October 8, 2010
Project 2013/2/5

The TPG's responses to the comments received to the PURR Inception Report

Annex to the Inception Report

The Comments from Espon to the Inception Report (CIR for short) are dated August 26 2010. These comments are addressed by the TPG below. The TPG's address will be made public as an Annex to the Inception Report.

1 General responses

In this chapter, we have some general reflections to the CIR. These will also be discussed in more detail in following chapters.

1.1   Further development of Inception Report

The TPG appreciates the comments from Espon, and recognises the overall appreciation of the Inception Report given by Espon in chapter 1.1 and 2.1 of the CIR. We also agree that certain issues could have been further developed in the Inception Report.

1.2   Coming work – Interim Report

The Inception Report reflects, in our view, the work that already had been undertaken by the TPG at the time the Inception Report was submitted to Espon. Bearing in mind that the Inception Report was delivered ultimo June, which was before the Subsidy Contract was signed, we think that some of the comments given by Espon are somewhat premature. These will be addressed during the project.

1.3   Research hypothesis

In addition, we think that some of the comments are more relevant for "ordinary" Espon projects than for PURR, which is a Targeted Analyses based on Stakeholder demand. Both our project application and the Inception Report reflect this view, which is especially important regarding the CIR comment on the missing research hypothesis. In order to secure relevance, we are using an *inductive approach* to the project, rather than testing specific research hypothesises.

This implies that the Stakeholders are very important in developing the contents of the project, and that the contents will be elaborated "as we go". In our view, this bottom-up approach with extensive Stakeholder participation is exactly what PURR is about and should not be restricted by top-down hypothesises that might influence the Stakeholders' participation in developing contents that are relevant for them.

On the other hand, we have developed a draft Template (see both the project application and the Inception Report), which will be used at the workshops. This draft Template is common to all

regions and will be used when discussing the project with the Stakeholders. The draft Template will be used as a guide book for the Workshops, and should contribute to clarifying individual (region specific) and common (irrespective of region) needs. Although the draft Template is relatively open in the sense that it challenges Stakeholders to participate, it also includes references to selected indicators and policies (European, national, regional). In this sense, the draft Template will influence the discussion. This is necessary, since the project is European. However, we think that the Stakeholders should be the ones formulating the potentials of their rural regions, the local/regional conditions these potentials are based on, and the policy measures necessary to achieve them. The TPG will discuss this with the Stakeholders, and one important task for the TPG is to relate the local/regional discussions to a broader (national, international) picture as well as to science.

2 Internal Coherence of the Inception Report

In this chapter, we especially refer to the comments in the CIR's chapter 2.2 and 5. We also refer to chapter 1.3 above, where the research hypothesises are discussed.

2.1   Conceptual Framework

There has been much discussion in the academic literature about the link between knowledge and policy development (Adams et al 2011) and one of the key challenges for the ESPON 2013 is to reduce the gap between the academic and practitioner world, in other words to generate outputs that are policy relevant and in a form that can be easily digested and applied by policy makers and practitioners. The representatives of the stakeholder regions have also stressed the importance of achieving practical outputs to the TPG. The user driven nature of the Priority 2 Targeted Analysis Projects also imply that such an approach is necessary. At the same time, we fully recognise the importance of the outputs being formulated on an academically and scientifically rigorous basis.

The potential of the European spatial planning discourse to offer useful theoretical and conceptual insights in the context of PURR was discussed in Chapter 1 of the Inception Report. The evolution of European spatial development policy into the more recently adopted territorial development and territorial cohesion agendas has been well documented in the academic literature (Faludi 2006, Waterhout 2008, Duhr et al 2010) The promotion of the integrated place based development policy in the Barca Report and elevation of territorial cohesion to an EU objective alongside social and economic cohesion as well as a shared competence between the EU and the Member States, since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, have given a fresh impetus to European spatial planning. Faludi claims that these developments mean that European spatial planning has reached a turning point (Faludi 2009) and Waterhout argues that this offers opportunities for planners and planning to engage with what he calls a broader territory matters coalition (Waterhout 2011).

In line with the nature of the project we anticipate that the conceptual framework will also evolve as the project progresses. A number of the concepts that have started to emerge from this wider discourse have the potential to operate as an interpretative lens through which to view the drivers, opportunities and constraints in relation to the PURR stakeholder regions specifically and other rural regions more generally. Some of these, such as the concept of soft spaces and soft planning (Haughton et al 2010, Faludi 2011 forthcoming) and the territorial knowledge channels framework (Adams et al 2011) are discussed briefly in the Inception Report.

The concept of soft spaces has recently come to prominence as part of the rescaling processes that have taken place in territorial governance responses to the perceived inadequacies of planning within the regulatory scope and remit of statutory planning systems, as well as to wider processes such as EU enlargement and the devolution of power in domestic contexts. Rural development issues and challenges clearly do not restrict themselves to within hard administrative boundaries and this implies that the concept will be useful in the exploration of the case studies. The Cambrian Mountains case study in Wales is the most obvious example where this concept could potentially be useful as this area extends over the administrative boundaries of a number of local authorities. Haughton et al argue that these 'soft' spaces 'are valued as a mechanism for encouraging more creative thinking, unconstrained by regulation and national guidance, and providing greater opportunities for a range of non-planning actors to engage more productively with the planning process' (2010: 240). The TPG agree with this statement but also feel that these soft spaces create significant challenges as well as opportunities in relation to the development of effective governance structures. The engagement of a wide diversity of actors in the rural is essential development process and this will be reflected in the diversity of the participants to be involved in the regional workshops.

The territorial knowledge channels framework relates closely to these territorial governance arrangements and conceptualises the role of diverse territorial knowledge communities in the policy development process. Territorial knowledge communities draw together a variety of theoretical strands in relation to the production and diffusion of knowledge by groups of experts or professionals in think tanks or research networks, epistemic communities (Haas 1992), communities of practice within or across professional organisations (Lave and Wenger 1991) and advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1988). The process oriented approach of the territorial knowledge channels framework again offers significant potential when considering the evolution of governance arrangements within rural areas. The fragmentation and dissolution of diverse arenas, communities and governance arrangements in the UK context in recent months will provide an interesting area of focus.

The CIR also requests clarification in relation to the definition and relevance of several key notions introduced in the Inception Report such as territorial capital, territorial potential and regional needs. The concept of territorial capital can be traced back to development theories that emerged in the early 1980s and it has recently re-emerged within the European spatial planning discourse in the context of the increased diversity of Europe. Basically the term refers to the specific characteristics or talents of a region. The most common definition of territorial capital is the one promoted by the OECD (2001) that was included in the Inception Report. The same definition was adopted in the evidence base for the Territorial Agenda document, the Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union (DE Presidency 2007a) and relates closely to wider discussions in EU policy circles about the importance of exploiting specific the territorial capital, or the specific endogenous characteristics of individual regions as a means of capitalising on the increased diversity of the EU and promoting the competitiveness of the individual regions and the EU as a whole.

The diversity of rural areas of the EU is illustrated by the diversity of the PURR stakeholder regions. The diversity of the spatial development characteristics and opportunities of the five regions will be demonstrated by the benchmarking and the portraits of the individual regions. The nature of territorial capital means that it includes tangible and non-tangible characteristics and the identification and strengthening of regional territorial capital provides one of the main challenges for the PURR regions. This is likely to involve strengthening of linkages to other areas to maximise synergies but also the optimisation of currently under-used elements of territorial capital within a specific region.

The concept of territorial capital is also closely linked to the concept of territorial potential. The concept of territorial potential is at the heart of the place based approach promoted by Barca who argued that a "*place-based policy* is a long-term strategy aimed at tackling persistent underutilisation of potential and reducing persistent social exclusion in specific places through external interventions and multilevel governance" (2009: 7). There is much discussion in the academic literature about the relative merits of endogenous and exogenous approaches to regional development. There has also been a strong focus in EU policy documents including the Territorial Agenda (DE Presidency 2007b), the various Reports on Economic and Social Cohesion (CEC 2004, 2007) and more recently the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (CEC 2008) on the importance of regions identifying and harnessing their own endogenous potentials.

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion did not seek to provide a definition for the concept of territorial cohesion, rather it sought to broaden the debate to engage a wider diversity of stakeholders. The Green Paper generated almost 400 responses from a wide diversity of actors from both Member and non Member states including (in decreasing order in terms of numbers) a highly heterogeneous set of interest groups, regional or local bodies, expert citizens, national governments, universities, research centres and consultancies, social and economic partners, towns, cities and municipalities, non-EU bodies (including a number from Norway), European institutions and EU programmes and finally political parties.

An analysis of the responses to the Green Paper reveals many commonalities but also many differences in terms of interpretations of the concept (Cotella et al 2010). The importance of the concept of territorial cohesion to rural areas was one aspect that was emphasised strongly and there were a high proportion of responses from interest groups with a specifically rural focus. In addition a number of the stakeholders involved in the PURR project responded (North Yorkshire County Council, Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government...). Many of these responses emphasised the procedural dimension that focuses on shaping the EU in such a way as to optimise the development potential of the individual regions, thus placing territorial potential at the heart of the territorial cohesion objective.

The characteristics of the PURR regions and the responses of some of the PURR stakeholders to the territorial cohesion Green Paper clearly demonstrate the relevance of these agendas. The focus of PURR on the territorial potentials of the individual stakeholder regions means that the project offers an opportunity to apply some of these rather abstract concepts to a practical level, applying a magnifying glass to explore their applicability in diverse regional contexts.

The idea of 'regional needs' embodies a nested set of project ambitions. Foremost amongst these, given the ESPON defined concern with 'stakeholder engagement', is to help channel, develop and express the policy aspirations and challenges facing key agents charged with regional spatial strategies in the case study areas. Needs in this sense, therefore, relates to those of the networks, practices and knowledges of local policy communities and the resources needed to enable their work.

In turn, however, such practitioners are of course engaged with promoting regional needs in a broader rhetorical sense as the socio-economic, cultural and environmental 'potentials' and 'well being' of their respective localities. At this point the project seeks to help facilitate, rather than prescribe, critical debate and reflection on the analytical and conceptual definition of such needs and the strategic policy decisions required to realise them. Generic narratives such as 'integrated' and 'sustainable' regional development are relatively uncontroversial and consensual in political terms. Finer grained analysis, however, forces local stakeholders and

policy practitioners to confront challenging sets of contradictions and controversial decisions as economic, social and environmental needs are brought into juxtaposition. For example, economic priorities of competitiveness and productivity growth may not necessarily be consistent with higher employment levels and income equality and other regional social and environmental aspirations. Regional needs in this sense embody critical reflection on whom and what is meant to benefit from regional spatial strategy and who should be involved in its design and the setting of its strategic priorities and underpinning values.

The TPG is also clear that regional needs, given the comparative nature of this and other ESPON projects, is also in part defined by the measures, indicators and statistical benchmarks used to judge and compare each case study region's performance vis-a-vis other European localities and averages. The choice, appropriateness and relevance of cross border indicators are not unproblematic and the TPG is keen to explore regional stakeholders' views and concerns over such relative judgements.

2.2   Benchmark

There are several ways of benchmarking a region, as the CIR suggests. Both the project application and the Inception Report are, in our view, quite clear on what we mean by benchmarking the Stakeholder regions. Based on statistical indicators, we will present the Stakeholder regions in a European and National (regional) context. This will provide us with a first glance into each Stakeholder region's situation for the different indicators. We will use the set of indicators (the typologies) from the Edora project (see chapter 2.3). Information from the Espon database will be supplemented by information from national databases. In a sense, we will apply a magnifying glass (vertical benchmark) to the Edora typologies, assessing how our regions compare to them.

Although we primarily were interested in benchmarking the Stakeholder regions statistically in the Inception Report, there are also other ways of benchmarking the regions later in the project. We plan to compare the five PURR regions based on the information we collect from the stakeholders. In this sense, we benchmark the regions according to the information from the draft Template (see section 1.3 above), isolating similarities from differences. This information can also be used for cross-regional learning between the PURR regions – trying to assess what each region might learn from the others.
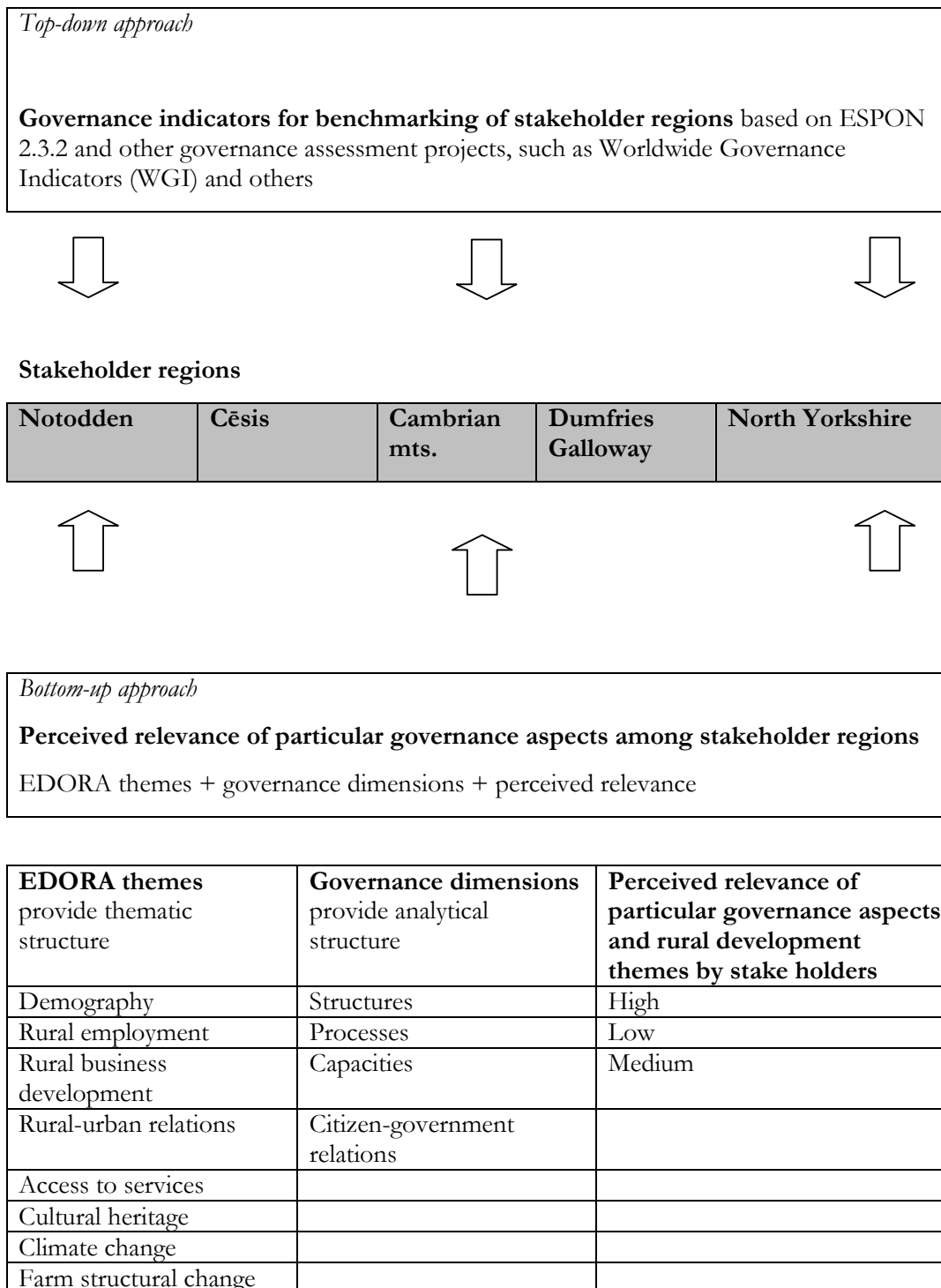
2.3   Data availability

Where available at an appropriate level Eurostat data will be used to inform the bencmarking in a European context. ESPON data base will be used to extract fundamental regional information in NUTS 3, NUTS 2, NUTS 1 and NUTS 0 level. Following data sets will be used: ESPON 2013 data base (basic indicators, land use data) Urban and regional research Accessibility indicators, Lisbon strategy performance indicators, ESPON TipTap project data, ESPON territorial observation No. 1. In addition data bases generated in specific ESPON projects will be used, such as EDORA project data base and data generated in ESPON 2006 thematic projects, especially ESPON 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, ESPON 2006 Policy impact projects, especially ESPON 2.3.2, 2.1.4. Finally, various local data sources will be used in describing stakeholder regions. TPG is aware of potential data gaps. In case of Latvia, for example, the assessment of complimentarity between ESPON and national data has been performed in case of describing rural-urban relations. This report has been helpful in identifying these gaps. (See, Konsorts, 2009).

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2.4   *Governance*

We assume that governance arrangements are important predictors of regional development therefore governance dimension will be integrated into common research approach. Instead of focusing on governance as separate issue area, several governance dimensions, such as structural dimension, coordination, policy integration, participation and networking, will be examined in the context of rural development themes identified by EDORA project. As it was mentioned in the Inception report, theme of institutional capacity is especially relevant in this respect. The concept of institutional capacity allows to focus research agenda on government's ability to collect social resources that enable coordination, collective strategic agency and accommodation of interests (EDORA, 2009).

PURR will provide overall benchmark of stakeholder regions according to available governance indicators, for example ESPON project 2.3.2 "Governance of Territorial and Urban." In addition, regionally specific information will be collected to account for particular aspects of governance that are considered relevant by stakeholder regions in their local contexts. Thus, for example, municipality's capacity in innovative management of cultural heritage can be important for regions in which cultural heritage objects exist but stakeholders feel that they should be used more strategically to promote regional development. If cultural heritage is considered relevant locally, it would be important to see if institutions are innovative in managing cultural heritage. Coordination capacity of institutions is another important governance aspect. It could be especially important for the development of rural businesses, especially in rural areas where small scale producers are looking to increase their business opportunities. In this instance, analysis of governance will focus more on coordination capacity of institutions. In PURR top-down perspective of governance assessment is combined with bottom-up perspective. In top-down perspective governance is assessed via governance indicators. Whereas, bottom-up perspective emerges out of perceived relevance of particular governance aspects in local and regional level. Figure 1 illustrates conceptual integration of governance in PURR.

Figure 1. Conceptual integration of governance into PURR research framework

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Top-down approach

Governance indicators for benchmarking of stakeholder regions based on ESPON 2.3.2 and other governance assessment projects, such as Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) and others

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Stakeholder regions

Notodden	Cēsis	Cambrian mts.	Dumfries Galloway	North Yorkshire

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Bottom-up approach

Perceived relevance of particular governance aspects among stakeholder regions

EDORA themes + governance dimensions + perceived relevance

EDORA themes provide thematic structure	**Governance dimensions** provide analytical structure	**Perceived relevance of particular governance aspects and rural development themes by stake holders**
Demography	Structures	High
Rural employment	Processes	Low
Rural business development	Capacities	Medium
Rural-urban relations	Citizen-government relations	
Access to services		
Cultural heritage		
Climate change		
Farm structural change		

3 User orientation

This chapter refers to chapter 2.4 and 2.5 in the CIR and to the general comments in the CIR regarding Stakeholder involvement in the project. As stated in section 1.3 above, as well as in the previous documents from the project, the Stakeholder regions' involvement is crucial to the methodology applied to the project, as well as to the project's potential outputs.

3.1   Stakeholder involvement

The three members of the TPG have already established contacts with the Stakeholder regions.

Workshops will be arranged in Latvia and Norway during October (see chapter 3.2 and 3.3 for further information on the UK regions), at which discussions on the project will be held. The TPG has prepared a draft Template and a series of questions to be used as guidelines at these workshops, and has also made agendas for the workshops. Representatives of the Stakeholder regions and other regional actors (who are invited by the Stakeholder regions) will be challenged by the TPG to discuss the different themes presented in the draft Template, among others performing a SWOT analysis or further elaborating on previous SWOTs. The main output of the workshops will be ideas, which will be synthesised by the TPG in the form of minutes from the meeting. The minutes, which will follow the structure of the draft Template, will be distributed among the workshop participants for comments after the workshop. The TPG will also take contact details of the participants, so that follow up discussions can take place face to face or over the telephone.

The ideas, and information from other sources (documents and statistical information), will be the basis for writing a report for each Stakeholder region. The five reports will have similar structures. When they are ready, they will be provided to the Stakeholder regions for comments. The five reports will also be the basis for making an aggregate report, where we discuss differences and similarities between the five regions. Additionally, the five reports will be the basis for revising the draft Template into a "final" Template, which we hope can be used also for assessing potentials also in other (rural) regions across Europe. The Stakeholders will be asked to comment on the aggregate report as well as the Template before they are finally submitted to Espon.

Representatives from the Stakeholder regions will also be invited to the two seminars that are planned within the project. At the first seminar (Latvia in February/March), the Interim Report from the project will be discussed. The Interim Report will be distributed to the Stakeholders before the seminar. At the second seminar (Oslo in September), the draft Final Report from the project will be discussed. The draft Final Report will be distributed to the Stakeholders before the seminar. The Stakeholders will be asked to prepare themselves for discussing these reports at the two seminars, and their comments will supplement the comments from Espon.

The Stakeholders are very important during the dissemination phase of the project. It is important that the results from PURR are distributed among the regional users, and one of the aims of the project is that the Stakeholder representatives should know the project's contents just as well as the members of the TPG, and thus be able to present it to a further audience. We feel that this can be achieved given the tight cooperation that is planned between the TPG and the Stakeholders, and the influence the Stakeholders are assumed to have when it comes to the contents of and the outputs from the project.

We emphasise that the outputs from PURR are assumed to be relevant for the Stakeholders, a.o. in improving their policy development. Therefore, it is important to discuss with the Stakeholders their "degrees of freedom" regarding policy options as well as policy development. This involves governance structures, including the division of labour between tiers of government and the cooperation between them (including regional development agencies). It also involves the access to policy means, including the institutional capacity of the Stakeholder regions (including existing and potential networks of regional actors). On the other hand, it requires a discussion as to what extent exogenous factors (factors that cannot be controlled by the Stakeholder regions) dominate endogenous factors (factors that originate from the Stakeholder regions, or over which they have some control) or not in rural development and potential. In this sense, it is important to focus on the endogenous factors when it comes to developing future policies.

The stakeholders participating in PURR have emphasised the importance of them using the project to learn from the experiences of the other stakeholder regions and what they have done. What have been their main challenges, and their policy responses to them? Which instruments have they used? What has been successful, and what has not worked? What were the critical success factors and what were the main constraints? These types of questions obviously lend themselves to a dissemination type activity where all of the regional stakeholders are brought together to supplement the exchange of experience that can be obtained from reading each others documents. There are *two seminars* planned by the TPG in 2011 where such learning processes might take place. In addition, the stakeholders could meet to continue the discussion as a part of the dissemination process after the project itself is terminated.

3.2   Issues with UK stakeholders

There has been a change of Government in the UK and this, in addition to the ongoing concern regarding the economy, has created an element of uncertainty in relation to the context for the UK case studies. As a result of the election and the current economic climate there are significant and ongoing upheavals in governance structures (severe public spending cuts, abolition of government agencies and tiers of governance, dissolution of knowledge networks....). As a result we have had difficulties in relation to contacts with the stakeholder regions in the UK and we informed the ESPON Co-ordinating team of these issues during our second TPG meeting in London on 13th-14th September 2010.

LSBU contacted the three UK stakeholders by e-mail and then by phone early in the project. The initial response of the stakeholders was that they were surprised that the project had taken so long to start and that the context within the stakeholder regions and in the UK more generally had changed significantly since the project had been conceived. It has therefore not been as easy as anticipated to identify willing stakeholders prepared to take ownership of the organisational and participatory activities involved in making the project a success for the spatial planning of these regions

The situation was exacerbated particularly in relation to the Dumfries and Galloway Council where there has been a notable dissolution of the initial knowledge networks and advocacy behind PURR. The staff members involved in the initial conception of PURR project have since left the Council. As a result of this, and the considerable pressure on the remaining staff members, we have experienced difficulties in clarifying who will be responsible for the PURR project within the Council and this has taken considerable time and energy to try to resolve.

In addition the contacts for the Welsh case study have also changed and the Welsh Assembly Government has recently informed us that the Countryside Council for Wales will now be

responsible for the organisational and participatory aspects of the project. Again this has caused a significant delay in both the organisational aspects (agreement of relevant sources of data and information, provision of documents, organisation of the workshops etc.) and the actual documentary research and benchmarking. It has therefore not been possible to arrange the regional workshops in October as initially planned. There are currently two workshops planned for mid-November with the third likely to be in early December.

The project specification emphasised the need for a close working relationship between the TPG and the relevant representatives of the stakeholder regions. We completely agree that this is essential for the successful implementation of the project and is central to the success and characteristics of a Priority 2 project such as this. We emphasised strongly in both the project proposal and the Inception Report that we wanted to work closely with the regional stakeholders to develop a methodology and project outputs that were useful to them. However, the delays that we have experienced have caused delays in relation to the data identification, collection and analysis and also in relation to the organisation of the regional workshops in the stakeholder regions.

We fully sympathise with the highly complex and fluid situation in relation to local government and governance in the UK and elsewhere at the current time. The feedback that we have received from the stakeholder regions is that the situation has been exacerbated due to the long lead in time for the project. We would like to stress that all of the UK regional stakeholders and the Norwegian lead stakeholder are working constructively for a positive solution to these issues.

3.3   Potential delays

Due to the situation in UK, regional workshops could not be planned there before November and December. We therefore propose that we are granted a one month delay for delivering the Interim Report, to February 1st 2011. Given no other unforeseen circumstances, this delay will have minimal effect on the rest of the project plans. Deadlines for both seminars, the draft Final Report and the Final Report, will be met as agreed.

3.4   Other Users

Above, we have focused mainly on Stakeholder (and other regional actors) involvement, which is essential to PURR. The Innovative Methodology (-ies) that potentially will be developed as a part of this project, rely heavily upon their involvement, and upon combining the Stakeholders' involvement with other sources of information (macro or top-down). Depending on the results, the Template will be an important output from the project, in which these two sources of information are combined. Our aim is that the Template should represent an analytical approach that can be applied to other regions as well, preferably in a user-friendly style that could be applied by other regions without the assistance of external experts. In this sense, other regions become users of the project. The Template will be delivered to Espon, and Espon is therefore also an important user. Finally, if the approach and methodology are successful, the scientific community will also be an important "user" of the project, as the results might be published in peer reviewed journals.

4 Final comments

Finally, we would like to comment on a couple of more issues. Referring to section 1.2 above, some work will be addressed as the project develops. In section 2.1, we have discussed some of the definitions that were lacking from the Inception Report, and others have been included and discussed in the draft Template. The discussion will be continued and definitions clarified in the Interim Report.

We would also like to make a comment to page 6 in the CIR, where accessibility and transport matters are claimed to be of crucial importance in rural development. The views regarding this importance differ within the scientific community. Whilst some researchers have identified supposedly high returns on infrastructural investment (e.g. Aschauer, 1989) others cast doubt on its effectiveness as part of a sustainable regional development strategy, identifying constant or negative economic returns from infrastructural investment (Martin, 1999; Vanhoudt et al, 2000) and there is much debate on the impact of infrastructure on rural and geographically peripheral areas (Phillip et al 2001) as such investments contribute to increasing the competition rurally as well as to increasing commuting from the rural area in question towards the centre. In some cases, the first users of infrastructure improvements are the out-migrants – it becomes easier to migrate towards the centre. We agree, however, that it is important to discuss accessibility and transport with the Stakeholders, but we do not necessarily agree that accessibility improvements generally will have exclusively positive benefits for rural development. The TPG reserve the right to discuss all such matters and potential ambiguities with the Stakeholders, as well as to provide them with views that might differ from mainstream views or EU official (political) views. The TPG feel that this is important to increase the scientific quality of the project and to provide an appropriate range of points of view to promote critical reflection amongst the stakeholders.

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