

During the remote usability test, it appeared that only a few of the participants knew what can be done and what can be found in the ‘illustrations’ part. Generally the impression was that adding an ‘illustration’ would take a lot of time. This also appeared out of the results of the questionnaire: 42 percent of the respondents find it too time consuming to add an illustration in the RFSC; 56 percent of the respondents from North- and West European cities share this opinion whereas only 19 percent of East European cities find it too time consuming to add an illustration to the RFSC. The testers observe the amount of information and time that is needed as a barrier to add a project. Important barriers are also that the illustration should be submitted in the English language, that cities do not know which illustration to select and that formal approvals are needed before an illustration can be submitted.

During the remote usability test, the testers got the impression that they have to use all filters when they are searching in the catalogue of illustrations. Because the database is not yet filled with many examples, narrowing their search too much leads to no results. When searching by city name, it does not appear to be relevant to use the other filters.

Some other comments that were made:
- The category name ‘illustration’ is confusing. When testers want to see what other cities did so far, their first reaction is to click on ‘networks’.
- When testers land on the page ‘your illustrations’, the possibility to search for cases added by others is missed.
- Too many questions need to be answered/ too much information has to be filled in before an ‘illustration’ is accepted.

**Conclusions**

The ‘illustration’ part is considered important by a clear majority of the test cities. Most test cities denoted in their application forms – in which they applied to become one of the test cities – that learning from other cities and exchanging good practice examples is seen as an activity with priority. However, for most of the cities adding an ‘illustration’ appeared to be too labour intensive and, consequently, the number of illustrations is disappointing. Next to some ‘cosmetic’ improvements the main challenge is to make this part of the RFSC more user friendly.

**Recommendations**
- Change the category name ‘illustrations’ to ‘showcases’ or to ‘best practices’.
- When testers go to ‘illustrations’, they should land on ‘catalogue of illustrations’. Also a button ‘+ add illustration’ should be shown on the catalogue page.
- To prevent that testers unnecessarily limit their search results by using all filters, ‘choose’ in the catalogue search function should be changed into ‘all (.);’. Also a separate search function should be made for searching by city name instead of city characteristics in the illustration catalogue.
- The number of questions and the requested information should be minimized.
- The administrator of the RFSC could add some illustrations – based on own research - to make it even more interesting for cities to use this tool and to add illustrations themselves.
7 Testing results: Tools

7.1 Introduction
The TOOLS part contains the four main tools of the RFSC that allow users to help in evaluating and/or monitoring a strategy, a policy or a project:
- Develop your strategy;
- Check the integrated approach;
- Focus on Deprived Neighbourhoods;
- Monitor your progress (indicators).

In the prototype of the RFSC the four tools can be used independently from each other.

7.2 Develop your strategy/project

Functionality and Relevance
This tool provide the users with hints - through a list of general and detailed objectives - to help the cities enrich and formalise its sustainable development strategy, so as to better respond to urban sustainable development challenges, while taking into account your local priorities.

During the on-site visit it became clear that the cities believe that the tool ‘develop your strategy/project’ may help to improve the local government’s decision making process and its planning process. It is also noted that it may facilitate a wide-range understanding and ‘acceptance’ of sustainable development. However, during the on-site visits it was asserted several times that the tool is particularly helpful when you do not have much (or any) experience in developing a strategy or project.

“We have much experience and therefore this tool was not helping a lot”

Nevertheless, for many test cities the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’ was considered one of the most important tools. For example, the results of the final questionnaire showed that 37 percent of the respondents chose the tool ‘to develop a sustainable and integrated strategy/project’ as the most important tool of the RFSC. Only the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ (44 percent) was chosen more often by the respondents as most important tool. Among large cities the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project’ was even the most important (42 percent). The same results are visible in the factual use of the tool according to the administration of the webmaster. The tool ‘Develop your
strategy/project’ was tested extensively: in total 68 percent of the respondents tested the tool ‘develop your strategy’.

A small majority (51 per cent) of the respondents find the presentation/illustration of data in the tool ‘Develop your strategy/project very useful to them. Respondents from South-European cities (79 per cent) are much more positive about the usefulness than respondents from North- and West European cities (33 per cent).

“This chart does not tell us much about the nature of our strategy because from the 25 main and 86 detailed questions we did not find many questions that are reflecting the reality of our city”

**Usability**

Via the page feedback survey 95 times comments were given on the ‘develop your strategy/project’ pages. In particular the third step ‘check the relevance’ was criticized. This step displays the amount of action steps per objective with the corresponding level of commitment. The cities have great difficulties interpreting this table. For example, it is unclear what the grey blocks mean. It is also unclear what the number of blocks means. There were also many critical remarks – both via the page feedback survey and the on-site visits – regarding the number of questions and the nature of the questions.

“In the module ‘check the relevance of your choices’ the length of bars are indicated by the number of actions picked in previous modules; maybe there should be an additional chart showing proportions of picked actions with their level of commitment”

When a city does not have lots of experience and expertise developing a strategy (or project), it is not always easy to use the RFSC. Therefore it would have helped those cities if a concrete example of a strategy was already filled in by a (fictional/real) test city.

As noticed before the ‘link’ between city profile and ‘develop your strategy’ is not always clear. Consequently, when an action from ‘your city profile’ is not selected for the corresponding strategy/action in ‘develop your strategy/project’ a red warning is shown but not understood. This also makes the warning difficult to interpret. During the remote usability test it appeared that few participants take the time to read the entire comment. Therefore, they remained unaware why the warning was shown. When it is a deliberate choice not to select objectives, the testers want to remove the warning from their screen. However, that option is not available.

Several times it was mentioned that the difference between various levels of commitment is not very clear. For some the term ‘commitment’ is misleading. In English ‘commitment’ is about how much you ‘want’ to
achieve something rather than how much you actually have achieved.

Some cities believe it would be better if you get info on how to improve a strategy or project.

Some other comments that were made:
- it would be better if the user gets information on how to improve the strategy;
- when clicking on the 'examples' you need to be able to select from the total number of examples;
- the appearance of the various pages of the tool 'Develop you strategy/project' looks dull and too academic. Besides there is too much to read which makes it not very inviting to fill in.

**Conclusions**
The tool 'develop your project/strategy' can be considered as a fundamental element of the RFSC. The importance is observed by most cities. However, in order to be more useful the tool should be made more flexible and the results more clearly interpretable.

**Important recommendations**
- Add an 'ideal' or 'a good practice' of sustainable and integrated urban development.
- Add a legend above the table (step 3 'check the relevance') explaining the number and colour of the blocks.

**Other recommendations**
- Improve the use of the 'add comment' field.
- Add a functionality to remove warnings from the table (step 3 'check the relevance') by, for example, placing a 'close' cross near the warning sign.
- Change the explanatory text to 'conflicts with your 'your city profile'.
- Add links to visit directly 'Your city profile' to make the link between the tool 'develop your strategy/project' and 'your city profile'.
- Add a functionality to remove warnings from the results page, for example by placing a 'close' cross near the warning sign.

### 7.3 Questioning grid

**Functionality and relevance**
The tool 'develop your strategy/project' contains in particular two important elements, the questioning grid (and the interdependencies). The questioning grid is composed of 25 first level objectives. Behind each of the 25 objectives the user finds detailed actions – so-called second level actions - the city can pick to summarise or complete elements of their own strategy that best suit their local priorities. In total there are 86 second level actions.
The functionality and usability of the questioning grid is not contested by the test cities. Nevertheless, important suggestions are made to improve, rephrase, combine, eliminate or add questions in the questioning grid of sustainable and integrated urban development (see annex 2).

**Usability**

Generally the 25 first level objectives are considered well-balanced and it is appreciated that they are linked to European objectives (although, this should be made more explicitly). However, not all objectives and actions are seen as relevant, especially when it concerns a small project. However, when a small project is tested often more specific objectives and actions are needed. Results from the questionnaire show that 43 per cent of the respondents is of the opinion that the 25 first level objectives need to be simplified. Compared to other elements of the RFSC this is a rather high percentage. As for the 86 second level objectives, 51 per cent of the respondents of the questionnaire believe these objectives need simplification.

“The 25 questions in the first level and the actions in the second level of objectives are very general and they can be interpreted in several ways. It is therefore recommended to add explanatory notes to clarify the essence of the statements”

**Recommendations**

There are two main options to improve the functionality and usability of the questioning grid.

First. Give the freedom to test cities to add some own first and second level questions. In this way the RFSC is more adaptable to national contexts and local situations. This makes it also possible for some cities to add more sustainable type of questions, add questions that bridge the pillars or add questions about the common understanding of the integrated approach. This option keeps the structure of the questioning grid intact and does not ask for a time consuming adaptation of the questioning grid. Of course, the freedom to add some own questions destroys the link between the questions of sustainable and integrated urban development and the indicators that is now available in the RFSC. Or, one could argue that cities that want to use the freedom to add some own questions have to think themselves about the indicators that go with their own chosen questions.

Second. Add – in keeping the questioning grid as it is - questions about urban planning etc., sustainable mobility etc. and social themes (equality, exclusion, heath care, safety). In the structure of the questioning grid of RFSC this obliges to choose new indicators.

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32 Sometimes it is noted that the RFSC can be used particularly for large scale or truly integrated projects; applying the RFSC to small scale projects is seen as less useful.
Other additional recommendations to add the usability of the questioning grid:

− improve the phrasing and wording of some questions;
− provide for each question a pop up menu with an explanation of its relevance, its link with European policies and examples;
− provide a button that gives the tester the choice to indicate that an objective or action is "irrelevant";
− number the second level questions as in the list of objectives that define the European sustainable city;
− include the name of the ‘pillar’ of sustainable development instead of only the colours next to the 25 core questions;
− be consistent in the order of the questions (question 23 and question 24 in city characteristics).

7.4 Interdependencies

*Functionality and relevance*

The ‘interdependencies’ highlight the purpose of each action and stress what could be the potential synergies and conflicts within others actions of the questioning grid. The aim of the interdependencies is to keep in mind crossed references (as for the four sustainable development pillars) when you want to develop (create or adapt) actions that best suit your local priorities in the strategy/project. The results of the questionnaire show that 70 percent of all respondents believe that interdependencies are a very useful and interesting part of the RFSC. This ranges from 60 percent of the respondents from North- and West European cities to 86 percent of the respondents from South-European cities.

*Usability*

Some cities indicated that the interdependencies in the RFSC were stimulating the discussion about sustainable development. In particular in large cities discussions about the contradictions and conflicts in sustainable urban development are difficult. Every department has specialists, strong arguments for their views and interest groups defending the priorities of particular departments. An overview of possible conflict or synergies helps the discussion. It would also improve the RFSC as the conflicts and synergies are explained in monetary terms (gains in efficiency, less additional expenses, more effectiveness).

"We think the information in the ‘interdependencies’ is very helpful; they improve the process of discussion”

The results of the questionnaire showed that 29 percent of the respondents see the leaflets about interdependencies as too complicated and that, therefore, the ‘interdependencies’ should be simplified. However, other parts of the RFSC are considered even more complicated than the interdependencies.
During the remote usability test it was observed that only a few participants clicked the icon ‘Need help? Interdependencies’ when filling in the forms. It seemed that the phrase ‘Needs help’ discouraged many users from clicking. The interdependencies are perceived more as advice than help.

Conclusions

The interdependencies are appreciated. Most test cities are of the opinion that the interdependencies are helpful to them and that it stimulates discussion. Still there are various cities who do not agree to that. They claim that it is more explanatory than it is of practical use.

“We can appreciate how consideration of interdependencies can stimulate thinking about the indirect impacts of a strategy and think this could be really useful. However, in their current form, the content of the interdependencies is poor as it’s patchy. They are also wordy and vague. In order to be credible and useful, they would have to be much more comprehensive in content coverage, sharper and more succinctly written”

Recommendations

- Rename the ‘Need help? Interdependencies’ to ‘find cross-relations’.
- Replace the icon with the two arrows by the icon of the particular tool, for example, the icon of ‘Develop your strategy/project’. These icons already refer to the interdependencies of the different pillars.
- Increase the added value of the leaflets of the RFSC in explaining the synergies and conflicts in monetary terms also (gains in efficiency, avoiding additional costs and improved effectiveness).

7.5 Check the integrated approach

Functionality and relevance

The tool ‘check the integrated approach’ shows how a project or strategy complies with the principle of the integrated approach. During the on-site visits it appeared that most cities see the tool as necessary to check and evaluate each project’s contribution to the integrated and sustainable approach. The tool ‘check the integrated approach’ is seen – by 44 percent of the respondents - as the most important tool. Of the respondents from East European cities 52 per cent see the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ as the most important. Small cities consider this tool in 51 per cent of the cases as most important whereas for large cities this is true for only 34 per cent of the respondents. It is also the tool that is mostly tested; 81 percent of the respondents have tested the tool ‘check the integrated approach’. Of the respondents from the East European cities even 93 per cent have tested this tool.
A large majority of the test cities find the presentations/illustrations ‘results of priorities’ in the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ very useful. Small cities find the presentations/illustrations ‘results of priorities’ in the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ more useful than large cities. Nevertheless, both find the presentations/illustrations very useful. Some cities also claim to learn from the results:

“On the basis of the graphs we concluded that some of the sectoral strategies complemented – or reinforced – the priorities of our development strategy”

“The low importance level of ‘governance’ priorities seemed to be the main weakness of our strategy”

Usability
The results of the questionnaire show that around 76 percent of the respondents is of the opinion that the presentations/illustrations ‘results of priorities’ in the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ is very useful to them. For 61 percent of the respondents the presentation/illustration ‘view of results’ in the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ is seen as very useful. This is remarkable since during the on-site visits most comments were made on the graphs, and mainly not positive ones. Some cities are of the opinion that the spider diagram and the dashboard stimulates discussion and that it may be a useful way of involving politicians or citizens. However, most cities found the graphs not clear. Particularly the proposed evaluation scales lead to a high level of subjectivity. Also the visualisation is not clear. According to the test cities the graphs should be self-explanatory. Now it is unclear how the graph should be interpreted and how it can help the user to validate and improve its strategy. Some cities mention that the graphs can only be applied to large and integrated projects and, thus, not to projects which cover only (one or) a few sectors.

For many cities there seems to exist overlap between the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ and the tool ‘develop your strategy/project’. For those cities, it was not observed that both tools can be tested independently from each other.

“There is a lack of connection between the modules ‘develop your strategy’ and ‘check the integrated approach’. The actions chosen in ‘develop your strategy’ should automatically influence the importance of priorities in the module ‘check the integrated approach’”

Some other comments that were made:
- It is unclear why the tool ‘check the integrated approach’ consists of two independent questionnaires and graphs. It is unclear whether there is a relationship between the two graphs.
“At first sight the difference between the two graphs in the ‘check the integrated approach’ tool is difficult to understand. Now we believe that it is right to interpret the first as a ‘quick scan’ graph and the second one as a more detailed graph”

- It is unclear which objectives/actions are highlighted when the error message is shown.
- It is unclear whether all objectives need a score on ‘importance’.
- A title is missing in the graph image ‘the profile of your strategy or project – impact’.
- The graphs showing ‘results of priorities’ and ‘view of results’ do not include a time perspective and assumed stages of implementation of the strategy. Therefore it does not show whether our strategy is implemented in a sustainable way.

Conclusions
The tool ‘check the integrated approach’ is the most important tool of the RFSC. From all of the tools it is tested mostly. Of all the tools it is also mentioned mostly as the most important tool. Although there are various critical remarks made on this tool, a clear majority find the results – presentations/illustrations – useful. Nevertheless, there is clear room for improvement especially with regard to the visualisation, legends and interpretation of the graphs.

Important recommendation
- To make the graphs more clear a title, legend and scale should be added. Besides, it is recommended to add a description of each objective while mouse-over the specific number.

Other recommendations
- Because it is unclear which objectives/actions are highlighted when the error message is shown, it is recommended to change the name ‘territory’ to ‘project or strategy’ and to change the text ‘… are not priorities for your territories’ to ‘… you considered all objectives’.
- Because it is unclear whether all objectives need a score on ‘importance’, it is recommended to add – on the scale of importance – ‘not a priority’ or ‘no’ to the first (most left) level of importance.
- A larger header and more spacing for the tagline ‘what is the impact of your strategy or project on …’ needs to be created.

7.6 Focus on deprived neighbourhoods

Functionality and Relevance
The Leipzig Charter highlighted deprived neighbourhoods as worthy of particular attention with the view to reduce inequalities and prevent social exclusion. With the tool ‘focus on deprived neighbourhoods’ it is possible to highlight the issues that are related to reducing inequalities
and preventing social exclusion. The testers are provided with a list of questions that should enable them to check whether they have taken - or are taking - specific measures for deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole.

Only two per cent of the respondents finds the tool 'focus on deprived neighbourhoods' the most important tool. Both represent a North- and West-European city. The tool was tested by 40 percent of the respondents which makes it the least tested tool of the RFSC. Remarkably, relatively most respondents from East European cities – 59 per cent of respondents from all East European cities - tested the tool. Almost one quarter of all respondents is of the opinion that the tool 'focus on deprived neighbourhood' could be left out of the RFSC which makes it by far the least popular tool of the RFSC.

"The tool could be more dynamic, for example by showing the development over time with the help of indicators, symptoms etc. Now it is 'one dimensional'. How could this tool help in finding the specific issues in the neighbourhoods?"

**Usability**

Two main comments were made on the tool 'focus on deprived neighbourhoods'. The first comment is that for many cities the tool is not relevant. Some cities claim that there are no deprived neighbourhoods within their territory (that they distinguish only deprived groups of citizens), while others do not consider deprived neighbourhood as an important policy issue. The second comment on the tool 'focus on deprived neighbourhoods' is that it is not enough developed. The tool does not offer any new solutions but only gives a general overview of the information the cities have filled in. Therefore the practical benefit is minimal.

"The tool 'deprived neighbourhoods' is very simple: input in, input out"

Some other comments that were made:

- The term 'N/A' is unclear, especially to participants who are not fluent in English. They expect to see the word 'No' at this point.
- A clear definition of what makes a neighbourhood deprived would be helpful.
- Why does the tool 'Focus on deprived neighbourhoods' not contain a list of 'governance' priorities?
- The hyperlink to the Leipzig Charter is not working.
- Specific measure number six is missing.
- The tool should be made more dynamic, for example by showing development over time with the help of indicators, symptoms etc.

**Conclusions**

The tool 'focus on deprived neighbourhoods' may be of interest for a small selected group of cities. However, in the current form just very
few cities may find this tool helpful. It is unclear how this tool - in only raising specific issues which may be of importance to deprived neighbour-ourhoods - could help cities in a practical way. The practical benefit of the tool is now even unclear for the small group of cities who have some interest in it. It does not offer any new solutions but only gives a general overview of the information the cities have filled in.

"After completing the first tab ‘specific measures for deprived neigh- bourhoods’, the second tab ‘graphic view’ only creates an overview of what the city has undertaken in the deprived neighbourhood. We are missing a recommendation regarding the actions (not) undertaken."

**Important recommendations**
- Adapt the tool ‘focus on deprived neighbourhoods’ considerably by for example adding more specific advices – based on the measures the cities have already taken in favour of deprived neighbourhoods – on how to further improve the neighbourhoods (thereby taken sustainable development into consideration).
- Add a third tab in the form of a link to good practice examples of how other cities have dealt with deprived neighbourhoods.

**Other recommendations**
- It is recommended to replace the term ‘n/a’ with ‘not’.
- Carry through the proposed improvements of the ad-hoc group on deprived neighbourhoods of the MS/I group.

## 7.7 Monitor progress

**Functionality and Relevance**
The tool ‘monitor progress’ aims to help the cities build their own sys-
tem to monitor a strategy or project. The objective is to offer the cities with sets of city indicators, recommended indicators and some targeted values shared at the European level. The tool also gives examples of useful monitoring dashboards or tools, which can be linked with the city’s own chosen indicators.

The tool ‘monitor progress’ is observed by many cities as a tool that is helpful to develop a monitoring system. When such a monitoring system for projects and strategies is developed a large percentage of the re-
spondents – almost three quarters - would like to share it with other cities in the future. The tool ‘monitor progress’ is, however, not valued as a very important tool. Just 16 percent of the respondents of the questionnaire see the tool as the most important tool. It is striking that most respondents (40 per cent) from South-European cities find this tool – of all tools – the most important one. Of respondents from North-
and West European cities only 13 per cent find the tool ‘monitor your progress’ the most important tool whereas in East Europe only 10 per-

cent of the respondents chose ‘monitor progress’ as the most important tool. Only five per cent of the respondents believes that this tool could be left out of the RFSC; all of them representing North- and West European cities. However, a higher percentage of the respondents (13 per cent) believes that the spreadsheet in the tool ‘monitor your progress’ could be left out of the RFSC. In North- and West European cities this percentage is 19 per cent.

Just over half of the respondents tested the tool ‘monitor your progress’. Relatively it was tested most by respondents from East European cities (59 per cent). Respondents from small cities tested the tool relatively more (54 per cent) than respondents from large cities (45 per cent).

By 66 per cent of the respondents of the questionnaire it is asserted that the link between political objectives and indicators helps to monitor progress and to adapt measures if necessary. Particularly respondents from South-European cities (89 per cent) believe this.

Usability
Most comments on this tool refer to the indicators. More specifically, comments were made with regard to:
- the way these indicators were defined;
- the question whether the indicators are useful for the specific local circumstances;
- the question whether these indicators are available at the local level or not;
- appreciation of the leaflets and the methodological explanation of the indicators.

The comments were very diverse (see annex 3). There were cities who claimed that some indicators can hardly be measured, others pointed to the fact that the definition of some indicators should be further developed. Moreover, some indicators are considered irrelevant as they do not reflect the defined objective of the second level questions whereas also some indicators were being missed.

To implement monitoring and evaluation the lack of statistical data was often seen by the test cities as a problem. In these cities data – referring to the indicators - is often collected at national level and not at local level. In order to collect data at local level, specific research – surveys - should be carried out regularly which requires additional resources and takes much time. Consequently, some cities believe that the tool ‘monitor progress’ can only be used as a source of inspiration; what kind of indicators can be used in case they are available for a particular municipality, and what kind of illustrations can be used.
Some cities also claim that the tool does not provide a methodology to build a multilevel monitoring system, to identify the most appropriate indicators for a particular situation, to identify the desirable objective (value) of particular indicators and to make a forecast of the socio-economic situation.

During the remote usability test it became clear that the users expect a connection between ‘key indicators’ and ‘secondary indicators’. When users select ‘key indicators’ in the first step they expect that only the secondary indicators of these ‘key indicators’ will be shown. However, they have to look for the relevant indicators by themselves;

For many test cities it was a bit confusing – and disappointing – to have an empty excel sheet at the end of the tool. It was expected that there would be a page with (at least) national- and European data so that some comparisons could be made.

“As for the tool ‘monitor your progress’, our city is in particular looking for a European benchmark. Now benchmarking (using another tool than the RFSC) takes place with a limited number of other Nordic cities. Our city is really looking for easy ways to compare its results etc. with other ‘frontrunner’ cities: so there is a need for a European benchmark”

Some other comments that were made:
- The monitoring tool is static: developments over time cannot be monitored.
- Some missing indicators: community finance, tax rate, income, ratio of working/not working, share of elderly, security, immigrants, more satisfaction to different community services.
- Few local data available as for the indicators on environment.
- It would be useful to have all the methodology explanations of indicators in a single PDF document.
- Some cities do not like to use the option to add an own ‘city-specific’ indicator since it limits the possibility to make a comparison with other cities.
- The secondary indicators have not been tested by many cities. The few cities that have looked at them are positive. They expect that the list of 294 indicators allows selecting the most representative indicators in each case.
- It would be useful to provide values of indicators at different territorial levels, thus allowing to compare the local situation with goals and guidelines of EU strategies or directives.
- The set of RFSC recommended indicators should be synergetic (not contradictory, not duplicating) with all other European Commission initiatives. It should contain or translate into cities all the indicators recommended by the European Commission;
- The indicators should be linked with the level 1 questions from the checklist derived from the Leipzig Charter, the Marseille and the Toledo Declarations;
- The indicators should be easy and possible to calculate for as many cities as possible. In this regard, synergies with existing databases should be achieved (Urban Audit, European Environment Agency);
- The definition of some indicators is sometimes too loose and, thus, not clear. Our Central Statistical Office should go through the list of key indicators to examine whether the indicators are available and/or comparable;
- The same indicators can not be used for monitoring and evaluating strategies and for monitoring and evaluating projects. The indicators can be used partially to monitor implementation of overall goals of local development strategies, but not for particular projects;
- The indicators can be used only in case they are oriented towards achievement of goals identified by a particular municipality. Since each city has its own vision on further development, not in all cases the indicators are suitable for certain local situations;
- It would be useful - in the monitoring part - to include the basic principles on how multilevel monitoring systems should be built in common. This is useful to a. identify the most appropriate indicators for a particular situation (results, policy, macro-economic indicators) and b. to identify the desirable objective (value) of particular indicators. Also the basic principles on how to make forecasts of social indicators would be useful.

"In our opinion, this is the most useful part of RFSC. It gives the opportunity to choose indicators that fit to the specifics of the city. More useful are the secondary indicators, because the 33 key indicators in many cases are difficult to understand and are not reflecting the reality of our cities (in our country)"

Conclusions
The tool 'monitor progress' is seen by just 15 per cent of the respondents answering the final questionnaire as the most important tool. At the same time, only 5 per cent of the respondents believes that this tool could be left out of the RFSC. It is striking that respondents from South-European cities find this tool – of all tools – the most important one. Most comments were made on the indicators. Although it is acknowledged that it is impossible to satisfy the need of all cities with regard to the indicators they find most useful, some improvements are straightforward. Also with regard to the result at the end of this tool – the excel sheet – some obvious adaptations need to be made.

"The limited set of key indicators is a good idea. When tens or may be hundreds of European cities are using these indicators in the future a true learning process can start. Not the indicator as such is important but the communication between cities about why do you score higher
and why am I scoring lower. Learning starts with explaining and understanding the differences in the same indicators between cities. This is more important than discussions about the value, the definition or the scaling of an indicator”

Important recommendations
- Of the 33 key indicators three indicators could be dropped (K2, K3 and K27) because there are mostly in many cities no local data.
- The other 30 key indicators could be kept.
- For 11 key indicators no improvements are needed: K1, K5, K9, K10, K11, K15, K16, K21, K22, K23, K26).
- For 12 indicators improvements are suggested: K4, K7, K14, K17, K19, K20, K25, K28, K29, K30, K31 and K32). These improvements can be the text of the leaflets, combine two key indicators (K17 and K19) or reconsider the second level questions.

Other recommendations
- For six indicators (K8, K12, K13, K18, K24 and K32) more information is needed before decisions can be made.
- For K6 an alternative should be considered.
- Add National and European reference values to the excel-sheet.
- Show only secondary indicators that are related to the previously selected key indicators.
- Provide the explanations of all indicators in one printable document.
## ANNEX 1  Overview of test cities feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test city</th>
<th>Launching event</th>
<th>On-site visit</th>
<th>Page Feedback</th>
<th>Final questionnaire</th>
<th>Notes, reports, results, presentations</th>
<th>Remote usability tests (16)</th>
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Legend:

- **Launching event ✓** = participation at launching event;
- **On-site visit: X** = on-site visit; **Xc** = combined on-site visit; **Xc-2** = two times an on-site visit;
- **Page Feedback Survey ✓** = testers filled in Feedback Surveys;
- **Final questionnaire ✓** = testers filled in final questionnaire;
- **Notes, reports, results, presentations ✓** = feedback of test city by all kind of separate notes etc.; we received of some test cities more than one note;
- **Remote usability test ✓** = sixteen volunteers in the test cities where asked and selected for participation in remote usability test.
ANNEX 2  Summary of comments made on questioning grid

Generally the 25 first level questions/objectives are considered well-balanced and it is appreciated that they are linked to European objectives. However, not all questions/objectives and actions are seen as relevant, especially when it concerns a small project. Some of the cities suggested to provide a button that gives the tester the choice to indicate that a question/objective or action is "irrelevant". However, when a small project is tested often more specific questions/objectives and actions are needed.

Different cities plead for the possibility to add their own questions/objectives and actions to the questioning grid. In this way the RFSC is also more adaptable to local situations. Results from the questionnaire show that 45 per cent of the respondents is of the opinion that the 25 first level questions need to be simplified. Compared to other elements of the RFSC this is a rather high percentage.

As for the 86 second level questions, 51 per cent of the respondents of the questionnaire believe these questions need simplification. Of all the elements in the RFSC, the 86 second level questions receive the highest percentage of suggestions for improvement. During the on-site visits most cities noted that the number of questions is too large.

Some general remarks32
- Some of the questions/sub-objectives are not clearly understandable and therefore can be widely interpreted;
- It would be useful to have examples for the different areas under the 25 sustainable development questions/objectives;
- The objectives are different from the strategy Europe 2020; there should be a link between the first level questions/objectives of the RFSC and the Europe 2020 objectives;
- Some of the conceptual elements are missing that were included in the Toledo Declaration;
- The wording of the questions/objectives under the pillar ‘governance’ is not clear;
- Some of the questions on governance are not very relevant;
- Some questions seem not to be – or less – important;

32 Remarks made on specific questions can be found in the Technical Background Report.
- Why not make it possible for cities to add objectives/actions/questions themselves?
- The questions mostly refer to city level and not to project level;
- First and second level questions and key indicators are applicable for the development of strategies; but projects are not reflecting a sustainable approach if they are specific and focus on solving one problem at a time.
- Some test cities wonder why the ‘second level questions’ were not numbered like 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2 etc.?
- Some test cities suggest that the questioning grid (and the indicators) should include more sustainable questions and indicators (e.g. happiness indices, system constraints, system stocks), questions and indicators that bridge all four pillars and questions and indicators that eliminate the traditional divide in four sectoral pillars.
ANNEX 3 Conclusions on key indicators

Table 1 provides a brief summary of the comments made on each of the 33 key indicators.34 Besides, per key indicator Nicis institute draws a conclusion. Some cities – Umeå, Munich, Tilburg, Rotterdam, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Sochaczew, Brussels, Helsinki-Espoo - have commented on the indicators extensively. This also means that the conclusions made and the suggestions given are a bit biased towards those cities. In the technical background report all comments made by the cities are given. According to the test cities, most of the recommended key indicators are useful for cities, but quite some indicators need to be improved or adjusted. In some cases that means that the definition needs to be made clearer whereas in other cases information is needed on how to measure the indicator. There are also some indicators in the form of a ‘yes-no’ question; these need to be transformed into a quantitative indicator or otherwise be deleted.

34 See for all suggestions provided the technical background report.
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<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Main comments cities</th>
<th>Nicis conclusion</th>
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<td>K1 ‘net migration’</td>
<td>This indicator is useful (although it can be interpreted in various ways) and the requested data is available</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
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<td>K2 ‘R&amp;D intensity’</td>
<td>Usefulness of this indicator is not broadly seen. Data is mostly not available.</td>
<td>Data not always available at the local level; therefore consider to drop this indicator</td>
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<td>K3 ‘Percentage of households having access to high speed internet of above 30 Mbps’</td>
<td>Not considered very relevant. Data may be difficult to collect</td>
<td>Consider to drop this indicator</td>
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<td>K4 ‘Satisfaction with level of city’s promotion/support for local and/or sustainable production’</td>
<td>Most find this indicator not useful. It will take some time to collect the requested information. Several recommendations are made to use other indicators.</td>
<td>It needs to be examined whether other indicators could better tackle this objective</td>
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<td>K5 ‘Employment rate for women and men aged 20-64’</td>
<td>This indicator is for most of the respondents useful, the data requested is also in most cases available</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
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<tr>
<td>K6 ‘Employment rate per activities sector – as indicator for economic diversity’</td>
<td>There are some doubts about the usefulness of this indicator. Data is not easily available.</td>
<td>It needs to be examined whether other indicators could better tackle this objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>K7 ‘Percentage of trips by private motorized transport - EC1, US1, by car and motor cycle – UA’</td>
<td>There are some doubts whether there should be three indicators for this objective. In most cities (that gave comments) data is available</td>
<td>Bring back the number of indicators for objective 7 to two or one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K8 ‘Satisfaction with level of public transport services’</td>
<td>Very few comments on this indicator. Besides the responses are mixed, both on usefulness and data availability</td>
<td>More information should be collected before a clear conclusion can be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K9 ‘Cost of a monthly ticket for public transport for 5-10 km’</td>
<td>Mixed responses to this indicator. Data seem to be available.</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K10 ‘Satisfaction with level of social services, nursery, primary and secondary schools’</td>
<td>There are too many issues under this indicator. Nevertheless, it is expected that the information is available</td>
<td>Keep it as it is – for the time being - but also examine whether the number of issues (under this question) should be lowered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K11 ‘Percentage of early school-leavers’</td>
<td>This indicator is considered useful and data are – in most cases – available</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K12 ‘Share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education’</td>
<td>Mixed responses as for the relevance of this indicator. In most comments data availability seems to be a problem</td>
<td>More information should be collected before a clear conclusion can be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Main comments cities</td>
<td>Nicis conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K13 'Satisfaction with level of health services/ health care services'</td>
<td>Mixed responses to usefulness and availability of this indicator</td>
<td>More information needed to consider whether this indicator should be replaced by another (proposed) one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K14 'Housing price/income ratio and housing rent/income ratio'</td>
<td>There are some doubts whether the indicators are clearly defined (especially with regard to the question whether it reflects the quality). The unit of measurement is also not clear</td>
<td>Define the indicators in such a way that the unit of measurement reflects the quality of housing and neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K15 'Percentage of people living in poverty and/or receiving government financial assistance'</td>
<td>Some mixed comments. Main criticism refers to the assertion that two different aspects (i.e. living in poverty and receiving financial assistance) are combined</td>
<td>Keep it as it is (although adding a secondary indicator can be considered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K16 'Percentage of municipal budget allocated to cultural and sporting facilities'</td>
<td>This indicator is found useful in most cases although some cities prefer a non-financial indicator</td>
<td>Keep it as it is (but PDF-sheet of indicators needs to become available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K17 'Greenhouse gas emissions – in tons per capita'</td>
<td>Partly happy with this indicator. However, there is clear overlap with K19. Data availability may be a problem</td>
<td>Make a choice between K17 and K19; one of these indicators should be deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K18 'Share of renewables in energy consumption'</td>
<td>Comments on this indicator are very diverse. There are in particular doubts as for measurement and data availability</td>
<td>More information is needed to draw a clear conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K19 'Annual CO2 emissions per capita'</td>
<td>Partly happy with this indicator. However, there is clear overlap with K19. Data availability may be a problem</td>
<td>Make a choice between K17 and K19; one of these indicators should be deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K20 '(Percentage of) areas designated for nature protection and biodiversity under either municipal, communal, national or local schemes'</td>
<td>Most cities are partly happy with this indicator although the definition needs to be made clearer</td>
<td>The definition of this indicator needs to be clarified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K21 'The number of times that the limit PM10 permitted by the European directives on air quality is exceeded'</td>
<td>Comments are very diverse but mostly (partly) positive. Some cities prefer to add more indicators</td>
<td>Keep it as it is (although adding more indicators could be considered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K22 'Share of people exposed to night noise levels higher than 55 db'</td>
<td>Most cities are partly happy with this indicator</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K23 'Water consumption per inhabitant per year'</td>
<td>Most find this indicator useful although adding more categories of consumption (e.g. sectors) is recommended</td>
<td>Keep it as it is but explore whether more categories of consumption (e.g. by sector) can be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K24 'Soil sealing (m²) per capita'</td>
<td>Very diverse comments</td>
<td>More information is needed to draw a clear conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Main comments cities</td>
<td>Nicis conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K25 'Percentage of people living within 100 m of a public open area'</td>
<td>Relatively many comments are given to this indicator. There are some clear doubts on the definition and data availability</td>
<td>A clear definition should be given of what constitutes a public open area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K26 'Latest approval or revision date of a master plan with an integrated vision for the city as a whole'</td>
<td>Few comments, mostly positive</td>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K27 'Level of involvement of inhabitants in the elaboration and implementation of projects and programmes in deprived neighbourhoods'</td>
<td>Some doubt the relevance of this indicator. There also seems to be some doubts about how to measure this indicator and the data availability</td>
<td>Delete this indicator. Examine whether one of the secondary indicators may be more useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K28 'Do you have specific administrative structures that promote the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects'</td>
<td>Few comments. There is agreement that this is not an indicator but a question</td>
<td>Examine how this 'yes-no' question can be transformed into a quantitative indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K29 'Debt service ratio'</td>
<td>Most agree that this indicator is difficult to measure/estimate. Besides, its relevance is doubted</td>
<td>It should be made clearer how to measure this indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K30 'Do you evaluate the progress of your project or programme and do you adapt it according to your findings?'</td>
<td>There is general agreement that this is not an indicator but a 'yes-no' question</td>
<td>Examine how this 'yes-no' question can be transformed into a quantitative indicator (if not possible, delete it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K31 'How well does your city promote the cooperation and/or coordination with other municipalities and/or other levels of government'</td>
<td>There is general agreement that this is not an indicator but a 'yes-no' question</td>
<td>Examine how this 'yes-no' question can be transformed into a quantitative indicator (if not possible, delete it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K32 'Satisfaction of local stakeholders with opportunities to participate in local planning and decision-making processes'</td>
<td>Few comments on this indicator</td>
<td>More information is needed to draw a clear conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K33 'Does the staff of your administration participate in training sessions and/or exchange programs?'</td>
<td>There is general agreement that this is not an indicator but a 'yes-no' question</td>
<td>Examine how this 'yes-no' question can be transformed into a quantitative indicator (if not possible, delete it)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nicis Institute
ANNEX 4    Overview of separate technical reports

In seven separate documents the following technical background reports can be provided:

− Background report 1 Administrative information of webmaster, Page Feedback Survey results and Notes of members of expert panel.
− Background report 2 Remote usability test.
− Background report 3 Results of final questionnaire.
− Background report 4 Feedback of test cities (on-site visits, notes, comments, evaluations, presentations, results).
− Background report 5 Feedback from Member States (National Support Groups).
− Background report 6 Comments on questioning grid.
− Background report 7 Detailed comments on key indicators.