

## **Summary of the Interim Report of the RISE (Regional Integrated Strategies in Europe) targeted analysis project**

As the title suggests, the project looks at the operational use of regional integrated strategies (RIS). It is producing a RIS toolkit. The lead stakeholder on this project is Birmingham City Council. The project is looking at four regions, the West Midlands, Zealand (Denmark), Västerbotten (Sweden) and Randstad (Netherlands).

### **Integration**

The idea of integration – horizontally and vertically – is central to the project. The team is probing what it really means in practice. What kind of tools can be used? What are the limits to policy integration? What are the contextual factors that are important? How do we assess public participation?

### **All change?**

It is not only in England that regional agencies and types of plans are in flux. In Denmark an administrative reform took place in 2007, according to which regional planning was reduced almost to an advisory level. In the Randstad region, a change of the regional structure is currently being considered. Finally, in Sweden, regional strategies in a majority of regions, including Västerbotten Region, are in the hands of co-operative municipal bodies. In general regional strategies carry little authority and so linking them to operational actions is difficult.

A key line of argument in the project is that there is no ideal regional integrated strategy – no blueprint to copy. Rather the team emphasises “integrative strategic conduct”, i.e. things like a shared sense of ownership amongst stakeholders.

### **Toolkit**

The toolkit seeks to provide both a framework for integration and an analytical tool by which integration can be measured. It provides a framework to inform the analyses of the case studies.

### **The West Midlands – from RDA to LEPs**

The report describes the demise of the RDAa and the framework in which the LEPs are expected to work. Interviews are being conducted with leading participants and stakeholders in the Birmingham and Solihull LEP, including Board members from local government and from business. These will explore the composition of the LEP (which places joined, which did not and why?), the organizational arrangements, strategic focus, implementation levers and future aspirations.

## **Randstad**

Regional governance in the Randstad has been in a state of constant flux. Attempts at integrated planning of the Randstad came to an end with the dissolution in January 2008 of Regio Randstad. The main reason was that the four participating cities lost interest in Randstad cooperation, chiefly because it was difficult to reach agreement. They also felt they did need this governance level to get financial support from nation government for a variety of projects.

Randstad cooperation has not ended entirely though. Although there is no political platform to discuss Randstad level policy issues anymore, the four Randstad provinces (without the four main cities!) still cooperate to promote their interests on the European level. A small group of provincial representatives works together on this, partly based in Brussels in the 'House of the Dutch Provinces'. So the only existing policy cooperation now on the Randstad level is externally oriented. Now discussion about the administrative structure of the Randstad is open again, but it is highly unlikely that a single Randstad authority will be created. The mayors of Rotterdam and The Hague have decided to create a new platform for cooperation: Metropolitan Region Rotterdam-The Hague.

The report also summarises the changes brought by the Netherlands' 2008 Spatial Planning Act, which has changed powers of the Provinces. It has reduced the power of a Province to influence local planning policy and local planning decisions. On the other hand, the Province has been empowered to make legally binding land-use regulations.

## **Zealand**

The role of the regions in Denmark changed dramatically after the structural reform in 2007. The regions now have fewer tasks and less authority and they are financed by the taxes from the state and the municipalities. The regions have retained their major role in being responsible for hospitals and secondary health care, but in the area of regional development and planning, their role changed from a hierarchical planning authority towards the municipalities to an advisory role and the making of the RUP – a regional development plan.

Region Zealand is governed by a directly elected regional council, which is the central body responsible for the regional integrated strategies. The most important RIS is the Regional Development Plan (Regional udviklingsplan, RUP) which is described as "competing with the Regional Business Plan made by Growth Forum." The overall responsibility for the Regional Development Plan (RUP) belongs solely to the regional council. However, the preparation of the RUP takes place in cooperation with the municipalities and Growth Forum. The latter is a legal body that is a mix of local authorities, business, education and trade union representatives.

Thus in Denmark the regions have been retained but have moved from a regulatory and hierarchical role to a visioning, facilitating and mobilising role that depends on other actors to deliver investments.

### **Västerbotten**

In Sweden in 2003 a Parliamentary Committee was established to analyse structures and functions in a system of regional and local scale governments. It identified the need for a new regional structure, of somewhere between 6 and 9 regions. These new regions would also get a new legal status with taxation rights and a publicly elected regional parliament. Sweden's present government has decided not to control this regional process, but rather responds to those regions that want to merge into larger municipal regions., though it will become more directive after 2011.

Lead Partner: Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham.

Other Partners: Delft University of Technology - Research Institute for Housing, Urban and Mobility Studies (OTB); University of Copenhagen - Forest & Landscape, Denmark (FLD); University of Umeå - Centre for Regional Science (CERUM); Nordic Centre for Spatial Development - NORDREGIO

Related ESPON reports: CAEE

Future reports from the RISE project: Draft Final Report, 31 March 2012. Final Report 30 June 2012.

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