

Summary of ESPON ARTS – Assessment of Regional and Territorial Sensitivity Draft Final Report

This project has developed a methodology for doing an *ex ante* territorial impact assessment of EU Directives, and a set of findings when the methodology is applied to 12 Directives, including a more in-depth assessment of three of them. TIA is defined as “a tool for assessing the impact of spatial development against spatial policy objectives or prospects for an area”, working at “any spatial scale” and therefore applicable to large projects, plans and programmes.

The method

Basically, for any chosen Directive, the first step is to work through the text of the Directive and to establish a logical set of cause / effect relations, using expert judgements to show how intensely the Directive will affect environment, economy, society and territory. For example, the Directive on sustainable use of pesticides can be expected to result in improved water quality, but reduced agricultural production and employment.

The next step is to ask whether or not the Directive will affect a particular type of region. For example, the Seveso II Directive on major accident hazards linked to dangerous substances, will affect regions (such as those scattered through the UK) which have such industries, but not regions without them.

Then, without reference to any particular Directive this time, regions are assessed for their “sensitivity” to the various components making up environment (e.g. air quality, water quality etc.), economy (types of jobs, e.g.), society (e.g. health statistics) and governance and regulatory systems (which can accentuate or dilute the effect of a Directive). Data from the ESPON database is used in this process.

Thus three matrices are prepared in Excel which are then combined to identify which in regions (at NUTS 2 level in the project) the Directive will impact. The report includes a guide to how to run a half-day workshop with experts (on the subject of the Directive and with territorial development experts) to get their assessments.

Main findings in relation to the UK

The Water Framework Directive has significant territorial impacts, through improving environmental quality in rural and urban regions, though agricultural regions will need to reduce pollution and urban areas will require better sewers and water filtration systems. Regions where natural water bodies make up a high percentage of the total surface, such as the Lake District and some parts of Scotland will need to spend considerable effort in maintaining the ecological and morphological conditions of the water system.

The Seveso II Directive is identified as having particular impacts in East Anglia and East Riding and North Lincolnshire.

The Directive on limiting noise requires Member States to make noise maps and action plans for agglomerations, major roads, major railways and major airports, and to enforce mitigation measures. This is seen as impacting most on Inner London where it should reduce CO2 emissions. It is also seen as having a positive economic impact by boosting entrepreneurship to respond to the challenges of the Directive. It is also expected to help (in a small way) retention of agricultural land in British regions.

The Directive on the identification and designation of European critical infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection is focused on the energy and transport sectors. Minor benefits in terms of soil sealing are expected in Greater Manchester, West Midlands and Outer London, though minor negative effects on conservation of natural heritage in terms of landscape diversity are anticipated in Eastern Scotland. The main regional benefit though is in reduction of the risk of serious accident in the East Riding and North Lincolnshire, while there are moderate gains in air accessibility in London.

The Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides is seen as impacting negatively on agricultural areas in East Riding and North Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Rutland and Northants as well as East Anglia. There is a suggestion that there might be high migration from some UK regions as a result.

The Directive that seeks to improve the energy performance of buildings is thought most likely to impact on local planning in urban areas and especially those with historic buildings.

The Directive on the use of biofuels sets minimum percentages for renewables in transport fuels. For the production of biofuels – whether imported or from domestic origin – industrial areas will need to be expanded and plants built. Thus one impact is increased soil sealing, with Inner London amongst areas highlighted. Because of imports, a risk of extra CO2 emissions in Merseyside and Greater Manchester is noted.

An interesting one is the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications. Mobile professionals are inclined to leave 'unattractive' regions and migrate to urban and wealthy regions. This creates additional supply of labour in prosperous regions and in due course prepares the ground for the establishment of service enterprises. For shrinking regions the effect can be opposite: jobs are lost in the secondary and tertiary sector which has negative effects on economic growth. Regions that are the destination for professionals

are likely to experience increased demand for housing, water and energy, and consequent urban sprawl. London, West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Merseyside are cited. The opposite can be expected for the regions of origin. Thus there is a trade-off here between two key EU principles – the free movement of labour and territorial cohesion.

The Directive on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles aims to address energy use and greenhouse gas emission with the ultimate goal of a better integration of transport and energy policies. Specifically, this directive aims at stimulating the market for clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles, particularly through the procurement of public transport services. Inner London is identified as an area that would significantly benefit in terms of reduced CO2 emissions. The East Riding and North Lincolnshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire are identified as places where the Directive is likely to have a positive effect in terms of the share of arable area.

Options for policy development

Finally, the researchers consider how this form of TIA might be used. It could serve as a first pre-check on the expert level of the Commission and add the territorial dimension to the Commission's Impact Assessment procedure. Used in this way it could identify those regions with would benefit intensely and those regions with likely high negative impacts. The result of TIA could feed in into the further stakeholder driven process of the Commission's Impact Assessment.

Another option would be to use the TIA procedure as part of the strategic environmental assessment (SEA). This would put bring a stronger focus on economic and social impacts, alongside the environmental emphasis in current SEAs.

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Future reports: Final Report due 31 May 2011.

Relevant previous ESPON projects: TIPTAP

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