

best practice guidelines for regional development strategies

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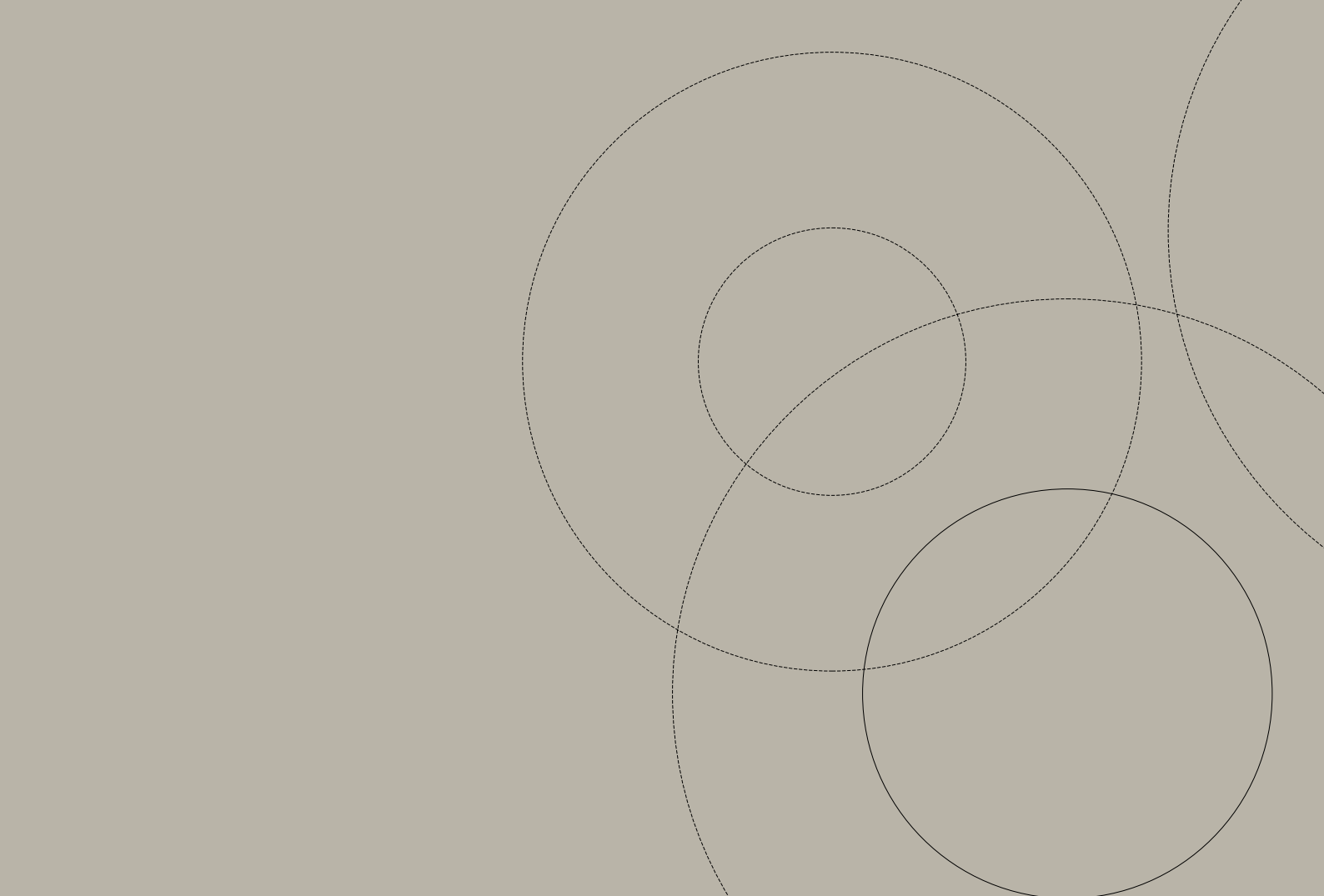
AGRICULTURE



TOURISM



NATURE





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**BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUMENTS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND SPATIAL PLANNING IN AN ENLARGED EU**



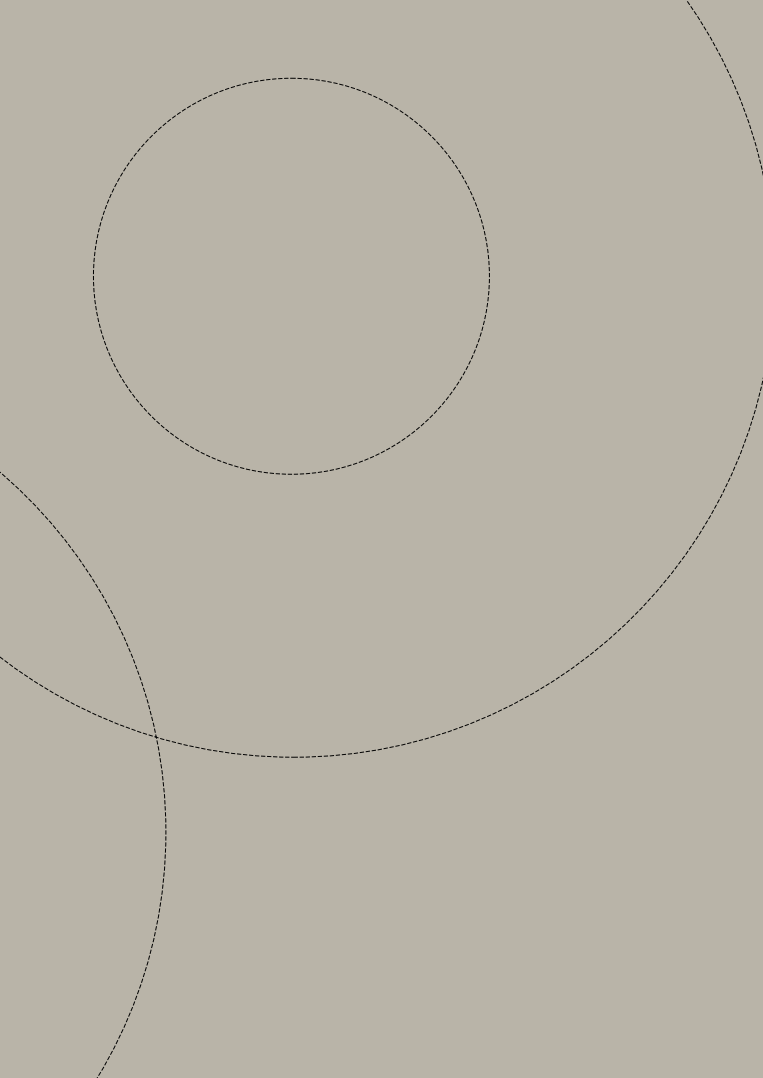
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE GRIDS PROJECT

GRIDS is an INTERREG IIC project that is focused on developing a series of best practice guidelines for regional development and spatial planning. It is especially concerned with identifying and promoting good practice within some of the smaller countries of the European Union.

Project partners are based in Ireland, Wales, Belgium, Latvia and Lithuania and include national, regional and local public administrations as well as academic institutions. The project has also attracted interest and involvement from government organisations in Scotland and Estonia.

The project has focused on exchanging experience between partners through a series of workshops and conferences.

Further information on the project and its key outputs can be found at the project website: www.interreg-grids.org

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The project partners identify the following as the key characteristics of a well-designed and effective regional development strategy. An effective regional development strategy:

- is embedded in its organisational, economic and social context;
- establishes a widely-shared vision for the future development of the region;
- engages stakeholders in an open and productive manner during preparation of the strategy;
- communicates its key messages clearly to a variety of audiences;
- identifies clear mechanisms for delivery;
- phases and sequences key investments and actions;
- establishes a simple but effective framework for monitoring.

AVOIDING THE COMMON WEAKNESS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The project has reviewed a range of regional development strategies and spatial plans prepared in the partner countries. This has revealed that a number of common weakness or difficulties exist. These can be summarised as follows:

- Regional development strategies often include excessive analysis and description of the region and its various characteristics, rather than focus on the key features of importance for preparing a RDS;
- Some cases exist of limited success in engaging stakeholders in the development of the RDS. Even in some of the more successful cases of involving stakeholders, some interest groups such as business representatives have been difficult to engage. Limited awareness, publicity and involvement mean that the RDS does not therefore enjoy a high profile.
- Strategies often fail to acknowledge or adequately address difficult or problematic issues and risk being criticised as overly optimistic.
- Many RDS documents fail to adequately explain how the strategy and its related actions have been arrived at, reflecting weak linkage between analysis and the objectives of the RDS;
- Many RDS documents lack clarity on the mechanisms or actions needed for implementation of the strategy. In addition, limited financial and other resources are dedicated to the implementation of regional development strategies. This is compounded by the limited attention given to phasing of actions and formulation of clear targets.
- Limited consideration is given to the development of indicators and frameworks for monitoring the implementation of the RDS. There is also an over-reliance on simple, quantitative indicators. Qualitative indicators are usually underdeveloped.

The project team has devised a series of good practice pointers to help improve the quality of regional development strategies and ensure policy-makers try and avoid the common weaknesses identified above. These pointers to good practice are arranged in the following sections:

- The purpose, scope and status of RDSs;
- Identifying and writing for your audience;
- Defining principles, visions and objectives
- Engaging stakeholders in the preparation of the RDS;
- Information, data and analysis;
- Presentation, images and illustrations;
- Implementation and resources;
- Monitoring, evaluation and review.

Detailed pointers and recommendations are provided for each of these categories.

INTRODUCTION

THE GRIDS PROJECT

GRIDS is a project focused on developing a series of best practice guidelines for regional development and spatial planning for countries and regions within the European Union. Various partners with some previous experience of working together recognised that many of the smaller countries within the European Union were facing similar policy challenges. The partners designed a project to examine and promote good practice in regional development and spatial planning within the context of enlargement of the European Union. The project was successful in securing INTERREG IIIC funding for a two-year period from January 2004 with Cardiff University acting as lead partner.

The project's various objectives include:

- Providing a means of identifying, sharing and disseminating good practice applicable to smaller nations throughout the EU where regional development strategies are being prepared;
- Strengthening networking capacity and knowledge within and between the partner lands;
- Providing a platform for stakeholders from different countries to come together to promote more effective joined-up government through the activities of regional development and spatial planning.

Key activities and outputs of the project include:

- Four thematic workshops addressing different approaches to regional development and the content, principles and implementation of regional development strategies. The workshops were held in Dublin (Ireland), Cardiff (Wales), Brussels (Belgium) and Vilnius (Lithuania).
- A special workshop to bring together the findings of the previous four workshops. The workshop was held in Latgale (Latvia) and enabled partners to discuss the first draft of the good practice guidelines.

- A conference in Riga (Latvia) in October 2005 attended by stakeholders from the national, regional and local levels in Latvia and Lithuania. An Estonian delegation and a strong international team of academics and practitioners also supported the event.
- A final conference in Cardiff (Wales) in November 2005, bringing together high-ranking civil servants and policy makers from various countries, and focused on ensuring more effective approaches to joined-up government.
- Various documents providing information and advice including the guidelines, in addition to the maintenance of a project website (available at www.interreg-grids.org where workshop materials are available), leaflets disseminating the project's findings, as well as a book to be published in 2006 with contributions from both academic and professional partners.

The GRIDS project has generated significant interest both within the partner lands and in other countries. The relevant ministries and some academic institutions in Scotland and Estonia have shown particular interest. Discussions are ongoing as to how the research capacity of and the co-operation between the Celtic and Baltic countries could be further strengthened once the GRIDS project has finished. If this can be achieved then it will provide a sustainable output that will continue to facilitate inter-regional co-operation and the sharing of experiences.

The various partners are very pleased to make this valuable contribution to the ongoing debates on regional development and spatial planning within the context of the European Union.

USING THE GUIDELINES

This document is organised in several parts:

- Part 1 outlines the context for regional development and spatial planning, highlighting the significance of regions to European Union policies and programmes. It will be useful for

those not familiar with this context or those needing to understand the activities of regional development and spatial planning.

- Part 2 provides a detailed series of guidelines and pointers to good practice. This is the main section of the document and can be used as a reference guide (see below). It is written mainly for those closely involved in preparing a regional development strategy.
- Part 3 provides some case studies and examples of projects from the various partner areas.

The guidelines in Part 2 are based on the experience of the various partners in the GRIDS project. They reflect a diversity of different experiences and have been written to have wider relevance across different member states and regions of the European Union. In writing the guidelines it is recognised that not all of the pointers towards good practice will be suitable in every context. There are, for example, different legal and administrative contexts that may make some of the guidelines difficult to accommodate. The economic and social contexts in different regions may mean that some stages in preparing a RDS need to adopt a particular approach at that time and for that region. The purpose of the guidelines is not to prescribe a particular approach to preparing a RDS, but to offer helpful advice and a series of useful reminders for the varying stages of RDS preparation.

The guidelines are organised around the key stages of the preparation of a RDS, from deciding on the overall approach to the RDS (what is its role, status and character), to defining its objectives, engaging key stakeholders and engaging in the activities of monitoring, evaluation and review.

The guidelines are therefore designed for each stage of the preparation of a RDS and will be equally relevant to those just embarking on a RDS or those reviewing the success of an existing RDS.

A glossary of key terms is also provided at the end of this document.

PART 1

regions, regional development and spatial planning

Part I provides some information on the context for regional co-operation within the European Union. It outlines the importance of Interreg as a means of supporting learning across different regions. In addition, it provides some general information on the challenge of defining regions, as well as describes the key terms 'regional development' and 'spatial planning'.

1.1 INTER-REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

The Interreg programme is a Community initiative providing opportunities to share experiences in a variety of fields. The various forms of inter-regional co-operation are supported under Interreg IIIA (cross-border co-operation), IIIB (trans-national co-operation) and IIIC (inter-regional co-operation). This reflects an increasing focus on regions throughout the EU.

GRIDS is an Interreg IIIC project. This provided the flexibility to involve regions from throughout the entire territory of the EU. This flexibility and the resulting ability to share experiences across the EU has proved to be invaluable in bringing various regions that share a number of common characteristics together in order to seek innovative solutions to common problems.

The GRIDS project illustrates the value of this approach and it is hoped that the project will lead to a sustainable partnership of co-operation between the participating lands and in particular between the Celtic and Baltic lands.

It is anticipated that inter-territorial co-operation will become the new Objective 3 during the next programming period post 2006 and that a considerable increase in funds will follow. It is to be hoped that the rationale of the third strand, which allows true inter-regional co-operation and networking, will be retained so as to offer opportunities to build on the much good work that has already been done.

Inter-regional co-operation has proved to be an extremely useful instrument and many answers have been generated to many questions. Many questions remain however and new questions are arising

all the time. Sharing experiences on these issues is one way to generate ideas that can be adapted to a variety of local situations. That is why even though these guidelines are the end product of the GRIDS project much work still remains for partners and other stakeholders to adapt the guidelines to their own needs and local situations. It is hoped that the inter-regional co-operation in the GRIDS project will make a significant contribution to the ongoing debate in relation to regional development and spatial planning throughout the EU.

1.2 DEFINING 'REGIONS'

Introduction

The term 'region' is used widely by policy makers and officials. There is no simple definition of a region and the term is used differently in different national contexts. This creates some difficulty in cross-national studies as participants attempt to understand the different meanings attached to the term 'region'.

The European Commission defines a region in its Reference Guide to European Regional Statistics (2004, p. 1) as 'a tract of land with more or less definitely marked boundaries, which often serves as an administrative unit below the level of the nation state'. Regions within (or even across) nations may be defined based on a number of characteristics, ranging from administrative areas to shared geographic, cultural or socio-economic features, such as their landscape, climate, language, ethnic origin or shared history.

Regions based on these features rarely coincide with the more precise boundaries that define public administrations. Administratively defined regions should not be treated as fixed ones for the purposes of dealing with either spatial planning or regional development activities. Ideally, administrative regions will be defined in a way that best captures how people relate to and understand regions, although this is often difficult to achieve. Regions, as defined, are therefore usually a compromise between administrative and other characteristics.

The European Union focus on regions

Regional policies of the European Union have had to address these various issues in attempting to both establish a mechanism for common recording and measuring of regional change and targeting policy interventions. The European Union has a system of classifying regions to facilitate common recording of data for regional units. EUROSTAT established a system in the early 1970s titled 'Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units' (NUTS). This is a single,

coherent system for dividing up the EU's territory in order to produce regional statistics for the Community.

The European Commission publishes a large amount of regional data through its EUROSTAT office. This comprehensive regional database is described in the European Regional Statistics Reference Guide(2004), which also provides a summary of the principles underlying the NUTS classification. It is a hierarchical classification, comprising levels I to III. Each Member State is divided into a whole number of regions at NUTS I level, and each of these is then sub-divided into regions at NUTS II level. The United Kingdom, for example, is divided into 12 NUTS I regions and 37 NUTS II regions. These are further sub-divided into regions at NUTS III level, of which the United Kingdom has 133.

The number of NUTS I regions forming a member state of the EU ranges from one (as in the case of Ireland) to as many as 16 (in the case of Germany) and is based in part on population figures (see figure below). The Baltic States are each classed as a NUTS II region. Consequently, 'national' government bodies may therefore be classified as regions for EU purposes. Similarly, regional development strategies may cover populations of between 100,000 and 6 million or more people.

Level	Min. population	Max. population
NUTS I	3 million	7 million
NUTS II	800 000	3 million
NUTS III	150 000	800 000

Source: European Regional Statistics (2004)

The Third Cohesion Report (February 2004) reaffirms a continuing emphasis on regions, regional policy and the role of regional development within the European Union. It sets out the European Commission's vision for the future of Europe's policy to reduce disparities and to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion. The main focus of the Report is the wide disparities in output, productivity and employment that persist between countries and regions. Disparities at the regional level are particularly emphasised in the Third Cohesion Report. Narrowing disparities in regional competitive factors is a particular concern, with a focus on improving infrastructure endowment, strengthening human capital, and increasing the capacity of regions to innovate in the new knowledge-based economy.



Regional policy, regional planning and spatial planning

The terms regional policy, regional planning and spatial planning also require some definition as they may be used differently in various national contexts.

Regional policy is a way of national government intervening in the distribution of various activities between its different regions, and has usually focused on the distribution of economic activities. In basic terms, it includes a wide range of activities to encourage the redistribution of economic activities to regions facing economic decline or restructuring.

Regional planning is quite different to regional policy, and involves decision making at the regional level in which co-ordinated action is applied to the whole or part of a region. Regional policy is seen as focussing on inter-regional issues, while regional planning focuses on a wider range of issues within a single region. The mechanisms for regional planning – usually including the preparation and implementation of a regional development strategy - and the institutions put in place to manage it, inevitably vary from one context to another. Regional planning may be carried out by decentralised administrative bodies of central government or by elected regional governments, depending on the institutional framework.

The term spatial planning is increasingly being used in some European Union member states. This is particularly the case within north-west Europe where various spatial planning exercises have been inspired by the preparation of the European Spatial Development Perspective. Spatial strategies or plans have been developed in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the English regions as well as in Flanders, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. These strategies each adopt a different approach, yet they are designed to contribute to 'joined-up government' through identifying how a wide spectrum of government policies (such as in health, employment, education, transport, environment, housing, culture, heritage and so on) impact on different places. Spatial planning can be a particularly important vehicle for relating economic development policies to housing provision or transport infrastructure.

Spatial planning and regional development or regional planning may be viewed as similar or very closely linked activities. However, some regional development strategies focus primarily on economic activities and therefore lack the wider scope of a spatial strategy. In this series of good practice guidelines, RDS is used as an abbreviation for regional development strategies, although we also use it to include reference to spatial strategies.

1.3 THE DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING

The project has assessed a variety of different types of regional development strategies and spatial planning frameworks. The distinction between a regional development strategy and a spatial plan has been discussed several times during the project. There are some important differences (see the above discussion), however in many cases the documents cover similar issues and have similar objectives. For example, the project reveals that there are only limited differences in topic coverage between the various case studies. There are, of course, differences of emphasis, with some of the case studies being focused very much on regional economic development and securing European Union funding, while others adopt a broader perspective. Yet even with similar topic coverage, there is still a considerable diversity of approaches, often reflecting the social, economic and institutional context of the region. This section identifies some of the important dimensions along which the various case studies vary in their approach.

The various approaches include:

- those that are prepared according to a highly formalised process, often prescribed or framed by legislation, and those that are prepared without any specific constraints or requirements on the process.
- those that form part of a hierarchical framework of documents and strategies in which compliance between different levels is important, and those that are prepared as stand alone documents that are not required to comply with other documents.
- those in which the RDS is seen as a specific programme of actions or a framework for determining whether actions are in accordance with the strategy (essentially a decision-making tool), and those in which the strategy is primarily a forum for debate and attaining some degree of consensus on future actions.
- those that are based on a detailed analysis of significant volumes of social, economic and environmental data, and those that are not obviously driven by extensive analysis of data.
- those that are well developed in their spatial expression, often including many maps, illustrations and a spatial expression of a strategy, and those that rely primarily on text with limited spatial content.
- those that are designed to integrate a wide range of different policy areas, and those that

focus intently on regional economic development.

Using these varying approaches, the case studies evaluated in the GRIDS project can be categorised according to two main and contrasting types of RDS:

- A highly formalised RDS: its content and even objectives may be prescribed by legislation. The process for preparing the plan is also prescribed by legislation and will include specific periods for consultation with key agencies and other levels of government. The RDS will be required to be in conformity with those of higher administrative tiers. The strategy will be based on detailed analysis of data that is presented extensively in the document itself. The strategy will include detailed actions and programmes and implementation, monitoring and review frameworks will be reasonably well developed. The case studies from Lithuania, Latvia and Flanders best represent this type of RDS.
- Informal types of RDS: neither the content of the RDS nor the process by which it is prepared is prescribed by legislation. Involvement of interested groups and stakeholders will also be less formal, and stakeholders may be engaged in shaping the plan throughout the process. The RDS is likely to be informed by other strategies and will in turn be applied or taken into account in other documents, yet its relationship with these documents is not one of conformity. The strategy is designed as a platform for action and will not itself provide detailed series of actions. The case studies drawn from Ireland and Wales best characterise this type of RDS.

This definition of two main types of RDS is clearly a simplification and more detailed points are addressed in the following guidelines.



PART 2

best practice guidelines

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Part 2 forms the main section of this document and is designed for use by those engaged in preparing regional development strategies. It should be used as a reference guide. It is organised around the various stages of preparing a strategy. Users can identify the guidance that is relevant to the stage of the strategy that they are currently involved in.

In addition to setting out a wide range of good practice points, it firstly establishes what tend to be the common weaknesses of many regional development strategies. This list of common weaknesses is based on the partners' sharing of experiences of being responsible for or involved in the preparation of their strategies. The early sections of this part of the document also state the key elements of a good regional development strategy. The detailed good practice pointers are based on this list of key elements.

Common weaknesses of regional development strategies

Some common weaknesses and deficiencies of regional development strategies have been identified from the review of case studies.

- Regional development strategies often include excessive analysis and description of the region and its various characteristics, rather than focus on the key features of importance for preparing a RDS;
- Some cases exist of limited success in engaging stakeholders in the development of the RDS. Even in some of the more successful cases of involving stakeholders, some interest groups such as business representatives have been difficult to engage. Limited awareness, publicity and involvement mean that the RDS does not therefore enjoy a high profile.
- Strategies often fail to acknowledge or adequately address difficult or problematic issues and risk being criticised as overly optimistic.
- Many RDS documents fail to adequately explain how the strategy and its related actions have been arrived at, reflecting weak linkage

- between analysis and the objectives of the RDS;
- Many RDS documents lack clarity on the mechanisms or actions needed for implementation of the strategy. In addition, limited financial and other resources are dedicated to the implementation of regional development strategies. This is compounded by the limited attention given to phasing of actions and formulation of clear targets.
- Limited consideration is given to the development of indicators and frameworks for monitoring the implementation of the RDS. There is also an over-reliance on simple, quantitative indicators. Qualitative indicators are usually underdeveloped.

The critical elements of a good RDS

The case studies examined in the GRIDS project exhibit a wide range of good practice features, many of which are the basis for the guidelines in this document. In addition, the case studies demonstrate that there are several simple elements, but very important ones, that are critical to the production of a good regional development strategy.

A good RDS is one that:

- is embedded in its organisational, economic and social context;
- establishes a widely-shared vision for the future development of the region;
- engages stakeholders in an open and productive manner during preparation of the strategy;
- communicates its key messages clearly to a variety of audiences;
- identifies clear mechanisms for delivery;
- phases and sequences key investments and actions;
- establishes a simple but effective framework for monitoring.

Taking these critical elements into account, alongside the detailed guidelines, will enable those charged with preparing a RDS to avoid many of the most common criticisms and weaknesses.

2.2 THE PURPOSE, SCOPE AND STATUS OF RDS'S

Introduction

There are a number of diverse approaches to preparing a regional development strategy (RDS) that have been attempted in different parts of the EU. This diversity is reflected in the case studies examined in detail during the course of the GRIDS project. The

purpose, scope and status of a RDS are important aspects in influencing the type of approach chosen along with the institutional, political, cultural, socio-economic and spatial context within which the RDS is to be prepared.

In general terms a distinction can be made between the highly formalised comprehensive approach adopted in Flanders, Latvia and Lithuania and the much less formal approach that has recently been favoured in Ireland and Wales. The choice of the appropriate approach will depend on a number of factors including those mentioned above but what is crucial is that the chosen approach is relevant to the specific local situation.

The Flemish Law on Spatial Planning in 1996 introduced a hierarchical structure of planning documents whereby the 3 levels of government (Flemish, provincial and local) were required to prepare a spatial structure plan with detailed vision and binding regulations. At the time in Flanders this formal hierarchical approach was a necessary response to dealing with the consequences of decades of passive land use planning that had a number of negative spatial effects and the new approach was an attempt to rectify this. In new member states such as Latvia and Lithuania the RDS is often closely linked to accessing the structural funds and this also exerts an important influence on the type of approach and document chosen.

The more formal approaches are often characterised by a rigid hierarchical structure of documents for the various levels of governance and relatively detailed legislation that prescribes various aspects in relation to the principles, content and format of the RDS. The Celtic lands have opted for a much more informal approach in the preparation of their recent RDS's¹ at the national level. In both Ireland and Wales the RDS followed the ESDP approach and was seen more as a forum for debate aimed at shaping future thinking and linking various policy areas.

In this section we will look at various reasons why a RDS is drawn up, its role and scope; the time horizons for the various case studies and finally at the choice of an appropriate methodology. For each subsection we will first outline a number of common

features in relation to the various case studies before identifying good practice pointers and providing a reasoned justification for why these specific aspects have been identified as good practice.

The purpose, role and scope of the RDS

RDS documents can serve or facilitate a number of different roles. The Celtic documents were prepared in the absence of any specific national guidelines whilst the Flemish, Latvian and Lithuanian documents are prepared in line with detailed legislation and guidelines.

The purpose and role of the documents range from facilitating joined-up government, providing a context for investment and leveraging national and international sources of funding, to enabling different sub-regions to fulfil their potential. Those RDS documents prepared in the Baltic States place a clear and explicit emphasis on the leverage of European Union funds as the principal purpose of the RDS. Several of the documents are also stated to be important vehicles for linking national, regional and local actions.

Interestingly a number of the case studies represented the first time that a RDS had been prepared at that particular scale. In such circumstances it is often wise to learn to walk before attempting to run. In other words, to focus on a limited number of key issues rather than trying to be too ambitious. In some cases the process was viewed as a learning exercise whereby the increased capacity of authors and stakeholders would enable a wider range of policy issues.

The scope of a typical RDS is often not prescribed, for example by national guidelines or legislation, and is often self-determined. This has the potential to result in a wide variety of different approaches to and scope of RDS documents. Yet the scope of RDS documents in different national contexts is remarkably similar and typically includes issues such as economic development, transport, urban structure, environment, infrastructure and energy. The approaches adopted in the Baltic countries do, however, place a noticeable emphasis upon cultural identity issues in comparison with the remainder of the RDS documents whilst the Welsh example also contains a strong emphasis on



¹ Irish National Spatial Strategy (2002) and Wales Spatial Plan (2004)



community, health and education issues.

Despite the differences however, it is clear that the preparation and implementation of a RDS is increasingly becoming a cross-sector multi-disciplinary issue. The RDS is increasingly being seen as a vehicle to link other policy areas and promote and integrate key strategic policies and issues such as sustainable development.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

1. *Choose an approach that is appropriate to the scale of the region and purpose of the document as well as to the spatial, social, economic and institutional context of the region.*

JUSTIFICATION

There are numerous factors that determine the success or otherwise of a RDS, over only some of which the authors have a degree of control. Any instrument can only be successful if it is appropriate to the situation within which it is being applied. A successful approach undertaken in a region with a specific institutional background and with specific spatial and socio-economic characteristics will not necessarily be successful if copied without adaptation in another region.

2. *Be aware of and clearly state the purpose and role of the RDS to authors and stakeholders.*
3. *Recognise the difference between an overriding strategic development strategy and a development programme.*

JUSTIFICATION

It is crucial that the authors of a RDS know in general terms what the purpose of the specific RDS is and its relationship with other strategies and that this is stated precisely and clearly both within the document itself and to all stakeholders involved in the process. Explain, for example, whether it is

designed to lever investment, coordinate funding arrangements or simply improve policy coordination. Where the purpose of the RDS is unclear this can create misunderstandings and conflicts and lead to the creation of false hopes and ultimately disappointment

4. *Use the RDS as a strategic framework to facilitate and stimulate integrated and sustainable spatial, economic and social development and contribute towards the achievement of the objectives set in the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies.*

JUSTIFICATION

The simultaneous pursuance of competitiveness and cohesion require the stimulation of economic growth with respect for the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental aspects. The spatial dimension of policy-making forms an important lever for integrating the three dimensions and identifying the spatial structures and characteristics that have the potential to drive the development of a region.

5. *Use strategic planning to test/link other sectoral policies and to foster and facilitate joined up government.*
6. *Political forewords with photographs and/or signatures of diverse ministers can be a useful unifying technique.*

JUSTIFICATION

One of the main distinctions between planning and other policy sectors is its multi-disciplinary nature and as such planning has the ability to provide the link between these diverse sectors. The concept of joined up government where there is an across the board understanding of the mutual inter-dependence of activities and actions is crucial.

RDS's often have relatively small budgets allocated directly for implementation and there-

fore often rely on influencing the budgets of other policy areas. Developments in all policy areas tend to have a spatial impact of some sort and it is important that governments continue to work in an increasingly integrated way in order to ensure more coherent policies. By linking other policy areas in an integrated and positive way strategic planning can increase its relevance, power and profile for other sectors. Simple techniques can often be used to create an atmosphere of unity (for example, the foreword with signatures and photographs of all Welsh ministers in the Wales Spatial Plan).

7. *Pay sufficient attention to areas and activities over administrative boundaries.*

JUSTIFICATION

A common criticism or problem with many RDS's is the lack of integration with and attention for neighbouring regions and their strategies. Whilst such neighbouring regions are invariably governed by a separate institution, clearly spatial problems and solutions do not respect administrative borders. The RDS process offers the opportunity for regions to discuss common issues and issues that cross administrative borders.

The RDS document can contain a clear summary of the implications of the strategies of the neighbouring areas as well as recommendations for elements in those regions with a cross-border impact

8. *Involve a diversity of experts (civil servants, academics, practitioners, consultants) in the dedicated team drawing up the strategy.*

JUSTIFICATION

The responsibility for working day to day on writing a RDS usually falls to a small dedicated team within the parent organisation. It is always useful however to have regular inputs into the process from planners (and others) from a diversity of backgrounds. The practical and institutional input of civil servants supplemented by the theoretical and reflective input of academics and the dynamic and commercial orientated input of consultants can result in a theoretically robust and realistic document that takes account of a wide diversity of interests.



9. *Be realistic about the limitations of the RDS and focus on matters which such strategies are capable of influencing.*
10. *Use the preparation process as a learning exercise to strengthen the capacity of authors and stakeholders.*

JUSTIFICATION

A realistic approach to the preparation of the RDS is important so as to protect the credibility of the process. A RDS cannot solve all problems in a region.

The preparation process provides a unique opportunity to build the capacity of the authors and a wide range of stakeholders. An increased appreciation of the spatial impacts of sector policies among stakeholders will help to facilitate a more joined up approach to Government.

The status and timescale of the RDS

Government bodies may prepare a RDS in response to a legislative requirement to do so. Others may prepare a RDS without any such obligation. A statutory requirement to prepare a RDS may not, however, imply a special status of the RDS in practical decision-making contexts. Nevertheless, such issues can have important consequences for the status or perceived status of a RDS document.

The evaluation of approaches indicates that the status of a RDS can change significantly as the preparation of a document progresses. In the case of both the Irish National Spatial Strategy and the Wales Spatial Plan, approaches have started out as informal and relatively unconstrained by formal requirements, yet they have each increasingly turned towards consideration of issues of statutory requirement to prepare the RDS and the status that is afforded to the document. They remain, however, relatively informal approaches. This contrasts sharply with the approach in Flanders, Latvia and Lithuania where the RDS is tied closely to legislation.

In certain cases the non-statutory status of a RDS can stimulate the involvement of stakeholders who may otherwise be reluctant to become involved in a formal statutory process. In other cases the informal approach may provide an excuse for certain stakeholders not to become involved. Once again the local situation will determine the most appropriate



approach. What is clear is that the RDS should be closely linked to the visions and objectives of other regional strategies and that these strategies should be mutually reinforcing.

A period of 20 years is a typical timescale covered in RDS documents. However, the period in the Baltic countries is usually shorter and closer to 10-15 years with an associated development programme for up to 7 years, reflecting the premise that a shorter period is more appropriate in more fluid and rapidly changing contexts and the close links between such documents in the Baltic's and the programming periods in relation to the EU structural funds. A common characteristic of a number of the RDS case studies examined in the GRIDS project was the lack of phasing built into the strategies.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

11. *Clearly identify the status of the RDS, its place in the hierarchy and the relationship with other strategies and highlight any legislative basis for the preparation of the RDS (if applicable).*
12. *Try to ensure that the legislative basis for the RDS is not too prescriptive in terms of the process for preparing the RDS and what it should contain.*
13. *Ensure close alignment with the vision and objectives of other regional strategies through a process of collaboration and discussion with relevant stakeholders and ensure that regional strategies are mutually reinforcing.*
14. *Consider providing a section highlighting how the document itself could be used in different decision-making contexts and whether the document has a special status in decision-making in particular fields.*
15. *Identify any higher-level documents that set an important policy context for the development of the RDS.*
16. *State clearly the implications of the document for strategies and programmes of lower levels of governance.*

JUSTIFICATION

Whether or not the RDS is a statutory document, clarity with regards to the status of the RDS and the

relationship between the RDS and other policy documents and areas is essential if it is to be successful. Whilst it can be useful to define the status of the document in legislation, this will not necessarily ensure that such status is respected by others. The status of the RDS will ultimately depend on how it is perceived by the stakeholders involved in its implementation.

If the legislative framework is highly prescriptive and detailed this can result in a focus on procedure rather than the formulation of a shared vision. It is also possible that legislative definitions can constrain the scope of the RDS by constraining it too narrowly to the traditional conceptions of spatial planning and regional development.

Clarity over the status and a perception that the RDS is a useful and positive instrument for a diversity of stakeholders can facilitate successful implementation. If the status of the RDS is clear and people are convinced of its usefulness then they will be prepared to buy into the process in a positive manner. A perception of ownership of the RDS between stakeholders will help to facilitate this.

Stakeholders should be able to easily understand how the document could be useful to them and what implications the RDS has for them. It is also often useful to have a concise summary of the implications of other policies on the RDS rather than passively stating that the RDS is in compliance with or takes account of other policies.

17. *State clearly the time horizon for the strategy.*
18. *A longer-term time horizon of 20 years should ideally be adopted for the overall strategy of the RDS.*
19. *Identify a shorter time horizon if the context is changing rapidly.*
20. *Phasing should be considered for interim periods and for more detailed actions.*
21. *Allow room for flexibility in terms of delivery.*

JUSTIFICATION

The time horizon of the different case studies examined during the GRIDS project varied according to the local situation (time horizons tended to be shorter in the Baltic examples reflecting the rapidly changing circumstances) and the type of document (development strategy or development programme). Whatever the type of document the time horizon should always be specified clearly for the purposes of clarity and to provide a framework for monitor-

ing, evaluation and revision.

The overall strategy is something that will be progressively worked towards rather than implemented and achieved. Within this context a longer time horizon of up to 20 years is relevant. Where more detailed actions are identified these can be incorporated into a development programme for the short to medium term.

Phasing can be a useful tool to be used in both the RDS and any associated development programme or action plan. Once again it provides clarity and is a useful tool in the context of monitoring, evaluation and revision of the RDS. Phasing should always allow the RDS sufficient flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances and take advantage of windows of opportunity. The level of detail should not inhibit this flexibility as this can also reduce the potential for innovation.

The nature of the approach

Over the years various approaches have been used for the formulation of RDS's and other planning documents. More recently there has been a tendency to move away from prescriptive master plan type approaches that aim to achieve a utopian end state towards a strategic framework approach. As with all such terms however there is great diversity in how these terms are interpreted.

This point is illustrated by the fact that all case studies in the GRIDS project can be considered and are considered by the responsible bodies to be strategic even though there is great diversity in terms of process and product. The Flanders Structure Plan is almost 600 pages long and extremely detailed compared to the Wales Spatial Plan, which is 76 pages long.

The Flanders Structure Plan covers strategic issues in an extremely detailed way whereas the Wales Spatial Plan is much more concise. As one might expect one of the criticisms of the Flemish SP is that it is too long and too detailed whilst at the same time one of the criticisms levelled at the Wales SP is that it is too superficial and not specific enough. Once again there were reasons why a particular approach was chosen in each of the cases studied and what is important is that the chosen approach is appropriate to the local situation. In general terms however there seems to be a tendency to move towards more strategic and less detailed approaches and documents.

Most of the RDS documents reviewed adopt a dual approach to the organisation of material and content with material typically organised by topic/sector or theme (or a combination of the two) and also subsequently by geographic area. Virtually all ap-

proaches used spatial structures and characteristics of an area to a greater or lesser extent to help to define territorial potentials that could be developed and so give focus for development.

Most of the case studies seemed to favour a thematic rather than a topic based approach. Topic based approaches look at traditional and easy to identify areas of work such as housing, economy, transport and so on. Although this approach is often easy to organise it can tend to reinforce the silo mentality where each sector works on its own towards its own goals and objectives. Looking at themes such as building sustainable communities or how to strengthen areas and places helps to facilitate integration and ensures that diverse sectors are considered in relation to their impact on other sectors.

However some approaches are deliberately more abstract, aiming to shape the ways people think rather than prescribe specific solutions for specific areas, a role that is left over to plans and strategies at a lower level. This was the approach adopted in the preparation of the ESDP. Where accessing the structural funds is the main priority of the RDS this will also have a profound effect on the approach to be adopted. A more structured technical approach with direct links to the higher level programming documents such as the single programming document is likely to be required in order to be able justify accessing the funds.

Again there was great diversity in the approaches studied in the level of detail in which the policies are translated to specific geographic areas and also in the way in which the areas are defined. The level of detail required will depend on the local circumstances and the role of the strategy although it should be remembered that there is a fine line between staying general enough to be strategic and being specific enough to be relevant and meaningful.

There were 3 main ways of defining the areas identified. First, areas with similar characteristics, perspectives and potentials and with no fixed boundaries were identified in some approaches (such as the sub-regions in the Flemish and Latgale structure plans and Wales Spatial Plan). Second, areas were defined according to administrative boundaries (administrative regions, districts and municipalities etc. in the Irish and Lithuanian examples). Finally development perspectives were elaborated for structures according to their place in a spatial hierarchy (gateways and hubs, main urban centres and small urban centres etc.)

Spatial challenges do not restrict themselves to administrative boundaries. Elaborating development perspectives for territorially coherent areas is more

logical and encourages cross-border co-operation although it is more difficult to organise and for people to relate to. On the other hand, elaborating development perspectives for administrative areas is easier to organise and also for people to understand, although again it can tend to reinforce the silo mentality. The fact that there are advantages and disadvantages in each approach is reflected by the fact that some of the case studies used a combination of two or all three of these approaches.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

22. *Choose an approach relevant to the role, audience and scope of the RDS, a thematic/topic-based or area-based approach or a combination of these.*
23. *Try to organise the process and material in ways that stimulate integrated working between stakeholders from different sectors.*
24. *Consider providing a concise summary of policies affecting specific administrative areas and indicating which policies or themes require cross-border co-operation.*

JUSTIFICATION

The combination of a topic/thematic approach with an area-based approach provides clarity and allows the reader to see how the topic/thematic-based material relates to specific areas and will help to avoid confusion about what policy applies where.

Organising the process and material in a way that stimulates integrated working will help to break down traditional barriers between sectors, foster an atmosphere of co-operation and help with delivery of the strategy.

Providing a concise summary of policies and responsibilities per administrative area provides clarity for policy makers and other interested parties and ensures that they get an easy to find and comprehensive summary of how the RDS affects them.

25. *Identify at an early stage a realistic range of policies and topics that are relevant to or should be covered by the RDS and develop your approach accordingly.*
26. *Highlight roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and administrative bodies either within the document or in supporting material.*

JUSTIFICATION

The range of policies/topics to be covered in the RDS will help to determine which stakeholders should be involved and how the process could be organised.

It should be remembered that a large proportion of the audience within a region will be primarily concerned with how the strategy relates to their specific area (either geographic area or area of interest) and will want to know what the strategy will mean to their every day lives. It is therefore useful to organise easily identifiable layers of material so that people and target audiences can easily find material relevant to them.

27. *The territorial dimension and territorial context of a region are necessary elements in a RDS.*

28. *Use spatial structures such as the physical structure, the natural structure and the urban structure to help identify the territorial capital, potential and the development perspectives for specific areas.*

JUSTIFICATION

Without the territorial dimension a RDS can remain abstract and appear to be irrelevant to key stakeholders. Policy-making that ignores the territorial context for those policies can reinforce the sectoral approach, encourage illogical decision-making and lead to negative impacts on the quality of space.

Each region is unique and therefore each RDS should be unique. A clear understanding of the spatial structures in a region will help the authors of a RDS to identify specific territorial capital (nature, coastline, ports, concentrations of infrastructure...) of a region and place it in its wider geographical context.

A good understanding of the territorial dimension, context and spatial structures can lead to the identification of specific potentials and development perspectives whereby different areas can fulfil their potential. Specific territorial capital can also strengthen the identity of a region and be a useful marketing tool (the Lakes of Latgale for example).

29. *Avoid unnecessary detail in strategic documents and policies which could infringe on the competences of others or reduce the flexibility or ability of implementing agencies to develop innovative solutions.*





JUSTIFICATION

A strategic approach implies providing a framework within which other stakeholders have the flexibility to pursue innovative solutions to specific problems and challenges. Being overly detailed not only reduces the possibility of innovation and infringes on the competences of others but also creates the possibility for unnecessary and time consuming debate about minor day to day details that are irrelevant to the pursuance of the overall strategy.

2.3 IDENTIFYING AND WRITING FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

Introduction

Although the principal audience of the RDS documents was relatively uniform, consisting invariably of public authorities, the manner in which they are written varied greatly. Whilst the Flemish and some of the Baltic documents tended to use slightly more technical language and a more sober layout, the Celtic documents and the Latgale Structure Plan adopted a more attractive style aimed at reaching a wider audience. The importance of appearance and writing style should not be underestimated as it can determine to what extent certain audiences will study the document.

Identifying your audience

The principal audience for the various RDS documents tended to be public authorities. The RDS documents clearly demonstrate that they are to act as a framework for the actions and decisions of a range of other public sector organisations. Whilst this audience can also be considered non-specialist, the style in which such documents are often written implies that a wider readership is also intended, with members of the public in some cases constituting an important, secondary audience.

When identifying the audience for the RDS it will be important in many cases to be aware of language issues. Language is obviously an important

issue in regions such as Wales and the WSP is written in English and in Welsh within the same document. The language issue did not receive the same attention in the other cases studied despite it being relevant to a greater or lesser degree in Flanders, Latvia and Lithuania.

Whilst the primary and secondary audiences for the RDS are a priority it is in most cases beneficial for the RDS also to be accessible to a wider audience.

In terms of spreading good practice and making a significant contribution to the ongoing EU-wide regional development debate, it is desirable that information about the RDS is available in English and in many cases also in other major languages. The impact of the Flanders Structure Plan and the Flemish structure planning methodology in the international arena for example was limited outside the Dutch-speaking world, as no English summary of the document was produced.

This can also be important for smaller nations attempting to reach a wider audience in order to raise the profile of the region and attract foreign investment. A number of the Lithuanian Regional Development Plans and the Estonian National Spatial Plan 2010 provide good examples where relatively detailed summaries of the documents have been produced.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

30. *Identify your primary and secondary audiences and adapt/develop your approach accordingly.*
31. *Be aware of language issues in relation to the audience you are trying to reach.*

JUSTIFICATION

Within the context of a multi-disciplinary approach it is likely that a RDS will have to engage a wide diversity of stakeholders. It is important that

the authors are clear about who the primary and secondary audience is for the RDS as this will have implications for the style of the document as well as the plan process.

An inclusive RDS process and approach can make a crucial contribution towards achieving social and economic cohesion and attention to language issues can form one of the cornerstones of an inclusive approach.

Provision of summaries of the RDS in English and/or other major languages will enable the RDS to reach a much wider audience, make a more significant contribution to the international regional development debate, raise the profile of the region and could help to attract foreign investment.

Writing style, terminology and the use of graphics and literary devices

The choice of the primary and secondary audiences for the RDS has significant implications for the writing style and choice of terminology that should be employed. A successful RDS needs to be accessible and understandable to the wide diversity of stakeholders that form the primary and secondary audience for the RDS.

The Wales Spatial Plan and the Irish National Spatial Strategy clearly adopted a style that is easily understandable for a non-specialist audience. This is clearly illustrated not only by the writing style and chosen terminology but also by the relatively short length of the documents and the attractive layout and generous use of images. Much of the supporting material and analysis were not included in the final documents but were available via other means (cd-rom, thematic sub-reports).

The Flanders Structure Plan adopted a different approach whereby the highly detailed analysis and vision resulted in a much longer document (almost 600 pages). Whilst there were valid reasons why this approach was adopted at that time in Flanders, the length, writing style and less attractive layout effectively reduced the accessibility of the document to the non-specialist audience.

The use of spatial concepts (e.g. gateways, hubs etc.) appears to be underdeveloped across the various RDS documents, with the Irish National Spatial Strategy, Flemish and Latgale structure plans being important exceptions to this. In general terms spatial visions and concepts should convey messages in a way that is easy to understand and should not be over-complex. Some of the spatial concepts in these documents succeeded in clarifying important messages in a simple way that was relatively easy to understand.

Other concepts in the documents however were less successful.

One characteristic of planning and other disciplines is that certain concepts become fashionable from time to time. A huge number of RDSs use phrases such as 'sustainable development' and 'polycentric development' although it is sometimes unclear if these concepts are clearly understood (they can mean different things to different people), and adapted and applied to the specific local situation.

Some of the case studies included a glossary of key terms and abbreviations to make it easier for the non-specialist reader. The exercise of preparing such a glossary can also be useful for the authors of the RDS in clarifying exactly what is meant by certain phrases within the specific context of a particular local situation.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

32. *Use clear and simple language wherever possible.*
33. *Write in a clear and accessible style to accommodate different audiences and increase the accessibility of the document.*
34. *Avoid overly long detailed descriptive texts.*
35. *Technical language that may not be widely understood should be used only where necessary and be clearly explained or defined in a glossary.*
36. *Consider using photographs and illustrations to illustrate difficult words, phrases and concepts.*
37. *Consider asking non-specialists to proof read texts to see if they are easily understandable.*

JUSTIFICATION

Regional development and spatial planning are by definition multi-disciplinary exercises. To be successful a RDS needs to be accessible to a wide diversity of stakeholders. In order to achieve this the message must be portrayed in a form that can be easily understood by a non-specialist audience.

38. *Use simple spatial planning concepts where they help to clarify ideas for future development.*
39. *Use slogans and metaphors where this helps to clarify a message.*

40. *Use formatting practices and images to increase the attractiveness of the documents and increase the user friendly feel of the document.*
41. *Avoid the use of buzz words unless their meanings are actually relevant to and translated in the strategy.*

JUSTIFICATION

Spatial concepts can help to clarify complex messages especially where they can be easily expressed visually. Slogans and metaphors also have the power to achieve this in a limited number of words and can also be useful for marketing the RDS.

Any practices that can be employed to make the document more attractive and consequently more user-friendly will increase the accessibility of the RDS to a wider audience.

Concepts must be related and adapted to the local situation if they are to be meaningful. It is crucial that the authors of the RDS have a clear understanding of what these concepts mean within the context of the specific RDS as such concepts can mean different things to different people and their meaning can also vary in different contexts and at different spatial scales.

Communication and marketing

Most of the processes in relation to the preparation of the RDS's were governed by statutory requirements in relation to consultation with relevant bodies and the general public and in general tended to be highly formalised. The usual techniques used included formal rounds of consultation with other government bodies and agencies, area based and/or sector based workshops and meetings, and publicity in the media and on the internet. In some cases outside views were only sought formally once a draft of the RDS had already been prepared.

The consultation in relation to the Wales Spatial Plan was the most informal and this was a deliberate approach adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government in order to make the process as inclusive as possible. According to many commentators this approach was highly successful in Wales and the consultation generated considerable reaction.

Again the chosen approach has to be adapted to the local situation. There is no guarantee that the Welsh approach would be successful in the Baltic's for example where stakeholder and public participation is still in its infancy and perhaps needs to be undertaken in a more structured way. A number of the case studies stressed the importance of informal

contacts to supplement information gathered during the formal process.

There seemed to be relatively little attention paid to the elaboration of communication and marketing strategies and few examples used the whole range of communication techniques available today. In many cases consultation was limited to what was expected under the statutory requirements governing the process.

Some of the examples studied made good use of the media at key moments in the process such as the publication of the draft or final version of the RDS although few made use of a celebrity figure to champion the RDS.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

42. *Be innovative with the use of modern communication techniques.*
43. *Know your target audience and develop an appropriate communication strategy to reach and engage that audience.*
44. *Seek to create a transparent, open, effective and positive communication culture in relation to the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

A sophisticated listening, communication and consultation campaign can give the authors an invaluable understanding of strategic and spatial development issues and challenges throughout the region.

An effective communication strategy must be audience focussed in its content, presentation and context and also needs to engage the interest of the audience by being creative. Clarity, consistency and transparency are crucial to any communication strategy so that the audience feel their views are being taken into account even if any proposals they make are not accepted as part of the RDS

45. *Make full use of the media at key moments in the RDS process to gain maximum publicity and to help get key messages across.*
46. *Pay sufficient attention to high profile marketing of the RDS before and after its adoption and try to maintain and capitalise on the momentum generated.*
47. *Consider involving well known public figures*



in the marketing of the RDS.

JUSTIFICATION

The way in which the RDS is marketed can have an important bearing on the impact of the strategy. Marketing is important during the elaboration and implementation phases. There are also certain key moments such as the launch and adoption of the RDS that offer the opportunity for wide spread publicity. Such publicity not only raises awareness but can also help to give the process momentum. The status of a RDS can be raised significantly by a champion, and endorsement of the RDS by a popular public figure is likely to have significantly more impact than a team of dedicated experts with the same message.

The process that led to the publication of the Wales Spatial Plan has been widely praised. The Welsh Assembly Government devoted significant time, effort and other resources to ensuring the WSP was well marketed. Key moments received significant publicity and after adoption the planning team from the Welsh Assembly Government organised a number of regional forums for stakeholders throughout Wales to 'sell' the WSP and explain its implications and the opportunities that it offered.

Structure of the documents

Another important determining factor in relation to the accessibility of the RDS is the structure of the document. As with the other aspects such as writing style, a document that is structured in a logical man-

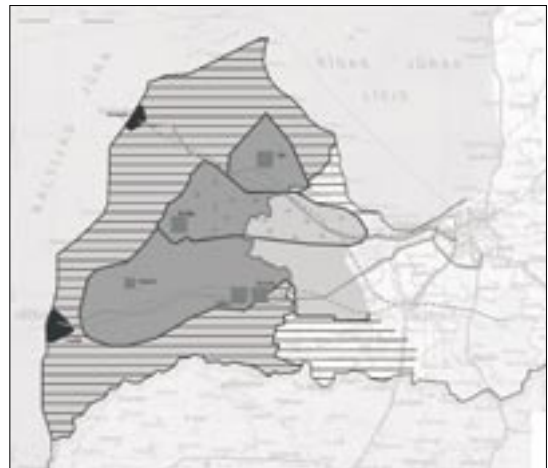
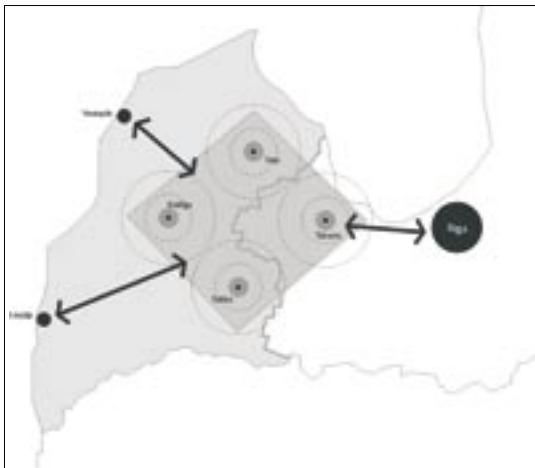
ner that is easy to follow will be more accessible to a wider audience than a document with a complex structure that only seems logical to planners. The days when planners made plans that could only be understood by planners are thankfully gone and the new spatial planning is much more of a process involving a wide diversity of stakeholders.

All documents contained a description of the existing or evolving situation, a description of the desired future situation in terms of a vision and strategy followed by a section on implementation although the level of detail in each varied greatly.

The structure of the RDS will also be partly determined by its purpose. An overarching strategy such as the Wales Spatial Plan will by definition require a different structure than a RDS where the primary purpose is to access the structural funds such as the Lithuanian RDP's. However the spatial or territorial dimension is crucial in both.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

48. *Avoid an overly complex and intricate structure to the RDS document.*
49. *Key sections of a RDS could cover the following elements:*
 - *the spatial/territorial context in the form of a concise description of the region identifying its specific character, key trends and current and future drivers of change*
 - *the spatial/territorial issues and challenges*



identified by interpreting the data analysed in relation to the context
 - the spatial/territorial vision identifying how the area will be changed as a result of the delivery of the RDS
 - the spatial/territorial objectives specifying the direction and degree of desired change.

50. Make use of checklists to self-evaluate objectives and other aspects of the strategy.

JUSTIFICATION

A simple logical structure to the RDS document will greatly enhance its accessibility to a wide non-specialist audience.

The spatial/territorial context provides insight into the main aspects relating to geographical, economic, environmental, social and cultural, transport and mobility aspects and the main inter-relationships between places. It also helps the author to identify specific territorial capital that makes the region unique.

The spatial/territorial issues and challenges are identified on the basis of the context and should also have attention to links to other strategies and initiatives. They form the starting point for the formulation of the strategy.

The spatial/territorial vision will derive from the issues and challenges already identified. The vision should contain easily understandable messages to enable it to be sold to stakeholders and the general public. The vision should also be specific enough to relate to (be able to identify outcomes and results) and abstract enough to be strategic. The vision also needs to give expression to other relevant strategies, programmes and initiatives.

The spatial/territorial objectives should illustrate how the strategy contributes to the outcomes identified in the vision. Objectives should be realistic, clear, focussed and concise and not be too narrow and mechanistic.

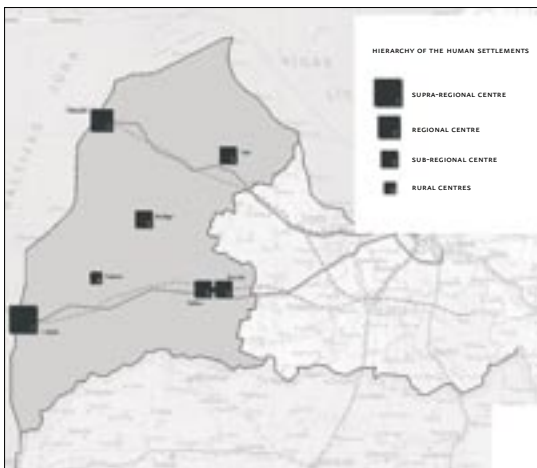
2.4 DEFINING PRINCIPLES, VISIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction

The establishment of the series of principles and objectives that will set the overall context for a RDS is an extremely important activity. It is important that these principles are widely supported and agreed upon as they provide the framework for all subsequent policies, programmes and actions. The preparation of the Latgale Regional Development Plan, for example, placed emphasis on the generation of a vision from within the region. The over-riding vision in the Wales Spatial Plan was also subjected to discussion and debate.

A clear set of agreed principles, the development of an agreed vision to work towards and its translation into a set of more detailed objectives should help to bring longer-term coherence and understanding to various policy interventions. Some approaches to developing regional strategies can indeed be objectives-led, as is the case in Wales, in which a strategy is primarily oriented around a series of shared objectives for the future development of a region.

Few organisations are able to engage in the activity of defining principles and visions without relating them to those of other organisations. In some contexts, for example in some of the Baltic states,



there is considerable emphasis on conformity of principles between different levels of government. In other contexts, lower-tier government organisations have considerable freedom to define their objectives and only need take higher-level objectives into general account.

Most strategies will be developed within the context of other governmental objectives and it is important for regional development strategies to be framed in a way that fits with and integrates into the wider policy context. Increasingly, this means that strategies need to take into account European, supranational, national and other regional strategies. Nevertheless, the experience of various strategies also suggests that it is important to modify any higher-level principles in order to tailor them so that they are appropriate to their regional context.

Some spatial strategies have placed emphasis on ensuring vertical integration between different levels of government (e.g. the Irish Spatial Strategy), while others have emphasised horizontal integration by focusing on joined-up government across a range of different sectors and government departments (e.g. the Wales Spatial Plan). The integration of different strategies and policies, whether emphasising vertical or horizontal integration, is an important characteristic of regional development planning and spatial strategy making. Specific mechanisms may need to be established in order to ensure effective integration between different policy areas. In the case of the Wales Spatial Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government has established a high-level working group that meets regularly to ensure that the objectives of the Wales Spatial Plan are informed by and influence other policy areas. The group is a cabinet committee and involves ministers with a range of different

portfolios. This enables wide political support to be developed for the Plan as well as ensuring policy integration.

This section of the guidelines emphasises the importance of taking into account the various principles of other organisations that may impact on the RDS, including those of organisations at different levels of government. The guidelines encourage authors of RDS documents to account for the European and national context as a means of linking regional policies to wider debates, agendas and funding mechanisms. This section also provides guidance on dealing with thematic and spatial principles, as well as highlighting some of the most common principles and objectives related to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of RDS's.

Addressing the European policy context

The European policy context has become an increasingly important aspect of regional development and spatial planning. The policies of the European Union impact on various sectors, from agriculture, the environment and transport through to economic development, social policy and competition policy. Significant funding opportunities are also available to support the application and implementation of these policies. Indeed, some small-scale, local initiatives have proven to be extremely successful through making effective connections to and use of European funding.

Recent policy developments and discussions within the European Union have focused on territorial cohesion as an additional objective alongside the long-standing objectives of economic and social cohesion. This focus on territorial cohesion has important implications for those engaged in regional development and spatial planning activities within member states. It promises to play an important part in the formulation of future cohesion policy in the period from 2006. The emphasis of such policy is on ensuring more balanced development across the European territory and reducing spatial disparities between the different parts of Europe. It is also intended to bring greater coherence to various sectoral policies that have a spatial impact. Member states and individual regions will be expected to co-operate with one another to help realise territorial cohesion. Both regional development and spatial planning activities at the regional level will be seen as central to assisting with delivering on wider European objectives. Spatial planners' experience based on interpreting documents such as the European Spatial Development Perspective will prove to be increasingly valuable within the context of the wider territorial

cohesion debate.

There is significant variation in the extent to which the principles at the EU level are reflected in the content of the different RDS documents. In some, they are reflected very strongly (see, for example, Ireland's NSS and various examples of Regional Development Plans in Lithuania), especially in developing the concept of 'balanced regional development' and encouraging 'territorial cohesion'. For example, the concept of balanced regional development, so central to the content of the European Spatial Development Perspective, has been adopted as the main guiding principle within the Irish Spatial Strategy. Yet in other examples of RDS documents, EU level principles are referenced but not applied in a specific way.

The Wales Spatial Plan and the Structure Plan for Flanders only provide general linkages with European policies and strategies. This to some extent reflects different levels of awareness of European Union policies. In some regions awareness of European policies is high at the national level, yet is limited at regional and local level. This needs to be improved and steps taken to increase awareness and understanding. The European Spatial Development Perspective, for example, has been influential in devising the strategy and objectives of some RDS documents, but in others the connection to the ESDP is not evident or explicit. For some, visions and strategies derived from the European Spatial Development Perspective have been useful in refining the higher-level principles into a more specific and appropriate form to be addressed at regional level (e.g. Latgale SSP).

Transnational visions, such as the Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB 2010) initiative for the Baltic Sea region, have influenced the preparation of Regional Development Plans in the counties of Latvia. Access to opportunities for funding appears to be a very important element in ensuring consistency with higher-level principles, and this is particularly evident in the case studies drawn from Latvia and Lithuania.

Principles at the EU level may not always be capable of reflection in a RDS due to the issue of the scale at which such concepts are meaningful. The definition and illustration of urban and rural regions at the overall European scale, or the categorisation of certain areas of the European Union as 'peripheral regions', may need refinement at the regional and local levels if they are to be meaningful. There can be a tendency to simply adopt the principles from a higher level and impose them on the local situation without really adapting them to the local situation. Policy-makers should therefore adapt such defini-

tions and principles in a manner that is appropriate to the region.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

51. *Identify and take into account the policies in supranational and trans-national policy frameworks.*

JUSTIFICATION

RDS documents that take into account the policies in supranational and trans-national policy frameworks facilitate access to the funding programmes that are allocated to the implementation of European policies and principles. In addition, such documents can provide useful information on the characteristics of a particular territory within the wider, European context. For example, they may highlight areas facing common policy issues, such as those areas characterised as being peripheral. They may also assist in addressing cross-border issues with adjacent countries, highlighting important, strategic gateways or transport corridors.

Reflecting national and higher-level principles

Principles at the national level may be non-existent or of limited influence in certain countries. In such cases, the preparation of a RDS will be determined largely by principles established at the regional level and by addressing the principles contained within supranational and transnational policy documents. In some instances – such as the Irish Spatial Strategy, the Wales Spatial Plan and the Flanders Structure Plan – an emphasis is placed on reflecting the diversity of different geographic areas and ensuring that the principles contained in the plan or strategy reflect the different sub-regions. However, in other countries the principles established at the national level are especially important and influential. RDS documents may, in such cases, be expected to align closely with the principles and objectives at the national level. In some cases, formal mechanisms are in place to ensure conformity between documents at different levels. The institutional landscape of the respective countries needs to be taken into account here.

Principles established at the national level may be contained within legislation (e.g. Latvia). These will usually consist of a series of basic and high-level principles related, for example, to sustainable development, protection of the environment or those of 'proper planning'. Alternatively, these national level

principles may be established in a select number of policy documents such as a national development plan or national spatial plan, or in a wide range of different documents. Some RDS documents contain a specific section in an early part of the RDS that translates higher-level principles into the national or regional context, explaining how the RDS contributes towards the delivery of national objectives. Conflict is not usually perceived as occurring between the principles expressed at different levels. This is either because of strong mechanisms for consistency between different levels and adherence to stated principles or the principles being framed very generally and flexibly.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

52. *Identify the range of policy documents that provide the context for the RDS.*
53. *Identify the significant policies at national level that need to be reflected in the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

It is important that a RDS document reflects or addresses the wide range of policy documents that provide the context for its implementation. Some funding programmes may depend on certain national policy objectives being reflected in RDS documents. Failure to account for these policies may mean certain programmes are not accessible as a result. RDS documents may also be an important means of giving effect to national policies. RDS documents that rely on formal approval by national-level government should pay particular attention to helping to deliver national policies. However, there are limits to the national policies that a RDS can fully account for. It is therefore important that the RDS document makes clear the most important policies at national level that have a bearing on the preparation and implementation of the RDS.

54. *Include a section that translates higher-level principles into the national or regional context.*
55. *Distinguish clearly between principles derived from legislation and those that are not.*
56. *Ensure that policies derived from higher levels are suitably modified to reflect circumstances in the region.*

JUSTIFICATION

National level principles cannot be imposed on a region but must be tailored to the particular circumstances of any particular region and reflect its distinctive characteristics. Principles identified, for example, at EU level may require refinement to reflect more appropriately to circumstances at regional level. National level principles therefore need to be translated into their context. The way in which principles need to be adapted or modified to fit their regional context should be explained in the RDS. However, it is important to state which principles are derived from legislation as these may not be capable of modification in the same way that other principles are.

Fundamental principles

In this section, the term fundamental principles is used to refer to the most important, high-level principles expressed in a RDS, or the stated corporate organisational principles of the organisation responsible for the RDS. They are those principles that apply across different policy sectors. Most RDS documents are prepared within a wider organisational context. They are often prepared by public organisations that are responsible for a much wider range of activities, functions and policy areas. Organisations responsible for preparing a RDS usually have stated corporate responsibilities that are to be built into and reflected in that organisation's entire range of activities. These will often be stated very generally as principles, as is the case in the context of Latvian regional development plans, but they will be important in directing resources towards particular activities. They are also thought to be influential in shaping the implementation of a RDS, even if not stated explicitly in the RDS document as a set of principles.

Project partners' experiences highlight the interesting issue of flexibility in fundamental principles being interpreted at lower levels. In some cases, RDS documents promote some flexibility to allow for more localised determination of principles and priorities, being critical of principles that are simply replicated in a highly structured and hierarchical fashion.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

57. *Keep priorities focused and limited in number.*
58. *Communicate a select number of priorities over the plan period.*



59. *Consider whether a series of themes could organise material better than individual topics.*

JUSTIFICATION

The fundamental principles on which a RDS is based need to be clearly stated in order that they can be clearly understood by all of those who may have a role in their implementation. By stating a few, selected principles it becomes clear what are the most important aspects of a RDS. Too many 'headline' principles risks confusion over the underlying reasons for preparing the RDS. If the key principles are kept simple and stated clearly, then they can act as organising ideas that can easily be recalled as the RDS is developed and implemented in detail. Fundamental principles are most effective if limited in number to between 3 and 5 clearly-framed principles. Cross-cutting themes can help to organise a wider range of topic-based principles if they are too many in number. One example of such a theme is 'improving quality of life'.

60. *Frame the principles flexibly to allow for local interpretation.*

61. *Keep aims and objectives realistic and capable of implementation.*

JUSTIFICATION

Fundamental principles are usually framed in general terms and therefore allow for a degree of flexibility in their application. It is useful to design an element of flexibility into such principles so that they allow for local interpretation. This enables policy makers and those responsible for implementation to adopt different approaches to realising the same objectives that fit better with local circumstances. This allows for innovation at the local level while also promoting certain key principles and desired outcomes. Yet it is also important for key principles, aims and objectives to be kept realistic and capable of implementation. Again, a series of carefully created, fundamental principles can be defined that

allow for implementation issues to be addressed more locally.

62. *Identify whether key principles are compatible with each other.*

63. *Acknowledge and be honest about expected conflicts.*

JUSTIFICATION

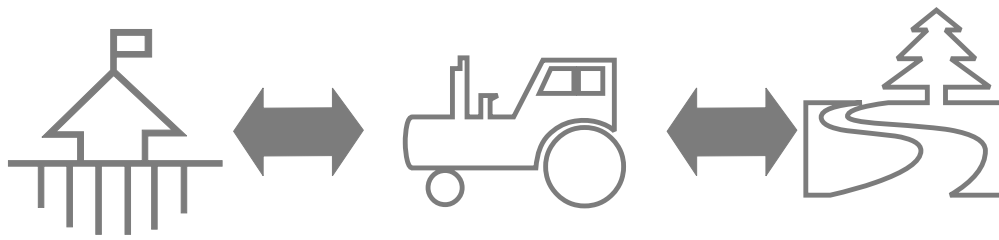
The fundamental principles on which a RDS is based may be framed in a very general manner and may appear to be in tension with each other. For example, stated key principles on economic growth may appear alongside other principles that prioritise the protection of environmental assets. This also reflects the sometimes aspirational dimension of key principles. The RDS should identify and anticipate any potential conflicts between the key principles and, if possible, also identify what approach will be taken when such conflicts do arise. Dealing with expected conflicts in an open and honest manner can prevent RDS documents being criticised as 'wish list' documents that fail to recognise the difficult choices to be made.

64. *Link the aims and objectives of the RDS to the wider corporate objectives of the organisation.*

65. *Be careful to tie principles and issues into the existing institutional arrangements for implementation.*

JUSTIFICATION

RDS documents usually relate to a wide variety of different policy fields, from housing, transport and planning to social policy, employment and health. To be effective, a RDS needs to impact on this wide range of different activities and can better achieve this by linking its principles closely to the organisation's corporate objectives. This also ties the RDS into those different policy fields. Similarly, the implementation of a RDS also relies on connecting



effectively with a wide range of different programmes and budgets. Implementation is improved by developing the RDS in a manner that is compatible with the wider institutional context.

66. *Ensure that there is sufficient debate and consultation about the basic principles at the start of the process.*

JUSTIFICATION

Engaging stakeholders in debate early on in helping to frame the fundamental principles will help to increase stakeholder involvement and ownership. This can be an important element in consensus-building through promoting agreement on the central principles on which the RDS is to be based.

Core principles at the regional level

The project partner experiences in preparing RDSs highlights that there are differences in the stated aims of regional policy. Economic and social issues are generally prioritised, even if only marginally, over environmental issues. Some approaches are explicit about the priority of economic development goals. Despite this general ordering of principles, there remains considerable variety in the range of core principles expressed at the regional level.

Some approaches are concerned primarily with physical characteristics and spatial structure (e.g. ‘deconcentrated clustering’ etc.) while others continue to focus on ‘traditional topics’ such as housing, transport, tourism, and enterprise. Yet others are focused on addressing more general concerns such as sustainability and regional identity. In some cases, the issues and principles addressed at regional level are very tightly constrained by principles stated in legislation. In some cases, the core principles at regional level are not precisely defined but framed very generally in order to be capable of elaboration at a lower level. In other cases, core principles at the regional level are not capable of elaboration or subjected to consultation and are simply derived from national documents.

Few of the documents of the project partners are expressly concerned with the redistribution of wealth and expressed in such direct terms, although the Baltic countries’ case studies are stronger than others in this respect. A small number claim to be concerned with both creating and redistributing wealth. Some documents are directed very clearly towards creating more wealth and prosperity for the region as a whole but with some actions to support peripheral areas, while others state simply that wealth creation is the priority objective. In yet other examples, the Wales Spatial Plan being a good example, an approach is adopted that looks to realise the potential of different areas rather than simply see the issue as one of creating or spreading wealth.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

67. *Identify the potential of different geographic areas in contributing towards regional economic growth.*

JUSTIFICATION

Promoting economic growth is one of the central objectives of most RDSs. Targets for economic growth may be stated in an RDS, although these need to be established as realistic targets based on the growth potential of different sectors and different geographic areas. A sound RDS will identify what the economic potential of different areas is and how they might contribute to an overall development strategy. Establishing the realistic potential of different areas will also enable a growth strategy to be revised if it becomes clear that different geographic areas cannot support the level of growth that is indicated.

68. *Identify the areas to which improved prosperity is to be spread.*
69. *Identify the key mechanisms to be used for spreading prosperity.*



JUSTIFICATION

In addition to promoting economic growth, many RDS documents also promote the more balanced distribution of economic growth as a means of addressing income and other disparities. This is sometimes expressed as the objective of spreading prosperity. However, this is a very general objective and a good RDS should identify those areas to which prosperity is to be spread. It should also identify some of the mechanisms for doing this in order to demonstrate the feasibility of achieving more balanced development.

The vision, strategy and objectives of the RDS

The overall vision, strategy and objectives expressed in RDS documents are usually simple, but also rather vague and abstract in character. Visions are often used in RDS documents to convey a general message of the kind of region that is hoped for. The vision is typically accompanied by a strategy that is designed to set the general direction required to achieve the stated vision. The purpose of a strategy is not to set out a detailed list of actions or a programme of activities, but to establish the general approach to be taken. Most visions and strategies tend to be formed around a series of primary themes, including the functions of and relationships between urban and rural areas, the development of the economy, improving accessibility, protecting the environment, and making effective use of human resources.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

- 70. *Ensure that the vision, strategy and objectives are simple and easy to understand.*
- 71. *Ensure that the vision, strategy, values, aims and objectives are related well to each other.*

JUSTIFICATION

The vision, strategy and objectives expressed in a RDS need to secure the support of stakeholders if they are to be implemented effectively. The vision should be widely supported and is central to communicating a clear message on what the RDS is intended to achieve. For this reason it should be simple, easy to understand and easily communicated to a wide audience. The strategy should also be capable of being expressed in simple terms. Objectives are usually more detailed, but should still be expressed in as simple a form as possible. It is

important that the vision, strategy and objectives relate well to each other so that they are supportive of each other and demonstrate a clear progression from a vision, to a strategy and to a more detailed set of objectives.

72. *Focus your strategy on medium and long-term issues and avoid excessive detail.*

73. *Keep the strategy focussed on a limited number of priorities and measures.*

JUSTIFICATION

A vision should express a set of desired changes over an extended period of time. A strategy should also express how those changes will be realised over similar periods of time. A vision is not realised and a strategy is not implemented within a short space of time. They should therefore be framed with reasonable time frames in which change can be achieved. Authors of RDS documents should avoid including too much detailed and short-term information in the section on vision and strategy. It should at most communicate a select number of priorities that are carefully explained. Too much detailed information undermines the clarity and focus of the strategy and leads to it becoming quickly outdated. The vision and strategy are the elements of the RDS that should have some stability.

Portraying a future spatial vision

The presentation of an analysis of the existing economic, social and environmental contexts and the existing or evolving spatial structure is a common feature of many RDS documents. In the case of Regional Development Plans in Lithuania the establishment of the present context forms an important part of the document. Nevertheless, not all RDS documents are explicit in portraying a desired future spatial structure. The Irish Spatial Strategy is an exception to this and is relatively well developed in its proposals for spatial change, identifying a series of gateways and hubs, in addition to specific proposals for settlements. Similarly, not all of the RDS documents identify development priorities for their areas. Nevertheless, some RDS documents do include specific and stated criteria for the prioritisation of particular types of project.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

74. *Ensure an appropriate balance in terms of the*

document being strategic and being specific.

JUSTIFICATION

Policies need to be strategic enough to guide frameworks to be elaborated at the lower levels without imposing unnecessary levels of detail. Strategies also need to be specific enough for stakeholders to be able to relate to them.

75. *Provide a clear expression of the desired future spatial structure.*

JUSTIFICATION

Providing a clear expression of the desired future spatial structure for an area allows various public bodies and the private sector to channel their investment and funding to areas that support the implementation of that spatial structure. These organisations will be able to identify the particular places that are identified, for example, as growth centres or as centres for the concentration of particular activities. The future spatial structure will identify where development should take place, how transport and movements patterns will change, and how that structure will evolve with future development and growth or managed decline. Patterns of activities are only likely to change in the medium and longer term if a future spatial structure is clearly defined.

76. *Ensure sufficient dialogue and cross-board support for the spatial vision at an early stage.*

JUSTIFICATION

The spatial vision contained within a RDS is a powerful mechanism that can impact on the activities of a wider range of stakeholders. It is therefore important that it is subjected to consultation and that stakeholders support the spatial vision.

77. *Stimulate other policy areas to think about the spatial impact of their policies and to estimate their spatial needs in the medium and long-term.*

JUSTIFICATION

A desired future spatial vision will only be effective if the actions and decisions of a wide range of public and private interests align with that vision. It is useful to encourage various different policy areas (such as housing, transport, health policy) to think about how their own policies have particular spatial effects or impacts within the region. Only if these spatial impacts of different policy areas are understood and suitably modified will they make

a positive contribution towards implementing and realising a desired future spatial vision.

Economic, social and environmental aims and objectives

An effective RDS attempts to secure an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental aims and objectives. The securing of an appropriate balance between these three separate aspects has indeed been fundamental to the preparation of the Flanders Structure Plan. However, other case studies, most notably those in Latvia and Lithuania, demonstrate the difficulty that can be faced in promoting economic growth while attending simultaneously to social and environmental objectives. In many of the case studies, social and environmental aims have deferred to economic goals despite an intention to secure a more balanced approach.

The following lists provide a series of examples of different aims and objectives for each of these elements. It also identifies some of the aims and objectives contained within selected RDS documents that can be said to have a spatial dimension that relates to particular spatial structures or patterns. All of the following are derived from the documents and strategies studied or prepared by the project partners.

Economic aims and objectives:

- Encouraging the integration of economic activity in nodes.
- Securing an improved balance of economic activity across the territory.
- Increasing competitiveness of businesses and encouraging fair and equal competition.
- Fostering sustainable economic growth.
- Promoting diversification of the regional economy.
- Attraction of foreign direct investment.
- Promoting innovative enterprise and the knowledge-based economy, including R&D and the educational sector.
- Improving the skills base in the working population.

Environmental and sustainability aspects:

- Preservation of open space.
- Strengthening alternatives to car-based transport.
- Maintaining and promoting diversity.
- Protecting cultural heritage.
- Protect, conserve and improve the natural environment.
- Reducing pollution levels.

- Minimising waste generation.
- Increasing energy efficiency.

Social aspects:

- Ensuring parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge.
- Encouraging the rational and effective use of human resources.
- Promoting the diversity of the cultural environment.
- Protection of cultural legacy.
- Reducing poverty and unemployment.
- Strengthen education, training and lifelong learning.
- Tackling social exclusion.
- Managing population migration.
- Securing improvements in health and health service provision.
- Facilitating ethnic integration.
- Protecting and promoting the use of national languages.

Spatial aspects:

- Concentration of development in urban areas and strong emphasis on the quality of space.
- Recognising the differentiated character of rural areas (decline or pressure).
- Rural diversification and development.
- Coordination of activities and sectors.
- Optimise use of existing transport infrastructure.
- Promotion of economic clusters.
- Strengthening the relationships between places and promoting networks of smaller settlements.

POINTERS TO GOOD PRACTICE

78. *Ensure sufficient integration between economic, environmental and social aims and objectives.*
79. *Ensure that the principles of sustainable development underpin and link the various strands.*
80. *Ensure that the principles of sustainable development are addressed at the outset of the process.*
81. *Subject the content of the strategy to an external sustainability appraisal and/or Strategic Environmental Assessment.*

² Both Latvia and Lithuania are classed as NUTS level II regions

JUSTIFICATION

Effective RDS documents consider the economic, social and environmental aspects of regional development simultaneously. They can become important instruments for policy integration. Effective integration of these three different elements can make for more realistic strategies that take into account, for example, some of the environmental impacts of growth and the social consequences of protecting environmental resources rather than securing economic growth. Sustainable development can act as an important concept for addressing the challenges arising from integrating the three different elements. However, sustainability concerns need to be embedded in the process from the outset if they are to be successfully incorporated into the RDS. From the earliest stages, the RDS strategy can be assessed in terms of its sustainability. Subjecting the strategy to an independent sustainability appraisal can help to determine the effectiveness of the RDS in securing economic, social and environmental benefits. Regional development strategies are also impacted on by the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment under the terms of the relevant EU Directive (2001/42/EC). This is especially the case for those strategies that are required by legislation or are prepared according to a process specified in legislation. This requires the likely significant environmental effects of draft plans to be considered according to a required procedure. Reference should be made to national measures implementing the Directive.

2.5 ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PREPARATION OF THE RDS

Stakeholder involvement and consultation

Engaging stakeholders in the preparation of regional development strategies has become increasingly important. In some cases, as in the preparation of the Flanders Structure Plan, the process is claimed to be as or more important than the plan itself. Stakehold-

ers are recognised as being important players in the implementation of regional development strategies through their own subsequent programmes and as managers of complementary resources. Regional development agencies hoping to influence the wide array of stakeholders in a region, in both the public and private sectors, will need to ensure there is opportunity for their involvement at various stages in the preparation of the strategy. Wider public involvement may also be necessary too.

Various different mechanisms have been used to engage stakeholders. In the case of the Wales Spatial Plan, 'key partners' have been identified and engaged in a formal stakeholder group and steering committee consisting of external partners and government officials. Similar mechanisms were put in place for the preparation of the Irish Spatial Strategy where the importance of developing networks on cross-cutting themes was clearly recognised. In Latvia in the preparation of the Regional Development Plan both sectoral and geographic working groups of stakeholders have been supported and developed. Specific 'task forces' have also been established in the counties of Lithuania to ensure participation of key partners in the preparation of regional development plans. In some cases - the Irish National Spatial Strategy being a good example - the preparation of the strategy itself was supplemented by an extensive range of topic papers which have been made publicly available.

Despite the existence of such mechanisms for engaging stakeholders, stakeholder involvement in the preparation of regional development strategies and spatial strategies is often informal. Even in cases where formal consultation processes are required by legislation, for example in Lithuania where statutory obligations are in place, informal approaches to stakeholder consultation have been used to supplement the more formal requirements. Informal contacts and opportunities for consultation are of equal importance even where extensive formal consultation is built into the process. A highly formalised consultation process does not on its own guarantee



the degree of agreement and ownership necessary for successful implementation.

Some approaches, such as that in Wales, are characterised and have been defined by their open, inclusive and consultative process. Such widespread engagement and consultation is not common to all of the approaches and in some cases less emphasis is placed on engaging stakeholders and ensuring an open and transparent process of consultation and engagement.

It can be difficult to sustain the involvement of stakeholders throughout the process of preparing a regional development strategy. It is important to keep stakeholders and the wider public informed at key stages in the process and inform them of the actions taken following their involvement. In addition to the good practice identified below, readers should also see the section on the effective use of communication and marketing techniques within the material on 'Identifying and writing for your audience'. This will enable policy-makers to both develop appropriate consultation and engagement processes and design a wider marketing and information programme.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

82. *Identify the key stakeholders in the region and involve them in the process from an early stage.*

JUSTIFICATION

The successful preparation and implementation of a RDS relies on the involvement and support of a wide range of stakeholders, although some of these will be key stakeholders whose involvement is central and essential. These stakeholders – which may include major companies in the region, key public investment agencies and so on – should be involved early in the process of preparing a RDS. The key stakeholders will each have their own strategies and programmes and early involvement is an opportunity to identify the key aspects of their different strategies and relate these to the formative ideas in preparing the RDS. It is also a useful idea to communicate to this important audience some of the key principles on which the RDS is likely to be based. Establishing a stakeholders' forum or a partnership board are useful ways of securing the involvement of key stakeholders throughout the process of preparing the RDS.

83. *Establish a wider team of stakeholders who are consulted regularly at various stages of the plan-making process.*



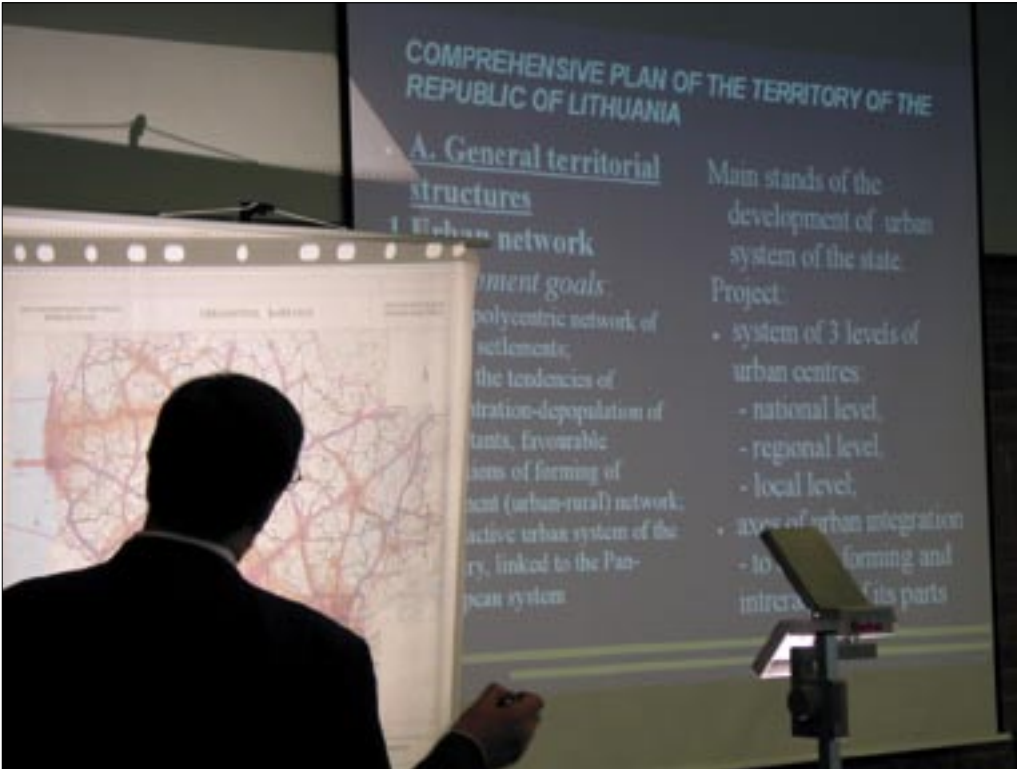
JUSTIFICATION

In addition to the identified key stakeholders whose involvement is critical to the success of the RDS, there is also a wide range of other interests who ought to be involved in a wider network of stakeholders. This could be an extensive list of organisations and individuals interested in regional development. In some cases, such organisations will simply wish to be kept informed of developments in preparing the RDS, while others will wish to become involved in particular stages or aspects of the RDS.

84. *Engage stakeholders in a manner appropriate to the overall approach to the RDS.*
85. *Emphasise the importance of both formal and informal contacts and dialogue in the plan process.*

JUSTIFICATION

Guidance is provided elsewhere in this document on the variety of different approaches that exist to preparing a RDS. The way in which stakeholders are engaged in preparing the RDS should reflect the particular approach to the overall preparation



of the RDS. Approaches that are data-rich and technical in character will need to devise different approaches to stakeholder involvement than those that are based on developing a regional consensus on a future development strategy. Those responsible for preparing the RDS need to think carefully about the purpose of involving stakeholders and develop consultation and involvement strategies that fit their approach. A range of formal and informal consultation exercises and methods can help to secure the involvement of a wider range of participants, including those who are not used to or familiar with formal consultation mechanisms.

86. *Decide on how and when key stakeholders will be engaged in the process of preparing the RDS.*
87. *Identify early on whether stakeholders will be invited to comment on a consultation draft of the RDS and/or on thematic sub-reports.*

JUSTIFICATION

It is useful to inform stakeholders at an early stage in the process of the opportunities that will be available to them to become involved in the

preparation of the RDS. This may be expressed as a timetable that states the level and nature of the issues that will be presented for discussion (for example, key principles, strategic issues, detailed considerations). This helps stakeholders understand that they will be invited to comment and become involved at key stages and allows them to schedule resources accordingly. It is also useful to state early on whether stakeholders will be able to comment on a full consultation draft of the RDS that many will expect as an important opportunity to influence the content of the RDS. Careful explanation of how comments and suggestions will be dealt with enables stakeholders to develop reasonable expectations on their involvement.

88. *Identify whether your organisation has sufficient skills in engaging stakeholders, and upgrade such skills, second staff or employ specialist consultants where appropriate.*

JUSTIFICATION

The team responsible for preparing a RDS will need to have a range of skills. Effective engagement of stakeholders is an activity that demands an awareness of and experience in consultation and

engagement techniques. This is especially important if an open dialogue with stakeholders is to be achieved. Staff may benefit from additional training in the effective use of such techniques. If this is not possible, then external facilitators can be useful, especially at discussion events, and may also have the added advantage of being neutral facilitators of discussions with stakeholders.

89. *Identify whether your key stakeholders have any particular training requirements in order to help them engage with the process.*

JUSTIFICATION

Many stakeholders will be well organised and have participated previously in a range of different consultation exercises with government organisations. However, other stakeholders, including 'hard-to-reach' groups, may not be familiar with or have the capacity to engage in government consultation exercises. Government organisations can take positive measures to help under-represented stakeholders engage in such exercises through capacity building and training.

90. *Consult with key stakeholders on the main principles and strategic issues.*
91. *Ensure the public is consulted and 'on board' for the principles contained in the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

Early involvement of stakeholders is important in discussions on the main principles and strategic issues to inform the RDS. This is especially so in approaches which are based on developing a consensus or vision on the future development of a region. Securing agreement on key principles can be an important first step in identifying the main features of the RDS and a valuable resource for maintaining focus when the detailed aspects of the RDS are developed.

92. *Consider using topic papers to stimulate discussion on key issues.*

JUSTIFICATION

Many stakeholders find it easier to engage with and comment on detailed issues in RDS documents. Early discussions on the key principles or the content of the RDS can be unstructured and fail to engage stakeholders. Topic-based papers, such as on key growth areas or particular sectors (e.g. tourism, manufacturing, services), can be useful vehicles

for generating response and discussion prior to the preparation of a draft or complete RDS document.

93. *Publish a summary of consultation responses and identify the organisation's responses to issues raised.*
94. *Provide an account of the key changes made between the consultation version and the final version of the RDS.*
95. *Where comments or proposals have been submitted but not included in a revised version it is important to communicate the reasons as justification in order to avoid alienating stakeholders who may otherwise feel that their voice is not being heard*

JUSTIFICATION

Stakeholders expect to be engaged in fair and open processes of consultation and involvement. They expect that their responses to consultation exercises will be carefully considered and taken into account wherever appropriate. In addition, a good RDS should respond to sound arguments and address any challenges to the content of the RDS in a reasonable way. The provision of a summary of consultation responses can assure stakeholders that their comments have been registered and addressed where necessary. Similarly, a simple explanation of the main changes that have been made to the RDS in response to consultation responses can help to provide an assurance that responses have been properly addressed and accounted for, in addition to helping understand any significant changes between different versions of the RDS. It is also important to state which suggestions and comments have not been adopted and reasons given for why this is the case. Addressing arguments and suggestions openly can help in delivering a sound RDS that is responsive to carefully argued suggestions.

96. *Clearly identify the author of the document.*
97. *Provide contact details for a single point of contact within the organisation responsible for the document. Include telephone, postal and email contact details.*
98. *Identify how people can obtain additional copies of the document.*

JUSTIFICATION

This series of simple recommendations for good

practice is designed to make it easier for stakeholders and members of the public to access documents and additional information. They include making it clear which organisation is responsible for preparing the RDS, and providing a range of different ways of contacting that organisation. These simple details can demonstrate that an organisation takes engagement with stakeholders seriously.

2.6 INFORMATION, DATA AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

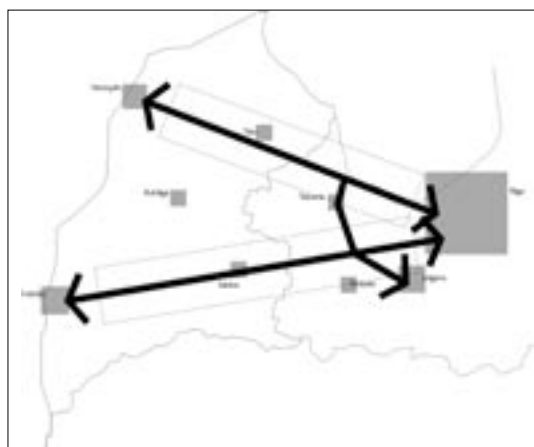
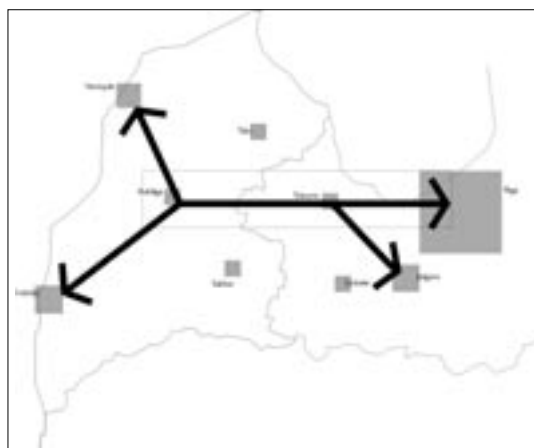
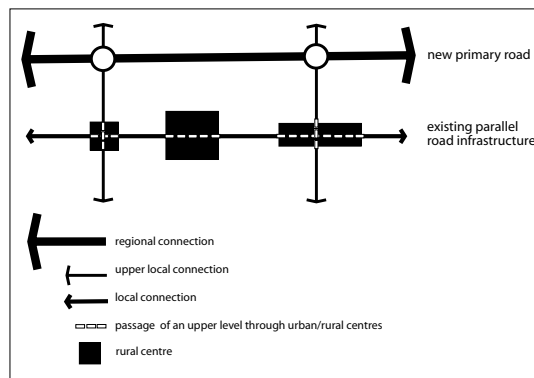
The collection, analysis and use of spatial data is one of the aspects that planners throughout the EU are looking at as part of the ESPON initiative. ESPON is the European Spatial Planning Observation Network, sponsored by the EU Community Initiative Interreg III. Work is ongoing to develop a common system of data at the NUTS II level although it is recognised that large discrepancies can exist within NUTS II regions (e.g. the discrepancies between Riga and Vilnius and rural areas in the Latvian and Lithuanian NUTS level II regions²). It is undoubtedly extremely difficult to collect and compare meaningful data at the EU level and it is often difficult to compare data from different countries due to the diversity of ways the data is collected. This is also the case for different sectors within the same country most of whom use diverse methods and structures for data collection.

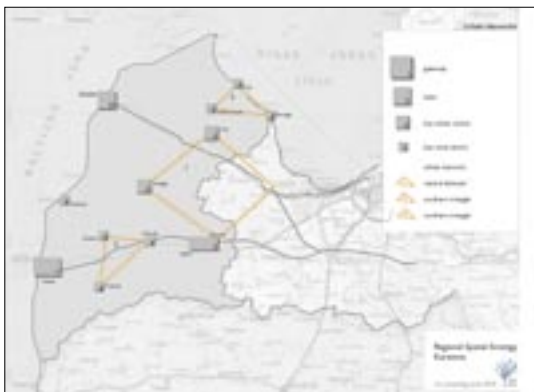
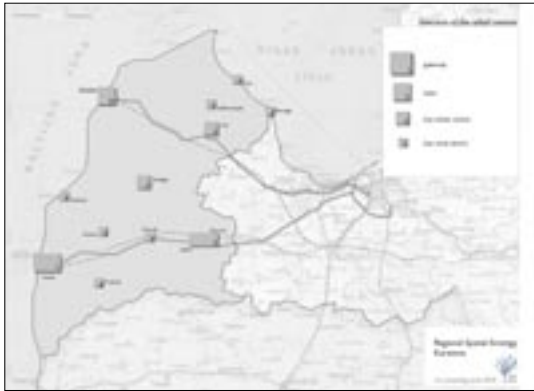
Despite the differing approaches to data collection none of the approaches examined appeared to have had great problems due to a lack of data. In Latvia and Lithuania comprehensive data is published annually and broken down to the national, regional/county, district and local administrative units.

Data availability and analysis

None of the approaches to preparing a RDS appear to have been severely constrained by the availability of data. Existing data sources are usually sufficient to allow key trends relevant to the RDS to be identified. Proxy data is also used where first-choice data is not available. More detailed and comprehensive data is often desirable, yet this does not prevent progress from being made on the preparation of a RDS.

Limited availability of data may however preclude the adoption of particular approaches to preparing a RDS. In cases of data restrictions, objectives-led approaches or those based on an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) may be necessary. Data at the regional level often appears to be created in a 'bottom-up' fashion through the aggregation of more locally





generated data. This bottom-up approach however often means that data is collected in different ways in different regions meaning data is often not comparable.

Whilst it is generally accepted that detailed analysis is necessary to allow informed decision-making, a number of the RDS documents did not incorporate this analysis into the RDS document itself but made it available in other forms (sub-reports, cd-roms). In relation to the preparation of a RDS the aim of the data-analysis is usually to identify overall trends and it is important to avoid over analysing. Analysis is never 100% comprehensive due to passage of time. If the focus on analysis is too strong it is possible that such analysis will become too quantitative and less visionary and this can slow down and hinder the preparation process.

Data collection should not be a task for one agency, rather all policy areas need to take responsibility for collecting relevant data and a common system for doing this would be hugely beneficial. In order to work a top-down format is required to ensure that the data collected is comparable.

The discrepancies in data collection and problems with comparison when various sectors are collecting data for their own purposes are a common feature of most of the partner organisations. As a result it is often extremely difficult if not impossible to be able to assess the spatial impact of the policies and spending programmes of the various line ministries.

The Welsh Assembly Government approached/tackled this challenge in terms of its Wales Spatial Plan and its task of co-ordinating the spending plans of all Government Ministries in terms of spatial impacts by developing a set of 6 domains (income, employment, health, education, skills and training, and housing deprivation and access to a wide range of services) that could be used to assess the spatial effects/impacts of various sectoral policies of a wide range of Government Ministries.

Each domain is based on a combination of indicators, i.e. a very large mass of statistical data has been reduced/summarised into 6 key domains/criteria. The success of this approach depends on it being a very transparent and widely accepted measure/map of the economic and social strength/vitality of all urban and rural areas. The Index is also supported by a GIS database allowing it to be applied to a variety of spatial scales. The Latvian Ministry of Regional Development and local government are also currently trying to develop a similar system.

This raises an important issue for regional development: a regional development strategy/regional spatial strategy is focused on both the region as a

whole and its local communities.

The Wales Spatial Plan is used by the WAG as a 'Gateway Policy' tool. All policies and spending programmes of the Welsh Assembly Government have to pass the 'Gateway Test' i.e. how will policies and programmes have an impact spatially within Wales?

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

99. *Conduct a 'data audit' prior to embarking on the preparation of the RDS and establish any data needs required to support the selected approach.*
100. *Avoid collecting extensive, unnecessary data and keep new data collection focused on that which is necessary for preparation of the RDS.*
101. *Use proxy data where this is possible and first-choice data is not readily available.*
102. *Ensure that data is capable of disaggregation at the appropriate scale.*
103. *Ensure that any modelling packages (e.g. demographic models) are compatible with the approach to preparing the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

Data collection and analysis can become an end in itself leading to a loss of focus. It is therefore crucial to have a clear idea of what data you have and what data you need from the start of the process. This will enable you to collect any additional data necessary in a focussed way and avoid wasting valuable resources collecting and analysing unnecessary data.

104. *Consider publishing detailed analysis, research and topic papers in a separate form (sub-reports, cd-roms) and not in the RDS itself.*
105. *Provide a concise account of the nature of regional disparities within the RDS itself.*
106. *Do not over analyse and accept that analysis is never 100% comprehensive due to the time factor and frailties in data availability and accuracy. Use analysis as a tool to identify general trends.*
107. *Consider your ability to monitor the data that is being collected and analysed.*

JUSTIFICATION

Whilst detailed analysis of data will be of interest to certain specialists and is certainly necessary in many cases in order to be able to make informed decisions, only the main points and conclusions of such analysis are of interest to the wider audience. By making such detailed data and analysis available outside the main body of the RDS will allow those who are interested to consult it whilst at the same time not making the RDS document appear too long and technical.

The key purpose of data analysis in relation to a RDS is to identify general trends and challenges. Over analysis can be extremely time consuming, have little additional benefit and can lead to endless disputes over minor details that are irrelevant to achieving the overall strategy.

108. *Recognise the importance of relevant and accurate data and that data collection is a constant ongoing process.*
109. *Consider setting up a specific and preferably independent unit for continuous and focussed data collection and analysis.*
110. *Consider using the RDS as a 'Gateway Policy' tool to assess the spatial impact of policies and programmes of other sectors and link them together.*
111. *Share data with other departments, organisations, regions and work towards a common database linked to a GIS resource.*
112. *Develop a transparent system of common and widely accepted criteria to measure the impact of other departments' spending programmes.*

JUSTIFICATION

Regional laboratories can be established to ensure that relevant and focussed data collection and analysis is an ongoing process. Such laboratories also provide a point of contact for other regions to discuss data, collection, analysis and use and the development of common systems.

As policy formulation in the form of a RDS has become a multi-disciplinary process involving a diversity of stakeholders it is important to be able to monitor the spatial impact of sector policies and spending programmes. In this way the RDS can be a tool to integrate the policies of all sectors in an organisation.

The success of any such monitoring system

rests on it being a very transparent and widely accepted measure/map of the economic and social strength/vitality of all urban and rural areas.

2.7 PRESENTATION, IMAGES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Presentation of the material

Most RDSs are primarily text-based documents, usually supplemented with the use of maps and tables. Photographs and illustrations are also used in some cases, while others also include a series of case studies to illustrate key issues. The Regional Development Plan for the Latgale region of Latvia is one such example where photographs have been used to enliven the document and appeal to a wider range of readers. Another example is the Wales Spatial Plan that is illustrated throughout with photographic material.

In terms of illustrative materials, it is naturally expected that most RDS documents include some illustrative materials, usually in the form of detailed or schematic maps, to depict the present spatial structure of the region. Such illustrations will highlight key settlements, major transport and other infrastructure, plus designated protected areas. Fewer documents use similar illustrations to identify the proposed or future spatial structure of the region or use illustrations to communicate spatial concepts. This is an important point as images and illustrations can be used to powerful effect in communicating key ideas behind the strategy.

The representation of background and other data in RDS documents is usually done using basic methods, including tables, graphs, pie-charts and related forms. Some provide supplementary information in annexes or on CD-rom to avoid making the document too long, or overloading the document with graphics illustrating large quantities of data. The consultation draft of the Wales Spatial Plan made effective use of a CD-rom in allowing interested readers to access the information on which the



Plan was based without overloading the document itself with technical data and mapped information.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

113. *Keep the documents as short as possible by avoiding too much descriptive text.*

114. *Include any supporting material and/or technical justifications that are not essential to the strategy in annexes, sub-reports or on an accompanying CD-ROM.*

JUSTIFICATION

Many readers of RDS documents will wish to know the key proposals of what it is that the document proposes or its key strategy and programmes. They are concerned with the impact that the RDS is likely to have on their activities. RDS documents do not need to be extensive. The RDS should avoid lengthy descriptive text, for example keeping descriptions of the economic profile of the region simple and focused on key points. Extensive background information, if it is required, can be satisfactorily included in separate documents as background papers.

115. *Make the document as user friendly and attractive as possible in terms of layout.*

116. *Use colour and text formatting techniques to soften and break up the text.*

JUSTIFICATION

There are various techniques and mechanisms for making RDS documents more engaging and much easier to use, for both professional and public audiences. These include the use of colour-indexed sections, headers and footers for different sections, use of easy-to-read fonts of a suitable size, and frequent and clearly marked titles and sub-titles.

117. *Use illustrations to support the material contained in the text. Include maps, diagrams, photographs and illustrations wherever appropriate.*

118. Use simple and easily understandable diagrams and schemes to clarify spatial concepts and to increase the attractiveness of the document

119. Ensure that such illustrations are sufficiently clear and specific so that the reader can relate to them

JUSTIFICATION

Many RDS documents make use of some means of illustration, although few make use of the full range of possible illustrative materials. Making use of diagrams, maps, graphic illustrations and photographs can help a document appeal to a range of different audiences as well as communicate key messages in a number of different ways. For example, photographs can support the text and carry messages forcefully to different audiences.

2.8 IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES

Introduction

Implementation, together with monitoring which is looked at in the next chapter, of the RDS are clearly aspects that receive relatively little attention during the drafting of the strategy itself. Many of the documents are not explicit on how they will be implemented and limited consideration is given to the resources necessary for implementation.

An important question in relation to this is what is implementation? What do we mean by implementation in any given case? Once again the perception of what implementation actually means was diverse amongst the various examples studied. In the case of the Lithuanian RDPs implementation refers to the implementation of projects whereas in the case of the Wales and Irish examples implementation is a much more abstract concept.

In general terms the more strategic and abstract a RDS is, then the less we can speak of implementation in the traditional sense. These examples tend to provide an ever-evolving strategy and set of values to work towards rather than actually achieve. Imple-

mentation can therefore be a dynamic and fluid concept.

Some of the examples had a dedicated action plan or development programme to be approved within or alongside the RDS, others as an entirely separate element, whilst some had no such dedicated implementation plan. Good examples of action plans that are approved alongside or within the RDS can be found in various national and regional strategies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Whilst implementation can be interpreted differently it is important that the authors and stakeholders of a particular RDS know clearly what is meant by implementation in their specific case.

The attracting of funding and investment for specific projects or proposals is one of the means by which implementation of a RDS is attempted. RDS approaches in the Baltic countries are heavily influenced by the possibility of leveraging European Union funding for regional development as a means of implementation. The approach adopted in Ireland, Wales and Flanders reflects a broader investment context and are directed towards the securing of both public and private investment.

The Lithuanian Regional Development Plans were the only example of a RDS examined during the GRIDS project that explicitly demonstrated a detailed approach to the costing of funding of the measures included in the strategy, adopting a project-led approach to implementation.

The project-led approach favoured in some of the Baltic

documents is entirely understandable as the primary aim of many of these documents is to access EU structural funds. This approach has the advantage of being extremely practical and it also forces authors to consider the costs of the actions they identify and propose. Another advantage is that this approach stimulates the formation of partnerships. One weakness recognised in both Latvia and Lithuania, however, is that this approach can lead to organisations preparing long and unrealistic 'wish lists' of projects, and it often tends to be the easiest rather than the best projects that get approved.

The remainder of the approaches rely very



heavily on influencing the budgets and resources of other programmes and reflect the fact that the strategy itself is backed up with little or no dedicated funding. In order to facilitate implementation, some of the RDS documents prescribe binding regulations on government bodies or agencies.

Several of the RDS approaches have been undertaken with limited staff resources and, in the case of Ireland also produced within a tight timetable. The staff resources available may influence the approach to preparing a RDS. Limited staff resources will, for example, make it difficult to adopt an approach that demands the generation of significant amounts of new data.

Implementation depends, amongst other things, on a number of key factors: the institutional and legal framework, the available delivery mechanisms and the dedicated resources.

Legal and institutional framework

The institutional background against which RDS's have to be implemented have changed beyond recognition in many countries in recent years. Although the histories and reasons are very different there has been a tendency in many countries (including the UK, Flanders and the Baltic States) to move towards devolution of power to the regions. This has provided new opportunities and challenges, and has often played a crucial role in the generation of RDS's.

The pace of change can cause problems and the regional development process in the Baltic States since independence has taken place against a background of ongoing institutional reform and uncertainty, coupled with the relative instability of central government. As time progresses this situation is likely to stabilise and be replaced by a more favourable environment for RDS preparation and implementation.

Whilst implementation responsibilities are not always clearly specified in the RDS documents, it is important that these responsibilities are situated within the institutional reality. In the Baltic examples, where a bottom-up approach to regional development has prevailed, the implementation of a RDS depends to a large extent on finance and co-operation of the municipalities who partly fund the counties and regions.

Whilst there are benefits of this bottom-up approach there is a question whether this reliance on the lower levels restricts the regions ability to act strategically. Legislation and regulations dealing with all aspects of the RDS, including implementation, tends to be relatively detailed. The Celtic lands tended to

adopt a flexible approach to implementation in the hope that this approach would be receptive to local needs.

Whilst legislation in this field can be useful and is often necessary there was a feeling among the partners that it should not be too detailed and restrictive as this can reduce flexibility and the ability of stakeholders to seek innovative delivery solutions. Reducing the complexity and increasing the flexibility with regards to implementation procedures and regulations allows the adaptation of priorities to take advantage of windows of opportunity, and to facilitate and stimulate innovative delivery.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

120. *Ensure that the implementation approach adopted is appropriate to the institutional reality bearing in mind any constraints imposed by the institutional and legal framework.*
121. *Ensure that implementation is flexible enough to allow the adaptation of priorities to take account of windows of opportunity and be receptive to local needs and culture.*
122. *Ensure that any legislation in relation to implementation is not too detailed or restrictive.*
123. *Use legal requirements where necessary to provide a backbone for the long-term programme and to clarify responsibilities.*

JUSTIFICATION

Where implementation relies heavily on influencing the budgets of other policy areas this has serious implications for involving these other policy areas in the process. Such an approach will not succeed without the support of these other policy areas.

Failure and disappointment can be the biggest enemies of regional development implementation. It is therefore crucial that implementation programmes are realistic and do not raise false hopes amongst stakeholders.

Over-detailed and rigid implementation frameworks will restrict the possibilities of an innovative and flexible approach to implementation. A degree of flexibility is necessary to allow adaptation in the light of unforeseen events or circumstances that are certain to arise during the course of a 15-20 year time horizon.

An overly prescriptive legal approach can reduce the ability of key stakeholders to adapt to



changing circumstances, although in certain cases a certain level of legal requirement and responsibility can be helpful.

Delivery mechanisms

Given the diversity of multi-disciplinary stakeholders involved in the implementation of a RDS and given that implementation will often rely on the RDS influencing the budgets of other sectors, cross-sector co-operation is vital. Most examples tended to rely on a combination of formal and informal contacts and a number of partners identified co-operation and consensus as the most important delivery mechanism available for the implementation of a RDS.

In a situation where it is necessary to influence the budgets of other areas cross-sector support is essential. For example, in order to try and facilitate this the Welsh Assembly Government have a Cabinet Sub-Committee chaired by the Minister responsible for planning. A similar high level inter-departmental working group monitors the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy in Ireland.

The delivery mechanisms in the Baltic States, along with the other processes and structures necessary for successful regional development, are still being developed. Often strategic partnerships tended to be stronger at the local level and at the project level than at the regional/national level although these are developing over time.

Elsewhere there was a tendency to rely, at least initially, on existing structures as delivery mechanisms. These existing groups however tended to have a number of shortcomings. Many have been criticised for not being robust enough to deal with difficult cross-border issues and also tend to lack resources. They also tended to be unrepresentative often being made up primarily of professional local authority officers. In some cases the RDS identifies the setting up of specific structures but no action has been taken.

Another common feature of the various RDS's examined was that the degree of phasing in the docu-

ments was generally weak and was often restricted to a very basic outline of when certain actions should be undertaken. As most of the examples covered are the first time such a RDS has been elaborated at that specific level and due to the fact that implementation is ongoing, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the various delivery mechanisms at this time.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

124. *Ensure that every effort is made to secure consensus and increase the ownership of the document amongst as many stakeholders as possible.*
125. *High-level inter-departmental or inter-ministerial co-ordinating structures can contribute significantly to strengthen horizontal co-operation with regard to the implementation of the strategy.*

JUSTIFICATION

Given the diversity of multi-disciplinary stakeholders involved in the implementation of a RDS and that implementation will often rely on the strategy influencing the budgets of other sectors, co-operation and consensus, where stakeholders work towards the elaboration and implementation of a shared vision can be the most important delivery mechanism available for the implementation of the RDS. Where stakeholders feel that they part own the RDS they are much more likely to view its implementation in a appositive light.

Where the RDS is a cross-sector initiative it is also important that there is high-level co-operation and discussion during the preparation and implementation processes to ensure that the various parts of government are signed up to the implementation process. Without this agreement successful implementation of a cross-sector RDS will be impossible.

126. Consider the use of existing structures for implementation initially.
127. Make sure that the implementation groups have clear tasks, responsibilities and missions and that they have the means at their disposal to undertake their tasks in an informed way.
128. Ensure that such implementation structures are as representative as possible of the groups that they are representing and that they meet regularly enough to perform their function (two times per annum or more often if necessary) and report regularly to the relevant co-ordinating body (once per annum or more often if necessary).
129. Ensure that implementation structures co-ordinate their information gathering, policy making and project implementation functions with the other structures and authorities who have similar tasks in other regions.
130. Ensure sufficient attention for cross-border aspects and closely monitor situations where co-operation between administrative units is required.

JUSTIFICATION

There are usually a number of structures in place in any given region with responsibility for discussing issues covered by the RDS. In order to save time and other resources, to avoid alienating these structures and to make optimal use of existing resources it is often a good idea to use existing structures initially where they are available. These structures can be supplemented by new arrangements (new structures or new responsibilities for existing structures) where existing structures are not or prove not to be robust, responsive and comprehensive enough.

Sufficient resource allocation from the outset is important if hopes are not to be raised artificially. Clear definition of tasks and responsibilities will

also help to increase accountability.

By sharing experience between similar structures both at home and in other regions it will be possible to identify and develop good practice. Such co-operation can also help to reduce the danger of unnecessary duplication of work.

Delivery mechanisms and implementing structures need to be robust enough to deal with difficult cross-border issues in order to avoid a situation whereby the least problematic solution is always the preferred option rather than the best solution. Such a scenario can lead to a loss of credibility for the RDS process.

131. Differentiate between long-term goals and short-term actions and choose an appropriate form of instrument to act as a framework for the short and medium-term actions.
132. Consider linking the strategy to a flexible implementation timetable or action plan where the short and medium term actions, responsibilities and funding are clearly identified and regularly reviewed and revised.

JUSTIFICATION

For the purposes of clarity it is important to ensure that the degree of phasing included in the RDS is sufficient to have a clear overview of the implementation process. Reference can be made in the RDS to the more detailed phasing included in a related action plan or development programme. Such a related action plan or implementation timetable can be revised annually or bi-annually as appropriate in order to provide the flexibility necessary in the implementation process.

133. Maintain the momentum of the strategy once it has been published/adopted by starting the implementation process as soon as possible

JUSTIFICATION

Certain key points in the RDS process provide the



opportunity to obtain significant publicity and it is important to capitalise upon these moments. The publishing and adoption of the RDS is one such moment and if the implementation process can start quickly then this provides the opportunity to build on this momentum and capitalise on any good will developed during the process.

Financial, physical and human resources

The success or otherwise of the implementation of a RDS can, to a large extent, rely heavily on the amount of human, financial and physical resources allocated to the task. In many cases human resources are often the primary implementation resource. In general terms there was a feeling that the human resources allocated to the task were limited. In the Baltic countries and Flanders the availability of suitably qualified and experienced human resources was quoted as a problem. Such limitations will certainly have an impact on the ability of the implementing agencies to perform their functions.

A RDS can be prepared with limited staff resources, although it appears that this is dependent on the selected approach. A relatively small core team supplemented periodically by inputs from a wider group often drove the process. In some cases such as Flanders, academics formed part of the core team being involved on a weekly basis. Various administrations in both Latvia and Lithuania have involved international teams, periodically and resources permitting, in various RDS processes. This openness to sharing experiences is a recognition that expertise and good practice in the field is constantly evolving and that such openness can be extremely beneficial.

The experience of the Irish NSS demonstrates that limited staff resources need not mean an extended preparation period. The predominantly bottom-up approaches in the Baltic States mean that the regional level is often reliant on the human resources and good will of the local authorities for implementation. It was also felt that the lack of human, financial and to a certain extent physical resources available in the Baltic States is a characteristic of the public sector in general.

Another common feature of the RDS examples studied was that there was usually very little finance specifically allocated to implementation and that as a result implementation is often reliant on influencing other policy areas and budgets of external agencies. None of the examples went as far as to identify and allocate specific budgets for complete implementation although some, particularly the Baltic examples, did suggest possible sources of funding that could be

investigated.

The Baltic examples, probably due to their more project-led approach and aim to access the EU Structural Funds, tended to contain more detailed cost estimates than the Celtic examples where the success of implementation depends largely on policy integration and effective networking with other policy areas. A number of the RDS examples were used as a consideration in the budgeting processes to determine government budgets.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

- 134. Ensure that the implementation programme is realistic in terms of the level of human, financial and physical resources available.*
- 135. Avoid extensive but unrealistic 'wish lists'.*
- 136. Allocate and/or identify sufficient resources for the implementation of the RDS.*
- 137. Identify the range of funding programmes that could be used to assist with implementing the RDS.*
- 138. Review and revise budgets to see how wider resources can assist with plan implementation.*
- 139. Foster a culture of innovation among implementing agencies in terms of seeking sources of funding for implementation.*
- 140. Share experiences with neighbouring/comparable regions and countries and discuss your adopted approach in the international arena.*

JUSTIFICATION

An overly ambitious implementation programme that bears no relationship to the human, financial and physical capacity available could generate false hopes and lead to disappointment. Failure can be one of the greatest enemies of implementation. It is important that the process is adequately and consistently resourced from the outset in order to avoid fluctuations in the level of expectation and delivery that can reduce the credibility of the entire RDS process.

Flexibility is an important pre-requisite of innovation and whilst it can be useful to identify possible sources of funding for implementation implementing agencies should have the ability to



seek alternative sources of funding.

Sharing experiences will facilitate an enriching learning process for all involved and provide diverse insights into ways of approaching specific challenges. By discussing your approach in the (inter)national arena you will be making a valuable approach to the ongoing regional development debate and have the opportunity to forge new partnerships and co-operation with similar regions elsewhere. An outsiders view on a specific challenge within your region can often provide a new insight and may well be more easily accepted by policymakers and stakeholders than if the same suggestion came from within the region.

Barriers to implementation

A variety of possibilities were cited as being the main barriers to the implementation of the RDS and many of these were related to shortcomings and characteristics in the adopted approach. The most consistently identified barrier related to the lack of a truly integrated and joined up approach to governance.

Clear and consistent political commitment is required for successful implementation and where this commitment is lacking or ambiguous the implementation process is at risk. Apathy amongst stakeholders and the general public can have the same effect. A lack of understanding of key issues amongst policy makers and stakeholders was cited as a problem in some cases. In many cases the fragility of consensus caused problems and some partners felt that the implementation timetable was not subject to sufficient political debate.

A number of partners also cited a lack of clarity in terms of the status of the RDS and/or the various implementation procedures and responsibilities that are in place as an important barrier.

In terms of human resources, the lack of experienced and qualified staff was considered a significant barrier in both Flanders and the Baltic's. It is likely however that a lack of human resources will always be cited as a problem in line with the principle that more could be done if more quality staff were available. In the case of Flanders and the Baltic States new legislation in the late 1990's and accession to the EU in 2004 respectively increased the demand for qualified planners. In both cases it was inevitable that the supply would be inadequate until the education system in the respective countries had time to satisfy the new demand.

A lack of human resources capacity can also lead to a situation where solutions from elsewhere are simply taken and imposed in another area with-

out being adapted to the specific locality.

The lack of phasing and indicators in most of the RDS documents was also cited as a barrier to implementation and to the ability to monitor the implementation process.

In many cases however the absence of significant dedicated financial resources as well as the lack of indicators is a direct result of the chosen approach. In Wales there was a conscious decision to adopt a consensual, collaborative and non-prescriptive approach that is allowed to develop as implementation proceeds. The objectives of the RDS are ones to work towards rather than be implemented and achieved.

Effective strategic partnerships and robust delivery mechanisms are a pre-requisite for successful implementation. In most cases both are still in the process of developing and are likely to be amended and adapted as shortcomings and problems come to light. The stimulation of more integrated working is equally relevant across sectoral and geographical/administrative boundaries.

Whilst co-operation across administrative boundaries is an issue in all countries studied, the implementation of regional projects in the Baltic States has often been hampered as municipalities do not have the resources and ability or in many cases the inclination to take the initiative for a project that will have benefits to stakeholders and other local authority areas. It is the responsibility of central and regional governments to encourage stakeholders to think strategically and not to confine their thinking to within their own administrative boundaries. Such exercises can be important in terms of capacity building and exchanging knowledge and experiences.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

141. *Ensure political consensus is generated and maintained.*
142. *Consider training for policy makers and stakeholders in order to create a knowledgeable community within which rational decision making will be central.*
143. *Elaborate a visible implementation programme or timetable that is subject to political debate.*
144. *Ensure that the implementation process is consultative, consensual and collaborative and endeavour to secure consensus and the buy in of a wide range of stakeholders from the earliest possible stage .*

145. *Identify a relevant common enemy (e.g. flooding or congestion).*

146. *Publicise stories of successful projects as widely as possible and make people aware of the positive elements of the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

Considerable time and effort will be required to generate and maintain consensus amongst politicians, stakeholders and the general public. Without this consensus however the implementation process is likely to fail or become marginal and diluted. A good basic understanding of the relevant issues and options and of the delivery mechanisms for implementation is required in order that policy makers can make rational and informed decisions. Specific and targeted training can significantly increase the capacity of policy makers and stakeholders.

Consultation, consensus and collaboration are key words in the approaches to regional development that have evolved in recent years. Just as with the preparation of the documents the implementation process should have these concepts at it's core in order to facilitate the co-operation of a diversity of stakeholders.

The identification of a common enemy can help to focus minds and be a useful ally for implementation. Many people are unaware of the role that a RDS can play in their everyday lives. Publicity for specific projects and initiatives linked to the RDS will raise awareness and can foster a positive image. Success stories should be publicised to inspire others, nothing succeeds like success!

147. *Build sufficient flexibility into the implementation structures and process to allow the adaptation of priorities to take advantage of windows of opportunity as well as allowing lower levels to adopt an approach that fits with their local needs.*

148. *Ensure that the adopted implementation procedure is appropriate to the type and role of the RDS.*

149. *Strike an appropriate balance between a bottom-up and top-down approach.*

JUSTIFICATION

The RDS should be able to deliver at both the regional and local level. A successful RDS provides a roadmap for the future development of the region as a whole, but also for its localities/communities.

2.9 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Introduction

Regional development or spatial strategies should not be seen as an end in themselves. Organisations having prepared a RDS will need to be aware of whether the implementation of the strategy is proceeding as planned, whether sufficient progress is being made and if it is on course to achieve certain milestones or targets. This demands that effective arrangements are made for the monitoring, evaluation and review of the RDS. However, it is these aspects of preparing a RDS that are often the most neglected. These guidelines argue for serious consideration to be given to monitoring and review early on and throughout the process.

Many of the arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review can be made in advance of completion of the RDS itself and doing so can ensure that an understanding of how the strategy will be monitored is built into the design of the strategy from an early stage. For example, objectives and targets can be designed in a form that is known to be capable of being monitored. Advance frameworks for monitoring can therefore demonstrate that monitoring has not been considered as a separate activity from the preparation of the strategy. Effective monitoring can be a demanding task even if monitoring frameworks are designed well, requiring significant staff time and financial resources if it is to be done as required.

In addition to arrangements for monitoring, a framework is also needed for the evaluation and review of the RDS. Monitoring information will be the basis for a review, yet a review will be a broader consideration of whether the RDS continues to be based on an appropriate strategy, if the strategy is effective or becoming dated. The review of a RDS will determine if a revision is required or if any adjustment of the strategy and actions is necessary.

It is important to recognise regional development strategies or spatial plans as the regional scale cannot be monitored in the same form as more detailed or more local plans. These strategies are by nature strategic, longer-term documents for which extensive targets and performance measures are not appropriate. Depending on the overall approach to the RDS, some aspects of monitoring may not be appropriate at all. This is evident in some spatial

strategies that do not include any targets or performance indicators. Yet it is important that a sufficient framework is in place to enable an appropriate assessment of progress to be made.

The importance of designing effective and appropriate frameworks for monitoring evaluation and review is clear. However, it is in these areas that there appears to have been least attention to detail and where there is significant scope for improving practice in the preparation of regional development strategies.

Assessment and appraisal

Varying timescales are identified in the RDS documents for formal review or replacement and range from 4 to 8 years. Some of the RDS documents, the Wales Spatial Plan being one such example, are to be subjected to a sustainability appraisal of their content.



POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

150. Review the RDS regularly.

151. Revise the RDS on an approximate timetable of every 5 years.

JUSTIFICATION

Regional development strategies and spatial strategies are intended to effect change over the longer term. The effects of any strategy may take some time to become apparent. However, regular review of the

RDS is necessary. In some cases, annual review will be appropriate. This is most likely to be the case with those RDS documents that focus on economic development issues. This does not mean that the RDS should be revised each year. Frequent revision of the document can create an unstable policy context, yet documents also need to be subjected to review and revision if they are to remain relevant and relate to their context in an appropriate way. A necessary balance needs to be achieved between a RDS being up to date and the creation of a stable policy context for effective implementation. Depending on changes in the regional context, the review may only need to be a partial one. Alternatively, significant change in the prevailing context will demand a more fundamental revision of the RDS. In the case of RDS documents that embrace a wider range of policy issues, and aim to effect

change over the longer-term, annual review will not be appropriate. Review should occur every 2 years or more to recognise the longer-term and wider scope of the documents.

152. *Subject the RDS to independent appraisal of its main economic, social and environmental issues.*

153. *Publish and take account of the findings of the appraisal.*

JUSTIFICATION

Independent appraisal of a RDS can help to reveal any deficiencies that need to be addressed and can be undertaken during the preparation of the RDS (for example, at draft stage) or on completion of the RDS as an accompanying document or to inform the next review of the RDS. Independent appraisal also forms an objective review of the RDS by a specialist, external organisation. It can therefore be useful in assuring stakeholders and others that the strategy is a robust and appropriate one. Funds should be allocated for commissioning the independent appraisal. Publishing the independent appraisal also adds to the open and inclusive approach to preparing a RDS. If the organisation responsible for preparing the RDS disagrees with some of the conclusions of the independent appraisal, then it may be appropriate to issue a statement alongside the appraisal that identifies any points of disagreement or any conclusions that have not been accepted.

Targets and indicators

Very little attention has been paid to the development of indicators for monitoring and assessing the implementation and success of regional development strategies. Few RDS documents include pre-established mechanisms for monitoring or implementation. The Celtic documents do not seem to be concerned with identifying indicators and monitoring mechanisms initially. Work is ongoing in Ireland whilst the Wales Spatial Plan only identifies general commitments rather than specific milestones meaning they are very difficult to measure. The approaches in these countries may also mean that detailed mechanisms for monitoring and performance measurement are not desirable. There are some questions and concerns about whether any forms of indicator are relevant when considering the preparation of strategic plans. Some view indicators – particularly those that are specific and measurable – to be of greater relevance to implementation programmes,



action plans and specific projects than to strategic documents.

Some RDS documents do however make use of specific and quantitative indicators for sectors, and the case studies drawn from Lithuania and Latvia are better developed in identifying targets and indicators. Regional Development Plans in Lithuania, for example, include a range of thematic indicators. The Flanders Structure Plan is also based on a well-developed system of 'spatial bookkeeping', with indicators and targets for a range of different topics including housing, industrial land and the environment.

Only in Ireland and Lithuania does there appear to be any serious consideration of the measuring of outputs and impacts. The preparation of RDP documents in Lithuania has a more formal monitoring process than the remainder of the RDS approaches. The team responsible for preparing the Irish NSS is actively considering implementation research.

In general terms the Baltic examples seem to be more advanced with the elaboration of targets and indicators although these are generally mostly very general, traditional and quantitative. It is also noticeable that where indicators have been identified they predominantly relate to economic development aspects.

The Baltic countries also seem to make more use of phasing, timetables and action plans. The level and type of targets and indicators used needs to be appropriate and not too detailed. Work seems to be ongoing throughout the EU to develop satisfactory indicators. The availability and reliability of data is important when considering the development of indicators. It should also be borne in mind that targets and indicators, like all aspects that rely on statistical data, can be manipulated.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

154. *Devise a series of appropriate targets and indicators to establish a framework for the monitoring of the RDS.*

155. *Strategies should contain appropriate phasing, targets, milestones and performance indicators.*

156. *Targets and indicators should relate to the key features of the RDS.*

JUSTIFICATION

The purpose of establishing a series of targets and indicators is to enable the progress towards the RDS's aims and objectives to be monitored and evaluated. They should form part of the wider appraisal of the effectiveness in implementing the RDS. For the sake of clarity and transparency, these should be included in the RDS itself. In addition to targets and indicators, a RDS should identify any phasing of actions over the strategy period. If a RDS is to be implemented over a 15 or 20 year period, then it should be possible to give an indication of the sequence of important investments and activities. More detailed planning should be dealt with outside of the strategy, for example in action plans and programming documents. Nevertheless, strategy phasing should be included in the RDS. Targets and indicators should be used selectively and it is important to remember that they focus on the key or critical features of the RDS.

157. *The strategy should include both strategic and more specific, topic-based indicators.*

158. *Relate the key indicators directly to the objectives of the strategy.*

159. *Link the strategy to an action plan and include more detailed phasing, targets, milestones and performance indicators in the action plan.*

JUSTIFICATION

Strategic indicators are used to assess the overall strategy and its implementation. These are different in character to more detailed indicators that may relate to specific topics, subjects or policies. Strategies benefit from including both types of indicators. Detailed indicators can be grouped or 'bundled' and linked directly to strategic, key indicators.

160. *Avoid using too many indicators.*

JUSTIFICATION

Using too many indicators reduces the clarity of the document and requires a disproportionate amount of time to monitor. Indicators should be carefully designed and selective. The indicators should be sufficient to enable an assessment to be made of the overall strategy. They are not intended to support the detailed measurement of outputs.

161. *Use indicators that are based on data that can be collected without undue difficulty.*

JUSTIFICATION

Reasonably effective monitoring should be capable of being undertaken without requiring extensive collection of new data sets. Available data can be refined over time, although some form of monitoring is usually possible with readily available data. Monitoring and assessment frameworks should be initially designed to make use of available data and refined as data collection capacity is increased.

162. *Devise qualitative indicators to supplement quantitative indicators.*

JUSTIFICATION

Indicators contained in RDS documents are usually quantitative in nature, being based on measurable effects and impacts. However, not all aspects of a RDS can be readily framed in quantitative form. They should be supplemented by qualitative indicators. Qualitative indicators or assessment criteria can be particularly useful for evaluating the strategic aspects or key principles of a RDS.

Monitoring and evaluation

Most examples of RDS documents demonstrate that relatively limited emphasis is placed on the development of prior evaluation frameworks. Monitoring and evaluation do not appear to be pre-established in the various approaches. Lithuanian practice demonstrates a more formal monitoring process than the others. Here, monitoring committees are established and reported to regularly every six months. However, even here, evaluation and review are new processes and will take some time to be developed more fully and effectively.

Arrangements for the monitoring of RDS documents are typically only given any real consideration once the RDS is substantially completed. In some examples, the issue of developing indicators and monitoring frameworks has only commenced once the RDS was finalised. Both the Irish Spatial Strategy

and the Wales Spatial Plan fall into this category, with consideration of how monitoring and evaluation would be conducted only considered after the finalisation of the strategy. Benefits can be achieved if the design of monitoring frameworks is considered during the preparation of the RDS, including ensuring a better degree of fit between the RDS and its monitoring.

POINTERS TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

163. *Give consideration to how the implementation process will be monitored and evaluated from an early stage even where no formal prior evaluation frameworks are set up.*

164. *Ensure that monitoring and evaluation frameworks and structures are set up quickly after the publication of the strategy and any associated action plan.*

JUSTIFICATION

Early discussion of how the RDS will be monitored and evaluated enables a better relationship to be secured between the RDS and the monitoring framework. It also enables work to commence early on identifying and additional data collection required for monitoring purposes. Monitoring should start as soon as the strategy is published.

165. *Share experiences on monitoring and evaluation structures and techniques.*

JUSTIFICATION

Monitoring and evaluation are key aspects of RDS preparation in which innovation is possible and areas where organisations can learn a great deal from each other. Many aspects of monitoring and evaluation are also transferable between organisations.



PART 3

exhibitions and case studies

This section contains the exhibition panels that were prepared for the final activities in the GRIDS project. The panels contain an overview of the rationale of and conclusions from the project, as well as 6 case studies that were visited during the course of the operation. The chosen case studies reflect a diversity of themes but were all considered in different ways to be examples of good practice.

The first example presented is from Ireland where Laois County Council reacted to a perceived disappointment in a positive manner and embraced the opportunities offered in a higher-level strategy. Two examples are drawn from Wales where Caerphilly County Borough Council has sought innovative solutions to the problems posed by industrial restructuring (e.g., the collapse of the South Wales coal industry). The aspects in relation to the use of sustainable principles and the engagement of the local community on the process were particularly impressive.

During the Flemish workshop the GRIDS team were able to witness the excellent work being done by Regionaal Landschap Kempen and Maasland in showing that the natural environment and sustainable tourism can be important instruments of regional development. There are two examples drawn from the Baltic States. First, from Lithuania, the Kaunas City Development Strategy seeks to develop Lithuania's second largest city as a multi-functional city with a focus on offering a high quality of life to its residents. Second, from Latvia, some of the work being done by Livani District Council, a small rural municipality in Eastern Latvia is presented because it may serve as an inspiration to other small municipalities in peripheral locations throughout the EU in promoting regional development projects.



North East South WEST
INTERREG III C

GRIDS PROJECT AND PARTNERS

GRIDS

Best Practice Guidelines for Instruments of Regional Development and Spatial Planning in an Enlarged EU

Duration: January 2004 – December 2006

Total Budget: 100,000 EUR

Partnership: Ministry of the European Community (Brussels, Belgium), Department of the Government and Local Government, Republic of Ireland (Dublin) and:
Economic and Social Regional Development Agency (Galway, IRE), Newcastle School of Economics in Riga (Latvia, LIT), Pilsdārzis Council (Latvia, LIT), Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuania, LIT)
Project Co-ordinator: The Consulting, Strategic, Region



❖ Background and Overall Objective

The preparation of Regional Development Strategies (RDS) and Spatial Plans for EU regions has attracted increasing interest in recent years across the EU. The GRIDS project is aimed at producing best practice guidelines for the preparation of such documents.



The GRIDS project is closely linked to previous EU initiatives on spatial planning, EU Regional Policy and Structural Funds, and the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP 1999) which developed the concept of 'polycentric regional development'.

❖ Lead Partner and Project Secretariat

The Lead Partner for the GRIDS project has been Cardiff University in Wales, UK. The project's work programme has been managed and directed by its School of City and Regional Planning.



❖ Project Workshops and Programme



The focus of the project has been the series of workshops held in Partner regions during 2004 and 2005, which included meetings in Brussels, Dublin, Cardiff, Riga and Vilnius. The best practice guidelines were presented at the Baltics Conference in Riga in October 2005. An end conference in Cardiff in November 2005 involves the participation of 40 'movers and shakers' in the field of regional development and planning from the Celtic and Baltic countries, and other member states.

The GRIDS project will produce a number of outputs, including final reports, brochures and a book published in 2006 by Ashgate Publishers.



**Laois County Council
IRELAND**

Response to National Spatial Strategy and Logistics Development in Portlaoise

◆ **Background and Context**

The Irish National Spatial Strategy adopted in 2002 is widely acclaimed as an example of good practice although it always not everyone agreed with all aspects and implications of the document. While some local stakeholders lamented the decision not to include Portlaoise as one of the centres in the tri-gateway Mullingar-Adelphi-Tullamore, the County Council decided instead to embrace the higher-level strategy in a positive manner for the benefit of the locality and region.

◆ **Aims and Objectives**

The County Council acted swiftly to capitalise on its strategic location and on the opportunities offered by being selected as a national transport node and inland port. A 100ha site was assembled and strategic developers worked together with the County Council to draw up a Master Plan for motorway services, logistics park with inland port, rail link, heliport and business park.



◆ **Innovative Aspects**

In a geographically peripheral open economy like Ireland international trade and logistics are crucial to national economic development. The positive approach of the County Council, the speed with which they reacted positively to a perceived disappointment and the dynamic way in which they have gone about achieving their goals in partnership with relevant stakeholders are considered to be examples of good practice that others can follow. The development is expected to create 5,000 jobs.

**Regionaal Landschap Kempen and Maasland
FLANDERS**

Sustainable Tourism as an Instrument of Regional Development



◆ **Background and Context**

Regionaal Landschap Kempen and Maasland (RLKM) is both a region in the north-east of Belgium and a non-governmental organisation. The main goal of RLKM is to protect, manage and develop the natural and cultural heritage and to promote the development of an efficient spatial, natural and environmental policy. RLKM pursues activities in 4 specific fields: cycling networks, walking routes, nature and landscape projects and landscapes without borders. They are currently working on a project to establish the first national park in Belgium, National Park Hoge Kempen.

◆ **Aims and Objectives**

RLKM aims to stimulate the accessibility of the natural and cultural heritage via recreational and educational measures to strengthen and conserve the socio-economic tissues of the region. RLKM brings together and co-operates with cross-sector partners to attract national and European funds, to develop tourism products, to increase employment in the sector and to elaborate and implement strategies for sustainable tourism development.

◆ **Innovative Aspects**

RLKM has provided a focus point to strengthen networking between the numerous stakeholders in the rural areas of Limburg. It also provides a lobbying vehicle at the EU, Flemish, provincial and local levels and has succeeded in mobilising high level support for new innovative projects in the fields of nature conservation and tourism. RLKM has proved that nature and sustainable tourism development can be suitable instruments in regional development.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Caerphilly Borough Council
WALES
New Tredegar Community Regeneration



◆ **Background and Context**

New Tredegar is a former mining community that grew from a small farming settlement in the 1850s to a thriving mining community with a population of 12,000 at its height in 1911. The community's fortunes declined however along with the mining industry until the last pit closed in 1967.

Since then low levels of economic activity, high unemployment, low incomes, low levels of educational achievement and acute health and social care problems have continued leaving the area as one of the most deprived in Wales with a population of just over 5,000.

◆ **Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of the regeneration strategy was to create a healthy, empowered and sustainable community through provision of modern educational and training facilities, employment opportunities, health facilities and safe routes.



◆ **Innovative Aspects**



Most importantly the drive for change came from the community. The result was a new state of the art Health Centre, Community School, Information and Resource Centre, Safe Community routes, new access road, New Business Units and a Disability Centre of Excellence. The involvement of the community, the partnership between all stakeholders and the diverse sources of funding all combined to highlight this project as an excellent example of how community regeneration can be a dynamic tool in regional development.



Caerphilly Borough Council
WALES
Tredomen Business Park



◆ **Background and Context**

Tredomen Business Park is a fully reclaimed brownfield site, which was the location of the former British Coal engineering works serving the South Wales coalfields. The works were demolished in the 1990s before the site was prepared for development using a variety of EU and national funds. Work progressed in 3 phases:

- ▶ Phase 1 was the Tredomen Business and Technology Centre (completed 2001);
- ▶ Phase 2 was Tredomen Innovation @ Technology Centre (completed 2007);
- ▶ Phase 3 is Tredomen Gateway (under construction).



◆ **Aims and Objectives**

The project contributes to the aims and objectives as set out in a complex policy framework of local, national and European strategies, all with a common theme of promoting economic growth and creating jobs within a wider regeneration vision to address social, environmental as well as economic issues. The aim is to provide high quality business support services and space for technology based value added and R and D activities.

◆ **Innovative Aspects**

The project sets a high standard specification and attractive accommodation designed to attract the higher value-added firms. Phase 1 offers the combined partnership approach to delivering business advice with the main national and local business support agencies under one roof. Phases 2 and 3 are leading the way in using renewable energy including sustainable heating, lighting and water systems and both are built to achieve a BREEM rating of excellence for environmental performance. The scheme is seen as a pathfinder for the Council and will be used as a pilot to promote further installations.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Kaunas City Council
LITHUANIA
Development Strategies for Kaunas City



◆ **Background and Context**

Kaunas is the second largest city in Lithuania with a population of 365,000. It occupies a strategic location at the crossroad of two international transport corridors: Via Baltica and E68. The High Speed European standard gauge railway is planned to reach Kaunas by 2010. It is also an important industrial and commercial centre and hosts 7 universities and a total of 48,500 students.



◆ **Aims and Objectives**

The City Council has elaborated a vision to develop the City as a multi-functional city offering a high quality of life for its residents. The vision is based on the university city and a centre for the knowledge economy of Baltic Sea Region importance; the transport and logistics centre of Eastern European importance and the sports capital of Lithuania.

◆ **Innovative Aspects**

The integration of the various aspects of the vision to develop Kaunas as a high quality multi-functional city of the 21st century will ensure that the future of the city is not too reliant on any one sector. A balance is being sought between hard (infrastructure and buildings) and soft (education and human resources) investments.

The City Council are strongly committed to improving the quality of life for its present and future residents. This will be vital if Kaunas will be able to make sufficient critical mass in terms of human resources to be competitive in the Baltic Sea Region and in combination with Vilnius to be competitive at the European level.

Livani District Council
LATVIA
Development Process and Initiatives in Livani



◆ **Background and Context**

Livani is a small town in Eastern Latvia with a population of approximately 11,000. The town faced huge social and economic problems after independence due to obsolete economic and transport infrastructure and limited human resource capacity.

◆ **Aims and Objectives**

The Municipality became actively involved in numerous projects using a variety of EU and national funding aimed at increasing the economic competitiveness of the town through the realisation of a variety of hard and soft projects. This included improvements to transport infrastructure and business premises, the establishment of an Art and Craft Development Centre, investments in IT infrastructure and training, the provision of training for local youth and entrepreneurs and the preparation of marketing material.

◆ **Innovative Aspects**

While many small municipalities have been reluctant to support participation in so-called soft projects, Livani adopted an approach to increase the capacity of its staff and other local stakeholders by sharing experiences through involvement in such soft projects. Innovative aspects included the cross-sector partnerships, the combination of hard and soft activities, applying new technology and approaches to old traditional activities, the involvement of youth and other specific target groups and the close involvement of local politicians.

This approach was based on looking at old problems in new ways, grasping opportunities and making choices, continual self-evaluation, long term planning alongside short term actions and perhaps most important of all taking the initiative and learning through doing.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The GRIDS project focuses on developing a series of best practice guidelines to support and help those responsible for preparing Regional Development Strategies.

Project partners have shared their experience through a series of thematic workshops and developed a series of good practice guidelines. These guidelines are designed to help at the various stages in preparing a RDS, from the first stages of considering the objectives and scope of the RDS to the ongoing processes of monitoring, evaluation and renewal. The guidelines are published in a user-friendly document.



The guidelines identify and discuss:

- the diversity of approaches to regional development and spatial planning;
- the common strengths and weaknesses of regional development strategies.

A series of good practice pointers are provided on:

- Clarifying the purpose, scope and status of the RDS;
- Writing appropriately for different audiences;
- Establishing the vision, strategy and objectives for the RDS;
- Engaging stakeholders in RDS preparation;
- Dealing with data, information and analysis;
- Using images and illustrations;
- Improving implementation of the RDS; and
- The monitoring, evaluation and review of regional development strategies.

The guidelines are supported by a series of case study examples and demonstration projects drawn from the various partners' programmes.





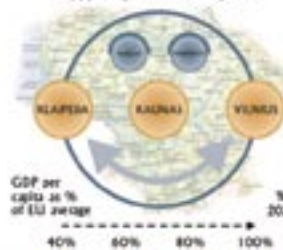
MAIN RESULTS

Happy or Sad Regions?

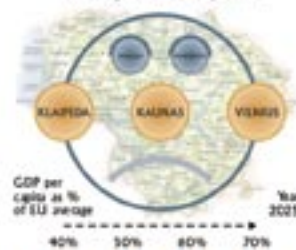
- Successful regional development delivers economic growth eg: parity with National and EU average GDP per capita and polycentric development.
- Poor regional development maintains status quo: slow economic growth and persistent regional prosperity gaps continue, and little progress with polycentric spatial development.
- Concept of more balanced and polycentric sustainable economic development resonates with all Partner countries.



Successful Regional Development = Happy Regional Development



Poor Regional Development = Sad Regional Development



Project Concludes That a Good Regional Development Strategy is One That:

- Is embedded in its organisation, economic and social context;
- Establishes a widely-shared vision for the future development of the region;
- Engages stakeholders in an open and productive manner during the preparation of the strategy;
- Communicates its key messages clearly to a variety of audiences;
- Identifies clear mechanisms for delivery;
- Phases and sequences key investments and actions;
- Establishes a simple but effective framework for monitoring.

GRIDS Project Success Factors:

- Resonates with aims of Interreg IIIc ie: sharing experiences, improving policies and instruments of regional development;
- Emphasises importance of collaborative approach and joined-up government to promote a good Regional Development Strategy;
- Instruments of successful regional development identified in best practice guidelines;
- GRIDS supports increasing EU debate and agenda on promoting successful regional development.



ANNEX

4.1 GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

BROWNFIELD SITE	A site that has previously been developed and is available for re-use. It may also be referred to as previously-developed land.
CLUSTER	A geographic concentration of activities, usually used to refer to a concentration of industries and research institutions in a particular location.
CORRIDOR	A linear area usually linking two or more settlements in which transport and other infrastructure is concentrated.
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network, an initiative sponsored by the EU Interreg III programme.
EUROPEAN SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE [ESDP]	A document published in 1999 following agreement between the then 15 EU member states. It contains a series of 60 policy options for member states to take into account in spatial development.
EUROSTAT	The Statistical Office of the European Communities
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT [GDP]	A widely used measure of economic wealth, with GDP per capita being a measure often used to compare regions in terms of their comparative wealth. Figures are shown as an index of some wider area (e.g. regional GDP/capita as a percentage of the EU average).
INCUBATOR	A collection of small, starter units designed to enable smaller enterprises and businesses the opportunity to grow in size and output.
INTERREG	A Community Initiative funded through the European Regional Development Fund designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion throughout the EU, by fostering the balanced development of the continent through cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.
LAND BANK	A series of sites held by a developer for future development, usually referring to land for industrial or housing development.
LAND USE PLANNING	The activity for determining policies and allocations for the future development of land and exercising regulatory controls over development.
MODE OF TRANSPORT	The means by which a person travels, such as by car, rail, bus or plane.
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics – a means of dividing national geographic areas in order to facilitate the collection and comparison of statistical data.
NWMA	North Western Metropolitan Area
POLYCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT	Development that is promoted in many different settlements rather than in a single settlement, designed to avoid over-concentration of activities in a single, specific location. Such development may recognise the interdependence of different settlements.
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY [RDA]	An organisation, which may be a public or semi-public agency, that is responsible for promoting the development of a region. It will usually be responsible for preparing a regional development or regional economic strategy.
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY [RDS]	A document outlining a framework for future development of a region, usually with an economic focus.

SECTORAL	Relating to particular sectors, such as the housing sector, economic sector etc.
SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE	The pattern of cities, towns and villages and the relationships that exist between them.
SME – (small to medium enterprise)	An independent business with a small number of employees or limited turnover
SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT	Change in the pattern and distribution of activities across a geographic area.
SPATIAL PLANNING	An activity usually undertaken by the public sector designed to better understand how a particular area functions and impact on its future spatial development. It encompasses a wide range of different policy areas, from the land use planning system to economic, health and transport policies.
SPATIAL VISION	A statement or graphic image of how a particular geographic area will be in the future; it is an expression of a desired future that includes reference to particular places or areas.
STATUTORY	Required by legislation.
STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITE	A large-scale site usually reserved for inward investment projects that are intended to generate significant employment opportunities.
SUPRANATIONAL	The level above the national level, often used to refer to the activities of the European Union.
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL	An assessment of the effects of a strategy or plan against a series of social, economic and environmental criteria designed to encourage more sustainable practices – see sustainable development.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	Sustainable development foresees in the needs of the current generation without endangering the needs of the future generations. In order to achieve sustainable development there is a consensus that economic, social and environmental aspects are to be taken into account simultaneously.
TERRITORY	A term referring to a geographic area that is usually consistent with the administrative area of a political body. A territory is a physical space that is also attributed with some deeper meaning or sense of ownership or belonging.
TERRITORIAL CAPITAL	Specific spatial characteristics that define the unique spatial context of each region
TERRITORIAL COHESION	Extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms the objective is to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing disparities, preventing territorial imbalances and by making both sector policies that have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent.
TRANS EUROPEAN NETWORKS [TENS]	Strategic routes at the European scale comprising road, rail and other infrastructure designed to improve connections between different parts of Europe.
TRANSNATIONAL STRATEGY	A strategy or plan that includes the whole or part of two or more different nation states.
VASAB 2010	Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea – an intergovernmental programme developed under the INTERREG programme.

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