
Integrated Urban Development of Vital Historic Towns as Regional Centres in South East Europe

South east Europe Transnational cooperation programme

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Transnational comparison of national policies and planning systems

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National urban policies and planning systems: Introduction

The SEE ViTo project addresses the problems of small and medium size towns (SMESTO) possessing cultural heritage as an asset for future development. In European documents¹ focused on regional and urban development, SMESTO are considered as places to live, work, to provide an access to public and private services, moreover, as sources of identity. For this, small and medium size towns are regarded as stabilizers of socio-spatial development all over Europe, supporting the implementation of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agenda goals.

Historic towns with their cultural heritage possess a particular asset to shape European space as regional centres: they have potentials for being attractive to economic activities and to social life. Moreover, historic towns have a peculiar role in supporting a more balanced spatial development in South East Europe that is a highly diverse region in terms of economic development, social processes and problems (demographic imbalances, poverty, migration, etc.), of the structure of urban systems, institutional frameworks and of political structures.

The highly complex tasks of preserving cultural heritage and also using those assets to promote economic development locally and also in a wider region, while remaining the scene of community life, an integrated approach toward urban development is needed. Development strategies rested on the Leipzig Charter principles, and new ways of urban governance should be developed to manage the realisation of concepts and to apprehend urban development as an ongoing task. Nevertheless, many of the municipalities in South East Europe lack the capability to use, adapt and manage this unique resource in the context discussed above.

Therefore, it is an objective of the ViTo project to support the development of new urban governance structures by implementing pilot measures, and raising the awareness of local and regional stakeholders of the importance of cross-sectoral a territorial cooperation and of social participation. For this, the ViTO project aims at supporting the capacity building of local governments and other stakeholders to build practice good urban governance and put it practice. This process is supported by the transnational cooperation to facilitate to share existing knowledge and best practices (including ViTo pilot project experiences) as well as to work parallel on different tasks of urban development in a higher intensity and such with a broader added value for the SEE space.

In the framework of the SEE ViTo Work Package 3 (WP3), an analytical basis for the transnational exchange of information and knowledge was proposed. WP3 embraces

¹ I.e. in the European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP, 1999), the Leipzig Charter (2007), the Territorial Agenda (2007), and in the Green Book on Territorial Cohesion (2008).

activities that support local activities of partner cities, as well as the development of transnational urban policies that rest on the Leipzig Charta principles and focus on cities and their regions concurrently.

This study is focused on key issues of national policies related to urban development and on national planning systems that define the framework and scope for local actions. Reviewing national systems supports:

- project partners to have a view of their problems ‘from outside’ and in this way, to help them to identify those that are stemming from national policies and planning systems;
- the transnational exchange of knowledge by introducing the wider context of each project partner’s activities, to understand the nature of PPs problems, to discuss them at transnational workgroups and possibly, suggest remedies to conflicts raised by inconsistencies and deficiencies of national systems.

The methods used for revealing the national policy and planning context of local projects were:

- ‘desk research’ that rested on the review and analysis of key policy and planning documents; papers and reports were collected from websites of the relevant institutions and from the ViTO partners;
- interviews made with local experts; discussions highlighted problems, contradictions and deficiencies of national policies and planning systems and revealed how they work in everyday practices of urban development.

To compare national policies and planning systems in the ViTo area, *the following issues are discussed in country reports*:

- Framework conditions for urban policies and planning in the partner countries, including current challenges for urban development, ongoing discussions about regional and spatial planning, and key issues (objectives, priorities) of national urban and other relevant policies;
- A brief overview of the structure of state administration;
- The instruments of regional and spatial planning, such as the legal framework for planning, its territorial levels (responsibilities/competences), and the interactions and cooperation between different levels;
- The general procedures of planning at regional and urban level (formalised or flexible; scope for social participation; involvement of different sectors/departments; who and how controls the planning process);
- Reality: legal and institutional planning frameworks in daily praxis; characteristics of planning cultures;
- Actors in regional and urban planning;

- Additional information, such as problems or conflicts stemming (in general) from the national planning system; problems or conflicts raised by the planning system locally, in ViTo partner towns.

Comparison of national planning systems: Some key findings

Problems and challenges that partner towns have to face are similar in many terms.

- Due to the changing global economic conditions, European towns are increasingly embedded into transnational flows of goods, services, labour, knowledge and information and tourists. In the increasingly contested arena of global economy, cities have to identify their place in global flows and networks for which, partner towns perceive capitalizing urban culture and urban space as a key issue.
- Local planners and policy-makers are increasingly concerned with the imbalance in power relations in the urban network, that made SMESTO dependent increasingly on non-local agents (investors, tourists, media, national authorities, etc.). This limits the autonomy of local (strategic) planning and also of controlling local spatial processes as a daily practice.
- The deepening of socio-spatial inequalities regionally and locally resulted by economic restructuring is also perceived as a heavy problem. Spatial conflicts that arise at regional level (urban sprawl, environmental problems, etc.) and locally (segregation, migration, housing deficiencies, etc.) should be managed in an integrated way, cross-sectorally and in territorial cooperation, as it was suggested by local and project meeting discussions. Cooperation is stimulated also by the shrinking role of the nation-states in the collective consumption (liberalization/budget cuts) and by throwing the responsibilities for managing social conflicts and for economic restructuring to local level. Thus, towns and cities have to act as regulators, as well as promoters of the local economy and also as entrepreneurs (in providing services, in managing municipal property stock, etc.).

However, spatial processes and thus, problems that should be addressed by policies suggested a mosaic-like view of South East Europe. The scale of socio-spatial inequalities and of the differentiation of the national urban systems is greater in the East and in the South compared to Central or Western Europe. Moreover, the East/West, and the South/East dichotomy appears in the problems of the rural regions. The rapidity of spatial transformation, the heaviness of environmental problems, moreover, the discourses that shape the urban policies and planning responding to those changes also carry differences, particularly, between the old and the new ('post-socialist') member-states. Thus, the problems of housing quality (e.g. 'socialist' housing estates'), the physical conditions of urban centres (built heritage), and the management of the historical stock (vague ownership conditions/speculation) cannot be interpreted but in the context of the changing national legislative frameworks.

As far as *national regional and spatial planning systems* are concerned, small and medium size towns of South East Europe have a planning tradition in common rooted in the European history. It is reflected by the European policy documents and also by the principles of national urban policies and of planning documents (the idea of the 'compact city'; multi-functionality of urban centres; historical heritage; socially mixed cities, etc.). Nevertheless,

national urban policies and planning systems are different in many terms, reflecting the distinct development path of each state in South East Europe. Different institutional contexts (and power relations behind them) shaped discourses over urban issues and resulted in different interpretations of spatial processes at national level. More decentralised territorial administration support more 'spatial'/more integrated approach toward socio-spatial issues (Austria; Italy).

The role of the regional level in the planning process is highly diverse in South East Europe, embracing the federalist system (Austria), the regionalised unitary model (Italy), and also a centralised unitary states that took divergent paths either toward maintaining the highly centralised model in planning (Greece) or to the step-by-step decentralisation models (new member states).

The status (autonomy) of municipalities in the national planning system is also a key issue. Although, each partner city's planning activity is embedded into a hierarchical system/process, municipalities in centralised administrative and planning systems often lack financial resources and capacities to think and act cross-sectorally and regionally. In the new member states, municipalities have a fairly large scope to define their development path and to control local spatial processes, but their autonomy is limited heavily by their dependence on non-local financial resources.

National planning systems define the framework for *the local planning processes*, the key agents and the stakeholders to be involved. The key issues for the ViTo area are:

- The planning procedure is a hierarchical process, linked to different levels of territorial administration and delegated planning competences; in this term, the ViTo area shows a fairly diverse picture particularly, as far as municipal planning competences are concerned;
- The relationships of spatial and sectoral planning that also defines the key agents shaping socio-spatial development at regional and local level; in the ViTo area, centralised unitary systems (Greece, new member states) are still characterised by the prevalence of sectoral plans over spatial (holistic) approach in planning;
- The lacking holistic view of urban development and the prevalence of sectoral planning might result in conflicts, e.g. between the owners' and developers' interests and national policies and regulations on environmental issues (traffic control, preservation of built heritage);
- The inconsistencies of the regional and spatial (physical) planning systems in which, competences are delegated to different territorial levels might separate strategic planning from the controlling of spatial processes (e.g. in Slovenia);
- The way that planning framework is put in daily practice is influenced largely by the organisational and professional background of particular countries and localities; the new member states and Moldova are in different phases of learning and capacity building;
- The social embeddedness of urban planning, such as the involvement of all concerned (targeted) social groups and of stakeholders (who actively shape urban space), moreover, cooperation of key agents (driving the planning process) are also key issues for all ViTo partners, however, in different ways and terms. Even in well-

defined participatory frameworks (Austria, Italy), involvement of particular groups of citizens might be difficult (Austria), or may be neglected in some phases of the planning process (Italy). In some cases, the framework of social participation and the range of stakeholders are vaguely defined, or just limited (Moldova, Greece). Moreover, in the majority of the new member states, the stakeholders' role and the way of social participation are well-defined, but local planners face with difficulties to involve citizens, or even potential stakeholders, that is stemming from the deficiencies of the cultural and institutional background for cooperation and democratic planning.

In general, gaps between planning frameworks (objectives/principles, procedures) defined at national level and the reality perceived while planning locally are existing. It raised ongoing discourses over the problems of decentralisation, the (in)dependence of municipalities, involvement of stakeholders and citizens, and the relations of public issues (e.g. protection of built and natural environment; quality of public spaces) and private investors.

Austria

Framework conditions in the partner countries

In Austria a new “Austrian Spatial Development Concept” is in progress (ÖREK 2011). Strategic fields of action for spatial development in Austria for the next ten years are suggested by the concept, such as: economic development, demographic development and social changes, transport and mobility, environment, climate change and resources (interim reports of the ÖREK).

This paper in progress also stresses key risks and chances of the future development:

Chances

- New position in Europe after east enlargement
- Highly qualified population and labour market
- Logistic and distribution location

Risks

- Population concentration in agglomerations and the related expansion of settlement area
- Shortage of the key resource “soil”
- Conflicts between tourism and agriculture in rural regions
- Increasing potential of natural risks
- Increasing competition between cities and regions
- Housing sprawl
- Increasing regional specialisation

In practice, the ÖREK has barely influence on the local level which is the key player for spatial planning in Austria but may be considered as guideline and recommendations more for the state level activities.

According to the valuation of the Austrian spatial planning expert in ViTo the main discussed challenges of spatial planning and development in experts’ discourses are:

1. The increasing concentration of population and economic activities in agglomerations while more rural regions face depletion tendencies,
2. Strategies to strengthen regional cooperation
3. Improvement of public transports
4. Strategies to reduce fine particles concentration in certain areas

Discussions following the signature of the Leipzig Charta and the Territorial Agenda do not lead to activities or discussions about how to guarantee a more cross-section oriented organisation of spatial planning. The stronger discussion is about the decentralised spatial planning in Austria: the competence for comprehensive spatial planning is on the state level.

A spatial planning ministry does not exist in Austria; national policies with a direct impact on regional and urban development are mainly sectoral planning activities of some federal ministries:

- Federal Chancellery (regional innovation incentives, promotion of endogenous regional development)
- Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure (responsible for federal roads, rivers and airports, funding of innovation and research activities)
- Ministry of Economic Affairs (subsidy scheme regional innovation bonus with the aim to renew old industrial areas and economic growth in peripheral rural areas)

- Ministry of the Environment, Agriculture, Forestry and Water issues.

Comprehensive spatial planning is the competence of the states. The states issue spatial planning laws. These laws are on the one hand basis for state development plans, sectoral state plans as well as regional development plans and regional sectoral plans (numbers and natures differ and vary from state to state). On the other hand these laws determine the planning instruments of the municipalities.

Main discussed challenges for spatial planning and development vary from state to state.

State and administration structure and instruments of spatial planning

In Austria there are three levels of territorial authorities (federal, state, municipality) but four levels of administrative authorities:

1. Federal government
2. States (Länder)
3. Districts (Bezirke)
4. Municipalities

The three territorial levels have certain “competences” for spatial planning while the local level is the most powerful.

Spatial planning levels, competences and related plans / programmes

level	competences	Plans / programmes	status
federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No real competences in spatial planning ▪ But sectoral planning with territorial reference ▪ Policy instrument “ÖREK” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ÖREK 2001 (Austrian spatial planning development concept), currently the elaboration of the new ÖREK 2011 is running ▪ Usually temporal horizon is ten years 	Strategic policy document general orientation/vision
States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulate spatial planning with own legislation (spatial planning laws lay down spatial planning instruments for municipalities) ▪ Supervise municipal planning ▪ Approves spatial planning on local level (conformity with spatial planning law and supra-local plans of the state) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State development plans ▪ Sectoral state plans ▪ Regional development plans ▪ Regional sectoral plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State development plans and regional development plans have the status of decrees, regional development plans are binding for spatial planning at local level by municipalities. ▪ Sectoral plans are established as decrees or as resolutions ▪ Function as supra-local framework for local spatial planning
municipalities	Act as “sovereign planners and economic bodies”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If applicable local development schemes (varies from State to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In some states (as for example in Styria state where the partner city)

		<p>state), drawn up for entire territory of the municipality), period of validity 10 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoning plan that determines the permissible use of land, drawn up for entire territory of the municipality, 5 to 10 years validity ▪ Building regulation plan, that determines the use of building land, does not have an expiry date 	<p>Graz is located) local development schemes are obligatory. They act as framework for the zoning plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoning plans are binding for land owners ▪ Building regulation plans are decrees issued by the municipal council.
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Main local revenues are the municipal tax (taxable base is the gross salary of the employee, 3% of the gross salary have to be paid by the employer as municipal tax) and municipal charges.

In Austria there are no grants for municipalities to support urban renewal.

For small municipalities (villages) there are state and federal grants to support village renewal (e.g. renovation of public places) and participation processes to generate in public private consensus visions for the villages. But these grants are reserved for small municipalities and for example the ViTo partner city Graz cannot benefit.

The three levels with competences in spatial planning do not cooperate in a narrow sense, but a kind of mutual reconciliation should be guaranteed as follows:

- There is an information process and discussion while the elaboration of the new ÖREK 2011 (Austrian Spatial Development Concept),
- The states involve the municipalities in elaboration of state and regional development plans,
- Municipalities involve the state in the elaboration of local plans.

There is the possibility to request plan changes (e.g. change of regional development plans because of purposes of municipalities), but the chances are not estimated very high by our Austrian ViTo partner.

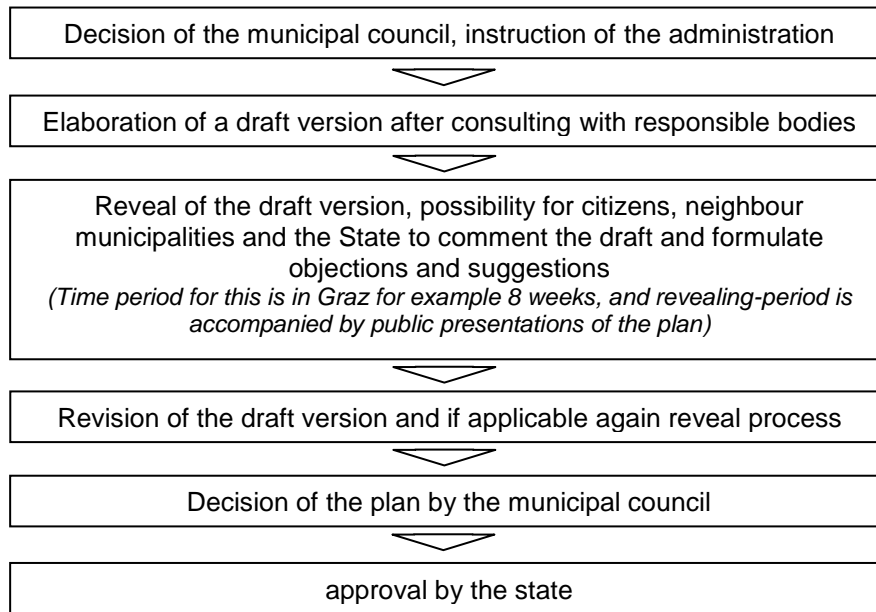
In the last few years regional cooperation became more and more important in Austria to ensure a more efficient provision of infrastructures. In Styria, for example, the state formed so called “Kleinregionen” (small regions) more or less as voluntary cooperations of some municipalities. These small regions are obliged to work out ‘small’ regional development concepts in which they define municipal tasks that will be carried out together in the future. In detail these small regional development concepts contains:

1. An analysis of the regional structure, the cooperation profile, infrastructures, financial situation etc.
2. A SWOT Analysis
3. Determination of joint strategic objectives
4. Determination of joint tasks.

At that time no experiences with this new instrument are available.

General procedures

The planning procedure to work out all local plans (local development scheme, zoning plan and building regulation plan) is as follows:



The duration of the process varies: while the planning process for local development schemes and zoning plans from the decision till the approval last four to five years (example Graz), the process to approve a building regulation plan is much faster. In Styria a new legislative initiative will be passed that schedule a time period of max. 18 month for the planning process of a building regulation plan.

Reality

A gap between federal, state and regional planning principles, general visions etc. and planning reality could be monitored in small municipalities. The municipalities' local planning responsibility is often used to stabilise or increase the municipal budget by providing zoning plans and building regulation plans to attract new inhabitants or new companies even if efficient allocation of resources is not ensured. Main reason for this fact refers to the tax system: most tax is collected by the federal state that re-distributes the money based on certain rules which are mostly depending on population number.

There are barely informal plans or programmes set up by municipalities.

Actors in regional and urban planning

Next to administrative cross-sectoral involvement in the planning processes private actors can participate especially on local level.

In general, it could be ascertained that the participation of citizens is firstly dependent on different city districts (while in some the number of participating citizens is always quite high, in others the ratio always is very low mostly due to social backgrounds), and secondly, higher if citizens are affected by the plan. In Graz the ratio of participants is quite high because a certain kind of participation culture has established. There are several citizens' initiatives and citizens are politically active on the local level. In Graz there are various advisory bodies:

- A citizen participation advisory body (composed of some representatives of the different administrative departments and some citizens out of a participation process "Zeit für Graz" (time for Graz, a participation process to elaborate a joint vision). This body is assessed as not 'representative' by our Austrian project partner because the involved citizens do not articulate all inhabitants' interests (too old, no migrant etc.),
- A migrant advisory body (elected members by migrants parallel election to local elections),
- A youth parliament,
- A disabled commissioner.

Additional information

Following specific problems or challenges for the partner city Graz were reported:

- Fine particles problem
- Transport, a regional transport concept is in progress
- New challenges concerning the new concept of "small regions"
- A new regulation which constitutes that all new construction need to have solar power to warm/heat the water. That could have impacts on the city shape.

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<http://www.oerok.gv.at/>

<http://www.oerok.gv.at/raum-region/oesterreichisches-raumentwicklungskonzept/oerek-2011.html>

<http://www.oerok.gv.at/raum-region/oesterreichisches-raumentwicklungskonzept/oerek-2011/pip-paper-in-progress.html>

State of Styria:

<http://www.steiermark.at/>

<http://www.raumplanung.steiermark.at/cms/beitrag/10020773/265335/>

City of Graz:

<http://www.graz.at/>

<http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10020472/311412/> (department of urban planning)

<http://www.graz.at/cms/ziel/1604016/DE/> (local development scheme)

<http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10023910/425976> (zoning plan)

<http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10068218/1277375> (building regulation plans)

Telephone interview: Eva Maria Benedikt, on 12th of May, 2010

Greece

Framework conditions of the Urban Development of Greece

Since the mid-nineties Greece has more or less endeavoured to restructure the highly centralised spatial and urban planning system to a more decentralised and regionalised one. The progress is described as a slow one, which is caused by the bureaucratic inertia and ineffectiveness, and by the resistance of the current and long established structures to the changes. Constitutional problems and decisions on the national level also obstructed the progress, moreover, decentralisation processes were hindered also by the financial dependence of the sub-national levels on the central state.²

The priorities, especially concerning the financial crises are assigning to topics of employment and economic growth, and mainly to the tourism sector. These priorities were also envisaged before the éclat and written down in the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013 of the Ministry of Economic and Finance, which also included the main objectives of spatial development.

Concerning the spatial and urban development Greece is characterised by storn urban-rural dichotomy. Accompanied by the inflow of population in the urban centres, they have to deal with a lot of challenges, such as:

- Deficits of the infrastructure,
- Malfunctions of the transport system resulting from infrastructure deficits,
- Overdevelopment of private space at expense of the public space,
- Urban sprawl and the existing rule of “ex post” planning,
- Restructuring of cities and their cultural centres that included upheavals of functionality and property,
- High risk of malfunction and degradation of districts as a result of increasing segregation and social exclusion,
- Increasing pollution.

Whereas the rural areas characterised relatively low income levels, unfavourable demographic development, lower educational level, deficit of social and cultural infrastructure, lack of new technical infrastructure (access and use) and a high dependence on the primary sector.

Concerning these challenges, the government is trying to cope with the social and economic disparities, but there is a wide gap between the theory and praxis.

In the discussions and implementations of the Leipzig Charta issues, there has not been much preogress. The influence of the European policy and especially the development funds take an important part by the restructuring of the spatial planning system and implementation of cohesion policy.

² Tosics I.; et.al. (2009)

State and administration structures and instruments of spatial planning

During the last 30 years, the spatial planning system of Greece changed from a centralised structure to a more decentralised one. More power and responsibilities on spatial planning issues were delegated to regional and local level. Nevertheless, the spatial planning of Greece is described as a "planning system: [with] multiplicity of laws and regulations, predominance of a centralized, regulatory and hierarchical planning style."³ Table 1. illustrates the different administrative levels with their current responsibility on spatial planning issues.

Table 1: Overview of Administrative Levels and Responsibilities on Spatial Planning

Administrative Level	Responsibility
National Level	
Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formulation of government policy on environment, urban planning, housing ○ Elaboration of regional plans, urban master plans, statutory town plans, environmental protection programmes ○ Approval of General Town Plans ○ Guidance for implementation plans ○ National economic and social development plans ○ Public investments programme, Management of funds (ERDF, etc.) ○ Guidance of the integrated development programs, supervision of programmes implementation, technical support
Several Ministries (e.g. of Greek Development, Ministry of Rural Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different duties with spatial relevance
Regional Level	
Regional Government (13 administrative regions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concretisation of national planning guidelines on spatial structure, land use, infrastructure and settlement networks, town plans, housing and building regulations ○ Collection of information and production of spatial studies to assist the regional spatial planning of the central government
Local Level (two-tiered system)	
Prefectures: (54 Prefectures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delegated power of several ministries (except the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Work) concerning compulsory acquisition of land under certain conditions ○ Advisory and interceded functions in planning process
Municipalities and Communes (900 Municipalities and 133 Communes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responsibilities are limited to public functions, such as technical infrastructure; creation, construction and maintenance of public buildings; urban public transport, etc. ○ Advisory activity and interceded function during the production of statutory plans (general development plans, town plans)

³ Giannakourrou, G.

Source: Own edition based on the literature listed in the references

The Greek planning system possesses several instruments for the land use issues, that comprises strategic and framework plans and programs of spatial planning on national, regional and local level. In the hierarchical system of spatial planning, which means that plans of higher tiers have a binding force for plans on the tier below, allows the local level only a limited autonomy of planning and arrangement (Table 2.).

Table 2: Types of Spatial Plans and the Approving Authority

Types of Plan	Surface of the Area	Approving Authority
Strategic		
General frameworks for spatial planning and sustainable development	Whole country	National Parliament
Special frameworks for spatial planning and sustainable development	Special areas of the country (e.g. coastal areas, islands, mountainous zones), sectoral activities of national importance, networks and technical, social and administrative services of national interests	Coordinating Committee of governmental policy for spatial planning and sustainable development (inter-governmental organisations)
Regional Frameworks for spatial planning and sustainable development	Region	Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works
Framework		
Master Plans of Athens and Thessaloniki	Metropolitan Area of Athens and Thessaloniki	By Parliament Act
Master Plans of other major cities	Urban regions of these cities	President of the Republic (Presidential Degree)
General Urban Plans, Plans of Spatial and Settlement Organisations for open cities	Municipality with 2000 and more inhabitants; one or more municipalities/communes of rural areas with 2000 or less inhabitants each	General Secretary of the Region
Regulatory		
Different types of town plans	Neighbourhood level of one municipality or commune	Presidential Degree (with exception of "minor modifications" of the above plans that may be approved by relevant local authorities)
Implementation and land contribution plans	Neighbourhood level of one Municipality or Commune	Prefect or Mayor
Zoning instruments	Functional planning urban or/and rural areas	Minister for Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works

Source: Giannakourou, 2010

Planning procedures and reality

It can be ascertained that all plans and programs were developed with a consultation of the next horizontal and vertical levels.

There are two ways to initiate the planning process. It might be started by the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Work initiated the process. The other possibility is the initiative of the local level, as shown in the figure. In both cases, the initiator is obliged to facilitate and support the participation of local public and private actors during the elaboration of the town plan. Nevertheless, involvement of stakeholders might not guarantee the adjustment of local plans to their needs.

Between the established and statutory land use and spatial planning system and the reality, there is a wide gap. The differences based on the lack of horizontal as well as vertical coordination between the different interests as well as a planning system that is predominated by a centralised structures. These problems are fostered by the inefficient system of the state bureaucracy that often acts in an inconsequent way. However, the slight autonomy in planning accompanied by the assignments of finance for the local levels is also a key obstacle for the local agents (local state/citizens/entrepreneurs etc.) to control the planning process is. Both problems limit the competencies of the municipalities.

Actors in regional and urban planning

Concerning the regional and urban planning there are obligatory hearings of the relevant levels. Certainly, the legal frame is limited and only established as advisory function. The decisions are taken by the government. The right for self-determination is not given either for municipalities or for the local stakeholders.

The Greek planning comprehension is different from Central European practices. This must be seen in the context to the planning history and the significance of spatial planning. In a country where “ex post” planning is a current method, regulations are not assertive, moreover, plans and programmes are established by law but never drawn up, there are heavy deficits and problems that have to be solved.

Nevertheless, conditions for the participation of local administration and stakeholders with more competences should be established, and their viewpoints should be given a greater emphasis. The progress towards a more decentralised planning system with clear competences and a suitable financial system might help to articulate and harmonise the interests of the concerned actors.

Additional information

The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, situated in the northeast of Greece, making it by distance from the metropolitan centres of the country and from the “traditional” growth axis, is the outermost region. This region includes the prefectures of Evros, Rodopi, Xanthi, Kavala and Drama and two islands, Thassos and Samothraki that apart from their highly interesting environment are an important tourist destination. During the last decade, the relations of the region with neighbouring countries to the north and east are constantly improving, that enhances the region’s role as a ‘gate’ region of the country and of European Union. This is favourable process that opened up new perspectives for development for small towns in the region, including Xanthi.

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Italy

Framework conditions in the partner countries

Issues the Italian cities face are demographic situation, relationship between large and smaller urban centres and a north-south dichotomy. SMESTOs with good accessibility to large urban centres showed demographic and economic growth in the last decade. They also gained position in quality of life rankings. Another issue, much more typical for large cities, is criminality. Italian cities have been marked by recent processes of suburbanisation, social and spatial polarisation, marginalisation and finally gentrification. Specific problems are unemployment, crime, drug abuse, low quality construction, modernisation backlogs, poor infrastructure and unplanned developments, especially in the south.

An explicit national urban policy has been established since the 1990s. However, until present day, the content of urban policy, such concrete priorities and actions have not been formulated yet. The development of a clear national urban policy suffers from the lack of coordination and cooperation between various government departments and institutions. Practice in the last decade moved towards urban renewal and regeneration, a shift of focus from housing to infrastructure, an increase of financing through projects and more attention towards environmental issues. The most recent main topics in urban development policy are urban safety, management of migration flows and integration of immigrants into the urban social structure. The main challenges for the integrated development are establishing and organising a national strategy and activation, participation and empowerment of the residents.

The Leipzig Charta has not been an important topic in Italian planning. It has some influence on policy formulation level, but no direct influence on legislation or even planning practice. According to our correspondent, most planners do not even have knowledge of its existence.

State and administration structure

In Italy, there are four administrative levels, which all have certain competences in spatial planning: state, regions, provinces, municipalities. With consequent reforms, regions have gained larger degree of legislative powers. ESPON project 2.3.2 has characterised Italian government system as regionalised and moving towards federal. Provinces and municipalities have autonomous statutes, regulations, organisation and administration. Regions, provinces and towns all have a similar government structure, consisting of three main bodies: the council, the giunta (administration) and its president (or the mayor in the towns). Another form of territorial administration is the prefecture (*prefettura*). The prefectures co-ordinate central government departments at provincial and regional level, support and supervise local authorities, but do not carry out direct scrutiny of their measures. Prefectures are organised on the level of provinces and regions.

There have been efforts to set a limit to the number and minimal size of provinces and municipalities. Despite this fact, there has been increase of their numbers. A variety of territorial associations have been established more recently. This situation has contributed to the creation of overlaps for the efficiency of local administration. Regions, provinces and towns have financial autonomy and are financially fairly independent from central government. Around 50 % of municipality revenue comes from tax sources and around 50 %

of it from own taxation. Municipalities and provinces have two sources of revenue: the whole or a part of a yield of certain taxes, mainly income tax, and revenue on their own taxation which includes mostly land tax, supplement to income tax and house waste disposal tax.

The municipalities have limited powers in exercising their competences. They are responsible for designation of spatial plans, which are in turn tightly regulated by state and regional law as well as the provincial spatial plan. The municipal decisions have to be adopted within a time period fixed by the region or prefecture, which may intervene whenever the towns do not (cannot) fulfil their tasks.

Instruments of spatial planning

The basic law regulating spatial planning is law No. 1150 of 1942, 'Urban Planning Law', that defines planning levels and outlines the content of plans. New planning instruments have been introduced by '*Programmi integrati*' and '*Programmi di Recupero urbano*' recently. The national government is the body responsible for providing the framework for planning activity (legislation and guidelines). There is no spatial plan issued on the level of the nation-state, planning takes place at all the other three spatial levels. The two most important institutions, responsible for planning and urban development at national level are the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transportation and the Ministry of Environment, Territory and Sea.

Regions have to prepare the Regional Territorial Plan (It. PTR: *Piano Territoriale Regionale*) and can prepare the Landscape Plan (*Piano Territoriale Paesistico*). Regions also exercise a supervision over planning in provinces and municipalities. The PTR:

- identifies sites for new urban development or for particular uses, as well as corridors for principal communication systems;
- defines the strategic targets of socio-economic development and the regional spatial system management;
- defines general principles for the protection of natural and man-made resources; and
- provides and outline for thematic regional planning, general provincial planning, and negotiated planning.

The contents of the PTR are binding for provincial and municipal plans, but do not have direct legal obligations for investors. It covers entire or only part of the regional territory. The procedures for forming the plan are determined by regional law. There is no time limit of validity.

Provinces have to prepare the provincial plan or '*Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale*' (PTCP). In addition, the provinces co-ordinate the approval of the communal planning tools, according to the guidelines provided by the Provincial and Regional Plan. The PTCP:

- determines guidelines for land use planning (contains a general zoning plan, with special environmental and zones of development limitations, e.g. flood zones);
- determines general location of important infrastructures;
- defines socio-economic role of the municipalities and their position in the provincial settlement system;
- provides guidelines for municipal planning involving inter-communal issues.

The content of PTCP is binding for municipal spatial plans and regional sectoral plans, but do not have direct legal power over decisions of investors. It covers the territory of the entire province, and there is no time limit of validity. PTCP has to be approved by the region before entering into force.

Municipalities have to prepare the Land use plan or '*Piano Regolatore Generale*' (PRG), which:

- identifies the future development needs;
- defines land use in the territory of the municipality;
- indicates communication routes, public areas, areas for public building;
- contains clauses on protection of environment and landscape;
- provides a basis to prepare executive plans.

PRG has a direct legal power over investors only in certain cases, where no executive plans are used. It is prepared for the entire territory of the municipality and has no time limit of validity, but it has to be regularly reviewed. Newly prepared or reviewed PRG has to be reviewed by the region before entering into force.

There is also a number of tools the central government introduced to support the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods and urban development in general:

- The *Integrated intervention programmes* focus primarily on the construction of new housing and aim to combine private and public funding;
- The *Urban Reclaim Programmes* were set up to combat structural and urban development shortcomings of run-down public housing;
- *Urban Requalification Programmes* are intended for structural and urban redevelopments of buildings, infrastructures and public spaces in urban areas, affected by deindustrialisation and dereliction.
- *Urban Requalification and Sustainable Territorial Development Programmes* are strategic tools for wide urban and territorial areas, extending the action-range to other sectors, such as infrastructural and environmental networks, in order to promote sustainable development and improve public welfare, with private involvement in the works, whether private or public.
- *Neighbourhood Agreements* are innovative urban programmes, financed by the National Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, aiming to improve the housing quality, to extend the facilities as services, green areas and infrastructures, and to increase the employment rate. The agreements co-ordinate the work of institutions at different levels and regulate the possible involvement of external partners. The agreements are very effective in implementing participant procedures and strengthening the social relationship.

General procedures

The planning procedure is formalised and it can be described as plan-led (as opposed to development-led). There is a hierarchy of spatial plans, which leaves municipalities relatively little space for own decisions in the process of the preparation of the PRG, as it is basically

the regional government, that prepares the PTCP and not a body acting on regional level, but formed by the municipalities themselves. Interests of different sectors are taken into account early in the process of PRG preparation. Various municipal offices, public offices, agencies and organisations cooperate already at the preparation of the PRG proposal. The population is brought into the process only after the first approval of the PRG proposal by the municipal council with 30 days of public display. The comments from the public are reviewed; the municipality has a free discretion at approving or rejecting them. After the new proposal of the PRG is again approved by the municipal council, it is then reviewed by the region, which also issues comments. These comments are basis for a new version of the PRG proposal. It enters into force after it is approved (for the third time) by the municipal council and the region.

Municipalities of a certain size (10000–20000 inhabitants) have their own planning departments. In other municipalities all the plan preparation is outsourced. The spatial plans are supposed to be prepared before sectoral plans. In case there is a valid sectoral plan, it must be usually revised and confirmed again. In Italy there is a limited experience with participation processes, according to ESPON 2.3.2. Next to the PRG instruments currently allowing any kind of local public consultation and participation are *Urban Reclaim Programmes*, *Urban Requalification Programmes*, *Urban Requalification* and *Sustainable Territorial Development Programmes* and *Neighbourhood Agreements*.

Reality

There is a wide gap between plans and the actual development in larger cities of the central and southern part of the country. In the latter areas even 50 % of all developments inside certain municipalities can be illegal and are often not equipped with adequate infrastructures. There is a legislation (*Concono*), which enables legalisation of illegally developed areas.

Actors in regional and urban planning

Usually, the active actors in urban renewal are the land/real estate owners, both public and private, interested to improve/valorise their properties for social (public) or market (private) reasons as a basic general motivation. Lot of plans have been made for historic centers (big and small) since the 1970s, and more recently for obsolete industrial areas. Associations may force for urban renewal but only the investment capability can make renewal effective. The cultural sensibility for historic centers may be identified since the mid '50es and this is considered the most important contribution of planning practice to the Italian towns and villages.

Moldova

Framework conditions in Moldova

Moldova's urban and regional policies have to adjust to unusually large transformations, while facing a special combination of external and internal problems, such as

- post-soviet and post-socialist political transition and its protractedness (the destabilising impact of party political conflicts),
- geopolitical changes (the rise of a sovereign state, transformation of relations with CIS, Romania and the EU, the Transnistria conflict, establishment ATU Gagauzia),
- economic decline, the structural problems of the economy (Europe's poorest country, the collapse of the Soviet markets, delays in modernisation and a low level of FDI inflows, etc.),
- social problems and conflicts (adverse demographic trends, emigration on a large scale, strong dependence on emigrants' remittances, a high poverty rate),
- unfavourable changes in the (urban) spatial structure:
 - Chisinau's prevalent dominance (high concentration of economic development and consumption, significant imbalances between the capital city and the rest of the country in terms of physical infrastructure, living standards, etc.)
 - desurbanisation: decline of towns (decline in urban population to 39% by 2004, ruralisation of lifestyle, depopulation in a lot of towns, "dead cities", economic crisis of urban areas, a high level of poverty in small towns, few potential "growth poles")
 - underdevelopment of rural localities (collapse of industry, unsuccessful reform in agriculture, lags in economic and social well-being, a disproportionate composition of local communities caused by emigration)
 - imbalances in the development of localities (significant regional, inter- and intra-rayon, urban-rural inequalities).

Expert debates are about the possible solutions to these problems; they raise the issue of sustainable (urban) development, the pros and cons of development along "growth poles", the issue of regionalisation and regional centres (and urban roles in general) as well as the tasks related to the changeover from centralised soviet-type planning to EU-type (urban) spatial planning. The issue of the Leipzig Charta was not discussed.

Explicit urban development policy is missing from governmental policy framework. Of the 4 priorities of the National Strategy for Regional Development (2007-2011), the 2nd deals with settlement development: "Development of tools supporting socio-economic growth, convergence and partnerships between small cities and encourage entrepreneurship spirit in rural areas". In contrast, the draft paper on the Concept of Sustainable Urban Development of the Republic of Moldova – elaborated with the financial assistance of UNDP – sets 5 strategic objectives (turning Chisinau into a modern metropolis embedded in the European space, the development of a social and cultural milieu that can be characterised by a balance of interests, providing a habitat with a lasting and comfortable environment, creating an attractive business climate and a metropolitan agglomeration of integrated and harmoniously

developed localities). However, the successive governments have failed to study this development document.

State and administrative structure

As a result of reforms subject to political changes, currently, there are 2 levels of the system of self-government: i) 900 *mayoralities* (operating in villages and towns), ii) 32 *rayons* and (Chisinau and Balti) *municipalities*. The legal status of ATU Gagauzia (with 3 rayons and a parliament of its own and a directly elected Governor) is regulated in a separate law. The administrative status of the Transnistrian region is to be granted with an advanced level of decentralisation (but within the clause of the state's unitary system).

As there is no implementation plan, Act of 2006 on Administrative Decentralisation has not yet become fully applicable (and, as a result, it is still at variance with a few legislative norms and procedures). It clearly defines 2 functions of local governments at both levels. Spatial/urban planning is among the „functions of its own” (statutory functions), listed in detail, of the 1st level of self-governance (villages, cities). When describing „delegated function”, the government exercises a higher degree of flexibility.

Frequent changes in the legal status (e.g. Chisinau was a provincial centre until 1992, then it became a “capital city”; during a reform aimed at creating counties, a large number of small towns lost their original function) has caused significant difficulty. Local budgets can hardly mobilise revenues (due to the prevailing economic situation and the shortcomings of the redistribution system). Their 3 major funds are their own revenues, shared revenues and less transparent transfers from the central budget. They seem to depend on the last one to an increasingly large extent.

Instruments of spatial planning

Strategic planning with a spatial (regional) perspective commenced as late as in the early 2000's after the era of socialist central planning followed by the era of a 'market solves everything' approach. The *National Strategy for Regional Development* based on the *Regional Development Act* (2006) represents one type of plans. The implementation only started after the 2009 general elections, when Regional Development Agencies were also set up. In addition to the findings of social and economic research, this strategy also relies on the *Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy* as well as EU experience. Focussing on the Northern, Central and the Southern development regions first, then on the Chisinau, ATU Gagauzia, and Transnistria regions, the strategy is implemented in several separate stages. Currently, Regional Development Councils approve their own strategies.

Meanwhile, regulated by the 1996 Act on the Bases of Urban Planning and Territorial Arrangement and a series of government resolutions, '*spatial planning*' with its roots in the soviet-type practice is still in use. Plans of this kind are prepared at national, rayonal and local levels. Local plans are *general urban plans*, and only 30% of all the cities and towns have their post-soviet versions.

A major source of problems is that these two types of plans are out of sync, fall under the competences of different ministries (government agencies), operate under different financial schemes and pertain to different regional units.

General procedures, reality, actors in regional and urban planning

In line with the soviet traditions, architects, overseen by politicians, had a decisive role in planning procedures. Post-soviet spatial planning still focuses on 'drawing maps'. Local economists and international organisations and companies facilitate the spread of a new approach to strategic planning.

Though *public hearing* regarding the preparation of spatial development documents is a statutory obligation, the law does not specify how such public hearing is to be organised/implemented. As urban residents usually do not understand the presentations held by architects or (as a result) they are not truly interested in such presentations, there is no constructive criticism. The effective methods of participatory planning are yet to gain ground.

For the time being, it is still early days for an analysis of the gap between reality and planning. Currently, there are no NGO's among the effectively participating actors in planning, nor is there any actor to implement modernisation. Though regional development encourages all types of partnerships, the mechanism of an effective and viable PPP is yet to be worked out.

Additional information

According to the representatives of the VITO partner city, a general problem facing urban/regional planning is that the old way of thinking still prevails and that the entire planning process is in transition. Often, completed plans are not actual instruments of development, rather, they are just another new document. New regional development plans are often perceived as a kind of fund raising opportunity.

The fact that national economic policy focuses on finding resolutions to the problems of villages (rural areas) and the agricultural sector is detrimental to Chisinau. Opinions seem to be divided as to whether the capital city is the engine of the national economy or it absorbs the resources needed elsewhere. Though national legislation supports the municipality of Chisinau (and relies mainly on its experience), there is ground yet to be covered, and changes are also needed badly. The fact that, for example, land use legislation cannot keep pace with the needs that have arisen in the wake of privatisation affects the capital city to a large extent.

Discussions concerning the protection of the historical part of the city between the national urbanistic council of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development and the municipal urbanistic council are on-going. Debates over and conflicts related to urban development are also common within Chisinau itself. Related to the creation of a recreational zone, one of the most recent of them is conflicting interests regarding the preservation of the landscape heritage and the needs of modernisation.

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Slovakia

Framework conditions for national urban policies

Current challenges that spatial (urban) policies face in Slovakia are rooted in the practices of 'socialist' urban development and also in the profound social changes of the transition period. The centrally planned system produced socio-spatial imbalances by stimulating industrialisation-led urbanisation and thus, focusing housing, transportation and public services development in major urban centres (particularly, in Bratislava and Kosice). Heavy problems stemming from that rapid growth, such as the deficiencies of the housing stock in quantitative and qualitative terms (prefabricated housing estates), services lagging behind population growth, the damage of the urban environment and the decline of the historical centres produced urban problems and conflicts that has not been resolved yet.

In the transition period, new socio-spatial processes emerged:

- Economic restructuring driven primarily by the crisis of the centrally planned system and of the 'socialist' industry, moreover, by the agents that entered increasingly liberalised national market through privatisation and FDI schemes, stimulated restructuring primarily in urban economies, while poverty (unemployment and the decline of collective consumption) hit increasingly the rural areas. However, tertiary-sector-led development was a selective process: small provincial towns and industrial towns in east Slovakia faced with long-lasting economic decline, while the dominance of the capital city was reinforced (in business services, R&D, etc.)
- As result of economic restructuring, unemployment, poverty and social problems (i.e. crime and delinquency) grew omni-present phenomena in cities, concentrated increasingly in low-status urban areas, primarily, in uniform, dilapidated housing estates.
- The housing sector that was (and still is) hit by structural problems and shortages, was a scene to rising investments in the 2000s. New developments reinforced socio-spatial polarisation, and gave a spur to the scarcely controlled transformation of the urban fringe and the suburbanisation (particularly, in/around Bratislava and Kosice). However, population density is still relatively high in Slovak cities that cannot be remedied easily: there's a lack of land for property development and prices are high. Meanwhile, extensive industrial areas remained non- or underutilised that reflect the imbalance of power relations that are at work in shaping urban spaces.
- Economic restructuring raised new environmental problems, such as increasing traffic congestion, and the loss of agricultural land.

Socio-spatial transition resulted in an increasing imbalance at national scale (selective development of the urban network), regionally (decline of rural areas, with weak urban/service centres) and also locally. Thus, national policies had to deal with 'socialist' urban heritage and the consequences of uneven development at regional and local scale, in a highly diverse settlement system.

The key issue that raised a long-lasting social debate in relation to urban problems was the division of power in controlling spatial processes. In the 1990s, there was a trend toward decentralisation (Municipality Act, 1990) that was reversed to support political centralisation (territorial administration reform, 1996). The shifts and turns in spatial administration resulted in inconsistencies.

From 2002 on, a consistent and an increasingly decentralised legal and institutional framework for regional development and territorial administration were emerging in which, urban development and planning was embedded. Other issues that raised social debate and stimulated area-based interventions were the problems of historical centres, rehabilitation of housing estates, economic development (e.g. industrial parks for greenfield development). However, urban issues were addressed largely by sectoral policies, such as transportation network development, housing policy (financial support schemes), and economic development (e.g. support for SMEs).

The structure of state administration

The 2002 reform of territorial administration provided a new framework for spatial policies in Slovakia. The role of regions was re-defined in state-administration and also in spatial planning and development as autonomous entities with elected representatives, clearly defined functions, competences and resources. Thus, recently, a three-tiered system exists in Slovakia:

- **Municipalities:** basic units of territorial administration and self-governance, with relatively large autonomy (since 1990); they provide the framework of collective consumption; hold the rights to lay tax and tariffs; act as business entities and cooperate with other organisations on behalf of the community; act also as part of the state administration (e.g. as agents of housing and of social policy); they have legally defined relations to the central state. Municipalities' are gained from tax revenues shared by the central and local state (personal income tax, road taxes etc.), moreover, resources provided by the central state to run the systems of public services and utilities (e.g. waste and sewage management), to support economic restructuring (e.g. by infrastructure development) and to manage social problems (social housing, rehabilitation of old decaying stock etc.).
- **Regions:** legally defined entities; they have clearly-set relations to the central state; they're led by elected bodies, have their revenues and functions in spatial planning, development and in providing services at regional scale (education, health, road system, social services, promoting tourism, etc.); the institutions of territorial administration of ministries are being adjusted to this territorial framework.
- **The nation-state** still has a key role in controlling resources through sectoral policies and institutions; thus, still there's a tight control over urban development through the institutions of state administration in terms of regulations (e.g. Ministry of Culture: regulations of protection of cultural heritage) and finance (grant systems for development; financing collective consumption on normative basis: Ministry of Internal Affairs). Moreover, the central governmental bodies (Ministry of Regional Development) define the principles and goals for regional development (based on EU development documents) and the key intervention areas (Spatial Perspectives on Slovakia; National Strategic Plan).

- Although, there's a district-system (LAU4) existing in Slovakia, this unit performs only as a tools for territorial administration, and its significance is gradually shrinking. Moreover, LAU2-regions (4) that are defined basically as frameworks for development and statistics to meet the EU administrative requirements, their role is less significant compared to regions (LAU3).

The instruments and key agents of spatial and regional planning

The 'Spatial Development Perspectives', that is the strategic national development document define the principles for urban development (polycentricity, European embeddedness of urban development, the idea of 'compact cities' etc.) and public instruments for local planning. The Act on Regional Development (2001) defined the framework for local strategic planning and made it compulsory (a condition for applying for grants) to all territorial levels (municipalities and LAU3-regions). Moreover, the Territorial Planning Act defined the agents and competencies in physical planning, delegating power to municipal, regional and national level.

The key position in spatial and regional planning is still held by the central state and controlled by the Ministry of Construction and Development. Since 2004, this body controls both regional (cross-sectoral, strategic) and spatial (physical) planning. Nevertheless, sectoral planning and development that have a major impact on regional development are not incorporated into the regional and spatial planning process properly.

Regional bodies have a competence to prepare plans and control spatial processes accordingly in their territories (since 2004). They prepare a regional regulatory plan that is binding to all entities (including municipalities and their planning activities) acting inside the region.

Municipal planning works as part of this structure, however, local bodies have a fairly large room for defining local goals and development projects and involve partners in those processes. Municipalities with more than 2000 inhabitants are obliged to prepare physical (master) plans, and major cities can make and approve a particular set of regulations for building activities in urban zones (detailed regulatory plans). Municipalities have a fairly large room for association with other such entities to define and achieve common goals.

The planning process

Planning the spatial development in Slovakia is a hierarchical process: local (urban) strategic and physical planning is embedded into a hierarchical system of national and regional plans. The legal framework the planning process is defined by the Act on Regional Development Act and by Territorial Planning Act (2001).

At national level, national policies and legal frameworks for planning was/is formulated by the central government (Ministry of Construction and Regional Development), through cross-sectoral (cross-ministerial) negotiations, and series of consultations with municipalities, business associations professional organizations and NGOs. Stakeholders are involved also in formulating and monitoring support schemes.

At local level, municipalities are empowered and also obliged to prepare local plans for development (a strategic plan) and also a physical plan. The planning process is initiated by the municipal council and the mayor, and monitored by the elected body of municipality

members' corporation. Since 2001 on, stakeholders from various interest groups (citizens, local business communities, neighbourhoods, local NGOs) were increasingly involved in local planning processes.

The objectives and the structure of municipal strategic and physical plans have to be in line with regional and national plans – this correspondence is reviewed by bodies responsible for planning at regional level (appointed by the regional council) and by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development. Planning documents are usually prepared by private consultants, however, they are obliged by the planning acts to involve a wide range of actors. Generally, municipalities have a well-defined and significant role on planning regulating spatial processes.

Planning process at regional level is initiated and controlled in a similar manner, but involving not only professionals (private experts) but also municipalities of the region in the planning process. The organisations of municipalities (particularly, the organisation of major cities) are increasingly active in shaping regional plans and cooperating with regional authorities in controlling regulating spatial processes.

Reality: the changing system of planning and spatial processes

In general terms, the changes in the planning system resulted in an improvement of local planning capacities and 'technologies': there was a progress in strategic planning at municipal level, that was supported by a grant scheme and a learning process (municipal administration). Moreover, an intermediate level (scale) emerged in territorial planning and administration that might ease and counteract to the centralised structures in the distribution and control of resources. In the 2000s, there was an improvement in the quality of urban life, too, in terms of urban infrastructure, housing and renewal of historical spaces. However, social problems (re)produced by economic restructuring are devolved to local level, that municipalities (mostly, in small and medium size towns) cannot respond to in lack of professional capacities, institutional and financial devices. In the future, the heaviest issues that urban policies should react to are urban sprawl, the change of historical centres driven by commercial capital, and the problems of 'socialist' housing estates. The majority of problems cannot be resolved locally, as they step across municipal boundaries and need a regional response (e.g. transformation of the urban fringe, suburbanisation, the complex problem of urban-rural dichotomy).

Financing urban development and running the systems of collective consumption makes municipalities and other sub-governmental bodies largely dependent on central state resources, EU funds and on the agents of the business sector (e.g. on developers). Local revenues are (generally) insufficient to fulfil the duties of municipalities, to promote economic development and improve the quality of life. Thus, the share of sectoral sources provided by the central state budget is increasing, moreover, the principles (development priorities) of the development grant systems are defined by central governmental bodies – and EU programmes. Daily practices of urban development and planning are shaped largely also by business interests that might 'overwrite' public ones.

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Slovenia

Framework conditions in the partner countries

The main current challenges to urban planning are suburbanisation and demographic decline in towns, low rate of equipment with infrastructure networks in suburban areas, high reliance on car travel even in larger urban centres, growth of suburban shopping centres with simultaneous decline of retail in town centres, high real estate prices especially in Ljubljana and coastal area. This is connected to high owner-occupancy rate, low degree of legal protection of tenants and large number of vacant flats (real estate tax is not yet introduced). After the change of economic and political system in 1990 numerous brownfield zones within the urban area came into being, mostly abandoned industrial and military sites. Gradually, deprived residential areas developed as well, comprising mostly of pre-WW II worker settlements and certain housing estates from the socialist period. The main topics of the expert discussions during the last decade were suburbanisation, real estate prices, city traffic and subsequent failures of reforming the planning system.

Slovenia has no explicit urban development policy, however, relevant strategic orientations can be found in spatial planning legislation and strategic documents. Due to constant reforms of the Slovenian planning system (new spatial planning acts adopted in 2002 and again in 2007, while majority of valid master plans are based on the 1984 legislation). The policies, defined on the basis of 2002 planning act, were heavily based on the ESDP and had emphasis on polycentric urban network, higher urban densities, mixed uses, development of areas within urbanised area borders and brownfield before greenfield developments. However, the validity of the Spatial Development Strategy and the Spatial Order, documents which defined abovementioned policies, will be cancelled with the introduction of the new national spatial plan. Its content was not known at the time of the preparation of this report. In any case, no new policy documents had markedly influenced planning practice before 2007. The legislation of 2007 is certainly a step away from the policy orientations of the ESDP. The Spatial Planning Act is focused on sustainable development and giving priority to re-urbanisation as two basic principles of spatial planning, but does not elaborate these principles later. In this atmosphere, integrated planning (the Leipzig Charter) could not influence the national policies and was not a topic of the discussions among planners.

Spatial planning and regional development are two separate policies in Slovenia, and the latter is more influential than spatial planning. Regional development policy is not explicitly turned towards urban development. It is area based on the level of NUTS3 or NUTS5 units; it is sector based on the level of individual programmes and projects. Its main aim is to diminish the development differences between the regions, especially between more developed centre and west of the country and less developed east. Regional development policy is primarily economic in its nature. It does not plan the development of any spatial structures. It is spatial in sense that it distributes financial support to the regions and in lesser degree also municipalities in accordance to their degree of economic development.

Other relevant policies include housing policy, heritage policy and traffic policy. Environmental protection policy has a very strong influence on the spatial planning in municipalities. The system of municipal finances is also a very important issue; it favours suburban municipalities over urban centres.

State and administration structure

Slovenia is a centralised state with only two levels of local self-government, which also hold responsibilities in spatial planning: state and 210 municipalities. There are local branches of the state administration, called the 'Administration units', organised on NUTS4 level. They issue building permits. Some ministries have regional offices organised on NUTS3 level. Inspectorate for environment and spatial planning works on this level. There are also RDAs in every NUTS3 unit. Some municipalities have established intermunicipal development agencies in addition. Spatial planning system is organised hierarchically, in a top-down manner. The contents of the national spatial plan are binding for the municipalities, which have little voice at plan-making. Vertical cooperation is problematic, as there is no regional level in spatial planning in Slovenia.

Municipalities are responsible for spatial planning on the municipal territory, infrastructure networks including most of the road network, public transportation, certain social services like primary education, local cultural and sports activities; promotion of tourism. The majority of income of Slovenian municipalities comes from personal income tax of the residents. The other important income sources are property (real estate) tax and various fees. Some, mostly rural, municipalities are not able to finance themselves and are financially supported by the state.

Instruments of spatial planning

Basic law regulating spatial planning is the Spatial Planning Act from 2007. Majority of municipal spatial plans were adopted in mid 80s and are based on Spatial planning act from 1984. Valid implementation spatial plans (building plans) are based on legislation from 1984, 2002 and 2007. Competences of the state in spatial planning are preparation of legislation framework, policy formulation and assistance to the municipalities. The Ministry must also review and approve municipal spatial plans. At the moment, there is no national spatial plan, which would roughly define land uses. A new national spatial plan is under preparation. There are also national building plans, which overrule municipal spatial plans.

Municipalities have to prepare a municipal spatial plan, which defines local spatial and urban development policies and land use plan. Municipalities also prepare building plans. Only small portion of the municipal territory is covered with building plans, which regulate only larger developments. The remainder of the municipal territory is covered by 'area specific building codes', which regulate conditions that developments have to meet in order to receive a building permission. The area specific building codes were introduced with 1984 legislation and will be replaced with the new municipal spatial plans. Building plans and area specific building codes do have a direct legal power over investors' decisions. It is obligatory for municipalities to prepare municipal spatial plan (land use plan) and either building plans or area specific building codes for the entire territory of the municipality.

The main instrument of the regional development policy is regional development plan. It is a compulsory document, prepared by the RDAs for every NUTS 3 unit. They do not contain spatial plan. Main contents are the economic development strategy with priority economic branches to be developed and list of the individual projects. RDP is legally non binding document, which is also not influential in practice. RDPs are prepared for EU seven year financial periods. The actual distribution of support funds is decided on the level of public procurements, organised on the basis of National Strategic Reference Framework,

operational programmes, strategic documents of Interreg programmes; and through other instruments, like funds, allocated to Pomurje region or direct regional supports.

There have been numerous activities, Slovenian municipalities have pursued in order to revitalise town centres. Common measures include change of traffic regimes (introduction of car-free zones), investments into appearance (facades, pavements, urban equipment) and measures to revive the retail activities (common promotion, longer opening times, subsidised rents for shop facilities).

General procedures

The plan preparation is formalised and defined by the law. The municipal spatial plan contents are heavily influenced by sectoral planning, especially environmental protection and agriculture. Generally, spatial planning in Slovenia is therefore weak. The public is included into plan preparation at a late stage. Inhabitants can file comments and initiatives after the draft plan has been revised by sector institutions and the ministry. The municipality has a power to accept or reject the initiatives. The plan has to be approved by the state ministry.

Reality

The phenomenon of unauthorised construction, mainly of single family houses in suburban areas, has been common in Slovenia since 1970. The planning mainly responded by adjusting existing plans to the actual situation. There is also a problem of a mismatch between spatial planning policy is proclaimed in national or local strategic documents and land use plans with implementation plans. Informal planning is gaining on importance (contracts between municipalities and investors, PPP), however, there is a lack of soft planning instruments.

Actors in regional and urban planning

Municipalities are the main actors in urban development; mayor is especially influential person within every municipality. Other important actors are: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Institute for Nature Conservation (and their regional branch offices), National Housing Fund, Slovenian Roads Agency, Inspectorate for Environment and Spatial Development (organised in regional branches). Moreover, real estate owners (dispersed ownership can be substantial obstacle), companies running businesses in respective towns or quarters and potential investors are also important actors.

Additional information

Main conflicts and problems of urban development in Ptuj are the presence of the archaeological heritage (the city lies on the Roman Poetovii), Natura 2000 areas, and areas protected as prime agricultural areas, which surround the town. The internal development of the town (mainly renovation building stock), especially in the old medieval core, requires a major financial and technical undertaking. Real estate owners and other potential investors therefore tend not to invest in renovation. Due to the medieval town centre with numerous pedestrianized streets, an access to various locations in the city presents another important problem. For this reason (and reason already mentioned earlier), investors prefer to invest in

the urban fringe, where the logistics (and some other conditions) are significantly better. The consequences are slow reconstruction of the city centre, where, by and large, the municipality and other public institutions are the only important investors where they invest for their own needs (school, library, administrative buildings, etc.). Investments by private owners are rare, because of the weak socioeconomic situation of the population of the urban core. Faster dynamics of development of the urban core is expected with the development of certain activities, especially tourism.

Romania

Framework conditions for urban planning

The problems that urban and regional policy-makers face in Romania are stemming from the post-socialist (and also 'pre-socialist') socio-economic heritage and from the rapid transition into market economy. Ongoing debates related to spatial policies address the issues of

- economic restructuring to stimulate employment and improve living standards that are lagging behind the 'rest' of the EU;
- rising tensions stemming from the widening gap between 'winners' and of 'losers' of the transition process should also be managed, by focusing on the heaviest problems, such as supporting the elderly, the young people (employment, housing), Roma population, and the poor (particularly, children).
- Social and economic inequalities manifested in spatial disparities that emerged along several dimensions, such as
 - i) major areas are suffering from poverty, poor infrastructure and population loss (Danube delta; mountainous areas in Transylvania);
 - ii) declining areas of 'socialist' industry are hit by the erosion of the economic base, high unemployment rate, deficiencies of infrastructure capacities (energy, transportation);
 - iii) extensive areas of mining and heavy industry are suffering from economic and also from environmental problems resulted by exploitation of natural resources in the socialist and also in the post-socialist era;
 - iv) regions of rapid economic restructuring in the West and the Bucharest region facing the problems of rapid growth (pollution, infrastructure capacities, rising prices).
- In the term of urban-rural dichotomy: the majority of rural areas are stagnating economically, due the lacking conditions for the transition of agriculture (knowledge, institutional framework, capital; domination of small scales in organisational terms), to the poor quality of infrastructure, and the to lack or decline of urban centres. The economic problems and social crisis (poverty, population loss) of rural areas emerged throughout of the country, however, major declining regions took shape in the South and the Northeast.
- Inside urban spaces: partly, they manifested as housing problems, such as entrapment of a major part of urban population in declining housing estates, the physical degradation of historical areas due to the lacking private (owners') resources for renovation, and the shrinking chance of young people to get their own flat. As a consequence, cities had to face with social segregation and the decline of historical centres.

Moreover, to stimulate the recovery of local economic base, towns and cities were challenged by their competitors (mostly, by towns of other emerging European economies) develop business infrastructure rapidly, i.e. transportation, energy and communication systems, that resulted in further differentiation.

State administration structure

The social, economic and environmental issues raised by the transition crisis had to be managed in a legal and institutional framework that was transformed and reorganised fundamentally within a very short period. In this process, the principles of policies and planning systems of the European Union and its member-states (taken as a 'guides' for shaping national policies) and the daily practices rooted deeply in national (and local) traditions often conflicted and produced different meanings and outcomes in Romanian context.

The basic units of territorial administration are local governments (LAU2) that consist of

- Communes (a group of functionally interlinked villages) governed by community councils (2856);
- Towns (holding central functions) governed by town councils (217);
 - Municipalities: a particular status gained by major cities holding regional functions (103).

At local level, decision-making process is controlled by the directly elected body of local council (4-year term), while the execution of decisions is controlled by the mayor (elected directly for 4 years). Local authorities are responsible for managing community property, for physical planning, protection and management of natural and built environment, and for providing a wide range of 'basic' public services (e.g. waste management, public spaces).

Counties (41+Bucarest) represent the intermediary level of territorial administration, controlling the legal conditions of local governance and the distribution of public funds. Due to the second function, counties should be considered as gatekeepers of local (urban) development. This dual function is reflected by the county-level governance structure, that includes an elected body (council) a president as well a prefect (delegated by the central government) providing a legal control over elected bodies' actions (locally and at county level). County councils are responsible for development and physical plans, water and sewage supply, public transportation and lower-rank road networks.

Although, LAU2-regions exist in Romania, they are no administrative units. Rather, they are statistical and planning unit (for Regional Operational Programmes) and frameworks for cooperation for development that stretches over municipal boundaries. Basically, it is a unitary system, with a relatively strong control of the central state over spatial processes. However, an ongoing reform of state administration (since 2004 on) aims at decentralisation (delegation of competences and funds to regional and local level).

Instruments and key agents of spatial planning

Urban policies are defined as part of the spatial (regional) policy and planning system in Romania. Regional policy is defined by the responsible ministry as a set of aims and measures employed by local and central administration in cooperation with other agents (civil organisations, entrepreneurs etc.) to stimulate economic growth rested on local and regional resources, and to improve the living standards of the whole population. Thus, the key documents of regional and urban development (National Development Plan; National Regional Development Plan) put economic growth as a goal and the nation-state as a key agent in the focus. However, regional policies also cover the problems of transportation development, water management issues, protection of natural resources and of cultural

heritage, and easing regional disparities. To the latter, the development of urban network is considered as a remedy.

The institutional framework for regional policy is three-tiered.

- Spatial planning and policy is coordinated and regulated by the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing. National documents supervised by the Ministry define the frameworks for planning processes at regional, county and local (municipal) level.
- ii) Development regions were set up as frameworks for territorial cooperation and harmonisation of sectoral policies by the 2004 Regional Development Act. However, regions are part of territorial administration, and the only legal entities representing this unit are Regional Development Agencies that channel development resources into local projects. Agencies are controlled by Regional Development Councils that coordinate supervise regional planning and development (projects). Basically, regions (and counties) provide framework for the collaboration of different agents of spatial development.
- iii) Municipalities are key agents in regional development. However, they have very different scope, and their position is rather static due to the 6-level hierarchical administrative and financial system, that provides an institutional framework also for public services. Centres of level 1 (Bucharest) and 2 (including Oradea) are entitled to organise their 'metropolitan regions' that should rest on cooperation of actors of regional development, nevertheless, such areas are not legal entities and their relations to development regions are not defined.

The approach to organisation of regional policy raised and ongoing national debate over i) the major (central) role of the nation-state in regional development⁴ (the centralised manner of regional development), ii) the issue of 'spatiality' in national policies (considering it as a horizontal issues vs. just as one of the key problems to be resolved), iii) the static planning framework for policy implementation (hierarchy of urban centres) and the unexploited potentials of lower-rank centres (e.g. Arad) for balancing regional development.

The planning process

Urban planning is embedded into the above-discussed centralised planning, financing and administrative system. The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing ensures the elaboration of the National and the Regional Development Plan that provide a framework for strategic planning. Moreover, the Ministry also sets the General Urban Planning Regulation and the Spatial Plan for National Territory as the framework for local physical planning locally and regionally. Counties also have planning competences. County regional development plans are prepared by county councils (elected bodies), economic development plans are coordinated by the prefects. Theses discument are not bindings to municipalities. However, Spatial Plans for County Territory (physical plans) define regulations that have to be adopted in local (urban) plans.

⁴ The Regional Development Fund rests on the resources channelled from the National Development Fund, from local and county funds and other local resources. Thus, priorities of regional development are often overridden by sectoral interests.

Municipal, town and community councils are entitled for strategic and physical planning on their territories in line with national and county plans and regulation. Planning process is coordinated by specific units within municipal administration headed by the chief architect of the city. Although, strategic planning do exist and rest increasingly on the involvement of all stakeholders, basically, it is still physical planning (General Urban Plan; Zonal Urban Plan; Detailed Urban Plan) that provides efficient tools for controlling urban development. Such plans are worked out, put in practice and monitored by the municipalities.

Urban policies and planning are closely linked to other national policies, such as:

- Housing policy, that is a major issue locally, due to its social concern (elderly, poor, young people), to the entangled ownership (privatisation, restitution) that often hinder local planning and development processes, and due to its (negative) impact on managing historical heritage;
- National policies on cultural heritage (controlled by the Ministry of Cultural heritage) that are also highly centralised, and leave little scope for localities to define reservation areas (not just buildings piece by piece);
- Tourism development policy that provide resources also for urban development (selling historical buildings for investors; involvement of local entrepreneurs);
- Transportation policy that shape the main direction of flows inside cities through the national programs of building motorways and bypasses, and through local development and reorganisation of traffic to seed it up and ease the congestion in urban centres;
- Environmental policies that have an overall impact on urban planning process (sustainability – protection of environment as a horizontal issue in strategic planning), but also raise challenges that is perceived by municipalities as difficulties, such as managing urban sprawl in booming cities (e.g. in Arad, Oradea) and meeting EU standards in public utilities that involve large scale investments.

Policies, planning systems and the reality

Our interviews made with local planners and officials suggested that, the problems that local agents of urban development face are stemming from:

- Very broad definition of responsibilities of municipalities including basically all aspects of development and 'daily' operation of the city that fragment local resources. Thus, resources for strategic issues such as protection of built and natural environment are scarce.
- The tight regulation of spatial processes and control over financial resources by the central government that slow local decisions and actions considerably, such as in the case of defining local cultural heritage – that might (should) be a tool for local authorities to control spatial processes.
- Uncertainties produced by the changing legislative and institutional framework is also a major problem, e.g. in relation to the management and development of cultural heritage: ongoing restitution makes ownership conditions unclear, while privatised (historical) buildings are left completely to the responsibilities of the (new) owner – while the municipality has no devise to press them for renovation. The latter problem

is rooted in the neoliberal approach toward urban planning that limits the scope of local control over spatial processes: owners' reluctance (or lack of funds) results in dilapidation of the historical stock (areas) that might go as far as pulling dangerous buildings down.

- Planning process is supposed to rest on social participation, however, the framework for it is defined rather vague; for this, practically, practices of cooperation and participation must be worked out locally. Thus, this tier of the Leipzig Charter depends largely on the attitude of local officials and politicians.

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