



ESPON 2006

Comments ECP France
on Final Report of Project 223 on
“Territorial Effects of Structural Funds in Urban Areas”

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A Strategic reflection

This point was not addressed in this note. As major methodological questions are asked to the report, its results do not like robust enough to be put into a strategic reflection, neither from a national point of view nor from a general point of view.

B Methodological matters

1. Do you consider the project scientifically well grounded?

The project looks badly defined even before its beginning. The goal is apparently to measure the competitiveness of the functional urban areas - as defined in the ESPON 1.1.1 project - as regards the Structural Funds amount they received. This is declined in the Terms of Reference into 9 objectives, without any consistent guideline through them. Moreover, the authors focused on objectives 2 and 3, that are not directed towards the Structural Funds' study but on measuring the competitiveness (“*to develop territorial indicators, typologies as well as new methodologies (...) to gain concrete and applicable information on the EU wide effects of spatially relevant development trends and their underlying determinates*”, and “*detection of territories most negatively and positively affected by the identified trends with special relevance to regions (...)*”).

This is explained by a lack of data on Structural Funds' spending at the urban areas level. In this context it is surprising on the one hand that the CU and the MC asked for such a work, and on the other that a consortium having an experience in evaluating Structural Funds programmes considered being able to do it.

As a result of this definition problem, the authors failed bridging the analysis of urban areas competitiveness and Structural Funds spending. Both tracks are followed in parallel and never cross because the authors do not have any appropriate statistical mean to connect them. Actually the urban areas competitiveness is studied at the FUA level, while SF spending is only available at NUTS3. This leads to a schizophrenic situation to the extent that the foreseen goal of such a study cannot be fulfilled. An example of this problem can be found at pages 54-55, displaying two tables

¹ I would like to thank Gregory Hamez, post-doc at the UMS RIATE (ECP France), for helping me shaping and translating these comments



recapitulating the state of Structural Funds in case study urban areas. As there is no means to know how many funds go to the urban areas, the sums are given by NUTS2 and by NUTS3 levels...

There is another reason to this impossibility: the fact that Structural Funds programmes, generally defined at a regional level, contains measures that are not addressed specifically to urban or rural areas. It is thus necessary to localize supported operations to estimate whether they are located in a FUA or not. In addition, evaluating the effect on urban areas' competitiveness of programmes that includes such different measures as supporting SMEs, protecting the environment or fighting against intra-urban segregation, appears rather unrealistic.

The form of the report

The major parts of the comments on the form may result of the early end of the TPG's work: quick finalization and no time available to correct the blunders. But it seemed important to emphasize one of these formal problems: there is no map at all. Several times, maps would be necessary to the reader, even just some basic maps displaying the localisation of case studies. The only map can be found at page 59 of the "Case Study analysis": it is focused on the Greek case and was not made by the report's authors. The legend is unfortunately written in Greek and this does not help the non-speaking Greek reader.

C Programming of future research

An interesting focus could have been on the urban areas' eligibility to Structural Funds: studying the evolution of urban development indicators in the totally, partially or not eligible FUAs could be a first step in the direction proposed by this project. The eligibility does not reflect the real spending, but such a kind of study may bring elements on the efficiency of the eligibility status.