Sustainable Regional Spatial Planning and Working Methods

Oktober 2005

Common report

Defris partners
- Regional Development Council of Östergötland, SE
- Regional Council of Central Finland, FI
- Regional Council of Pohjois–Savo, FI
- Kaunas County Governor’s Administration, LT
- Regional Authority of Kujawsko–Pomorskie Voivodship, PL

Defris – DEVELOPMENT OF FIRST DIVISION REGIONS
A project part-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund) within the BSR INTERREG III B Programme
Contents

The aim of WP2 3
Working process 3
Reports 4
Main tasks of the organisations 4
Interplay between different levels and administrations 4
Planning systems in each country 6
Planning on the regional level 7
Desirable networks 8

Appendix: Partner reports

Regional Development Council of Östergötland, SE
Regional Council of Central Finland, FI
Regional Council of Pohjois–Savo, FI
Kaunas County Governor’s Administration, LT
Regional Authority of Kujawsko–Pomorskie Voivodship, PL
The aim of WP 2

According to milestone 1:
“Organise necessary networks for collection of specific preconditions for regional planning at national, regional and local levels. Interesting differences and resemblances shall be identified. Start up of discussions, analyses and comparisons of the most important conditions for regional spatial planning in the First Divisions regions. The purpose is better understanding of the different working conditions in the regions, not to investigate details in laws etc”.

According to milestone 2:
“The discussions, analyses and comparisons from the earlier Milestone in WP2 finish. The most important differences and equalities for regional spatial planning shall be identified”.

The basic concept of WP 2 and WP 1 was to provide a good mutual understanding of the various organisations involved (WP 2) and regional circumstances (WP 1) prior to the regions discussing concrete development projects. This would make it clearer how the partners see their role in certain development projects and the contacts and networks required to implement said projects.

The WP 2 working process has highlighted a number of issues that require an outlined analysis. As is clear from the application, the aim is not to conduct a deeper analysis but to obtain a rough picture of the areas of responsibility of the partners along with the organisational circumstances of the day-to-day work.

During the course of the work it was established that WP 2 must result in more transparency with regard:
- The main tasks of the regional organisations in each country
- The interplay between regional and other planning levels
- Similarities and differences in the planning systems
- How development planning is conducted at regional level
- The need for networks at different levels in order to implement the selected development projects in WP 3

Working process
The above-mentioned WP2 has been widely discussed at two seminars and two working meetings and summary was made after each meeting to clarify the tasks of all partners ahead of the following meeting. Coordination has also taken place via email.

The first meeting on October 17-19, 2004 discussed the work planning and the partners’ reports. The second meeting on February 5-8, 2005 further discussed the reports and compiled a draft joint report. The working meeting on April 9-11, 2005 prioritised the joint report and the final timetables for the various measures required prior to the presentations on June 19-21, 2005 and on September 19-20,2005.
Reports
At the first seminar, parties agreed that each partner should compile a report with the same basic headings. The report dispositions were then finalised at the three joint meetings. Each report is enclosed as an appendix to this common report. Particulars of each partner’s planning conditions are available from these partners reports.

Main tasks of the organisations
It would require considerable efforts to systematically sift through, compare and better understand the background of the most important tasks facing the various regions. The roles of the various regions are naturally more or less directly dependent on different rules and regulations. Judging by the discussions at the meetings, the tasks delegated at regional level to a great extent express the need of a logical and modern task distribution within each country, but are also the result of historical working processes. A consequence of this is that the regions after all have partly different work tasks. It could also be assumed that the same heading is hiding a slightly different context. The one thing in common for the regional bodies in question is that they all have the task of working with certain regional development issues and securing sustainability of regional spatial planning. But the regions do not have joint responsibility for issues relating to for example healthcare, consumers, water-protection, etc.

There are thus a number of regional tasks for which all the regional organisations have a clear responsibility, even if their approach varies. Crucial joint tasks could for example be arranged under:

- Communications
- Environment
- Culture
- Education
- Public transport
- Tourism
- Commerce etc.

Interplay between different levels and administrations
After discussing joint tasks, the working group felt that the next logical step would be to compare the organisational requirements for regional development work, i.e. chiefly how the regional level in each country interplay with other planning levels.
The group agreed that a suitable way to try to describe the regions’ role and the main “playing field” within each country was to place them in the joint European NUTS hierarchy. This also facilitates rather good comparisons between the regions. Closer comparisons demand special studies of each partner report.

Such structural picture could later be supplemented with a presentation of the organisational affiliation, i.e. mainly if each region is working towards a regional political grouping or if there is a government representative on the regional arena. That is if the organisations have the roots and are ranked “upward” or “downward” in this NUTS hierarchy.

Together, these two questions provide the following picture.

The regions concerned have the common denominator of not belonging to the largest regions in their countries but the second largest group. Moreover, the great difference in the population density of each country also leads to differences in the regions’ population figures. Poland in particular is characterised by the so-called “polycentric structure”, which means that many regions show high population figures while Sweden and Finland, for example, have a more “monocentric structure”, i.e. dominated by the main metropolis. Accordingly, the Regional Authority of Kujawsko - Pomorskie Voivodship has around five times more inhabitants than the Regional Council of Pohjois-Savo. This also results in the Polish region being classed as a NUTS 2 region. The other regions are NUTS 3 regions. With regard authority, all regions work for a regional political organisation with the exception of Kaunas County Governor’s Administration, which is a regional government body.
Planning systems in each country

The internal relationship between national, regional and local levels as illustrated in the above figure is consequently based on the laws and planning instruments etc. of the various countries. As indicated above, this in turn can also be traced to various historical connections and development processes. National rules and regulations do not only regulate the position taken at national level but contain a number of provisions that influence the work at regional and local level. These regulations also specify the extent to which the position taken at regional level impacts at municipal and local levels.

Regional level is therefore greatly dependent on the role it is continuously allocated through national distribution policy, a “top-down” process. Development at regional level is also a result of the coordination required for efficient management and production at municipal level, i.e. the result of a “down-up” process. The “down-up” process is connected with the fact that more and more connections between municipal administrative limits and functional limits are increasingly diverging. A consequence of this is the increased needs on regional level to take into account local considerations to produce well-balanced conclusions for bigger functional areas.

The group discussions have confirmed the similarities of the planning systems in each country that regulates the conditions for development planning at regional level. The system designs are similar but the content and strength of the various planning directives and instruments can vary. Likewise, a continuous adaptation of regulation systems and interpretations takes place over time in pace with new needs arising. The balance between the various levels can thus gradually be adapted without corresponding changes in planning structures. European cooperation in particular is an external factor that affects the various planning levels within each country. In the regions’ Europe, regional development is no longer only about “domestic policy” but increasingly more about “foreign policy” i.e. there are stronger direct connections between European and regional levels.
Planning on the regional level

The next step for the working group was to study in more detail the planning instruments at the disposal of the current regional planning bodies. The more concrete work at regional level also shows clear similarities. All regions compile some sort of strategic documentation that forms the basis of strategic deliberations within various operational activities. The master document therewith becomes operative. This provides a basis for decisions at regional level. All regions, with the exception of Östsm Regional Development Council, have moreover formal responsibility for drawing up a regional plan, i.e. other regional planning documents shall then be transferred and construed into a physical image. This plan will then govern decisions on the use of land and water at municipal level.

The discussions in the group have underlined the fact that the obligation to draw up a regional plan creates a sustainable “legitimacy” for regional planning. It is a question of extent and fundamental planning processes. The plan, and the planning process in particular, sharpens the regional line of reasoning. Inversely, the absence of any such obligatory planning instrument means the prerequisites for specifying and ensuring regional deliberation in the municipal structure plan requires in practice that the municipalities in the region taking into account, and are positive to, the regional positions.
Desirable networks

The aim of taking up networks within WP 2 for organising and implementing the selected development projects in WP3 has been to facilitate an early and more thorough handling of this issue and to eliminate the risk of it being organised “in the meantime”.

All partners in their reports give an overall account of the networks they intend to activate at this initial stage in relation to the development projects the region wishes to continue working on. The regions’ areas of responsibility and the nature of the projects naturally influence the need for networks. The regional area must be put in to this special context. The networks embrace local, regional and national projects. It is also clear that if the project requires more concrete planning relating to the drawing up the regional plan, there exist directives that put automatic demands on the organisation of networks and the duty to consult. Therefore some of the partners are busy working with special information systems to better communicate with citizens, companies, organizations etc. A further conclusion that could well be drawn is that building of networks could also be controlled by the ambition to find messengers and entrepreneurs for the development concept. Implementing a project of this sort normally requires many crucial players pulling in the same direction towards the same goal.
Defris Project Aim

The aim of this project is to formulate equal or alternative strategies for the development of "First Division regions".

The project is going to have phases of

- Analysing basic facts and comparison between participating partners
- Exchanging experience concerning regional planning processes
- Designing concrete project proposals and strategies for realization
- Networking in transnational seminars

In each participating region the work should be cross-sector organised.