

## Editorial

This newsletter documents the International Expert Conference of the CENTRAL EUROPE project City Regions on 24 September 2014 in Dresden on the positioning of urban regions in European strategies. Topics for discussion were the future of urban-rural partnerships against the background of the EU urban

agenda, possibilities for European and regional funding in the 2014–2020 period with regard to peri-urban cooperation and benefits of functional cooperation in different scales.

During the conference, which was hosted by the Saxon State Ministry of the Interior, as well possible motivations and bene-

fits of more intensified macro-regional coordination in Central Europe were discussed. A more exhaustive documentation on this issue will be included in the final brochure of the project, which will be published in December 2014.

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## Urban-rural partnerships and the EU urban agenda



Władysław Piskorz, Head of the Competence Centre Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development at the Directorate General (DG) for Regional and Urban Policy, explained the current approach of the European Commission towards urban-rural partnerships, which has been developed through pilot studies and analyses of the experience of stakeholders.

According to the RURBAN study, urban-rural partnerships are organisms that cover a territory where rural and urban areas co-exist and are connected through one or more functional linkages (e.g. commuting, value chains, demography, natural resources, etc.). Partnerships are mechanisms of co-operation which manage these linkages in order to reach common objectives. So there is an evolutionary movement from “quasi-natural” linkages and sectoral partnerships towards integrated partnerships supported by joint governance.

In the new cohesion policy, urban-rural partnerships are supported by territorial instruments supporting functional territory approaches: Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI); 5% of ERDF dedicated to Urban Integrated Development; Community-led Local Development (CLLD). Additionally, the funding

instruments of inter-regional and cross-border cooperation and the ESPON and URBACT programmes remain available.

Finally, Władysław Piskorz outlined the challenges connected to the coordination of multiple European Structural and Investment (ESI) interventions and underlined that urban-rural partnership will benefit from the EU urban agenda which is currently under discussion. Although many decisions have been already made, he ended with the appeal to make use of the opportunities that are still open in the programming process of the future ESI funds. The European Commission supports urban-rural partnerships, but the responsibilities to make it happen are at the local, regional and national level.



## Making Europe open and polycentric



Andreu Ulled, Partner and Director of MCRIT Barcelona and Lead Partner of the ESPON ET2050 project ([www.et2050.eu](http://www.et2050.eu)), presented the

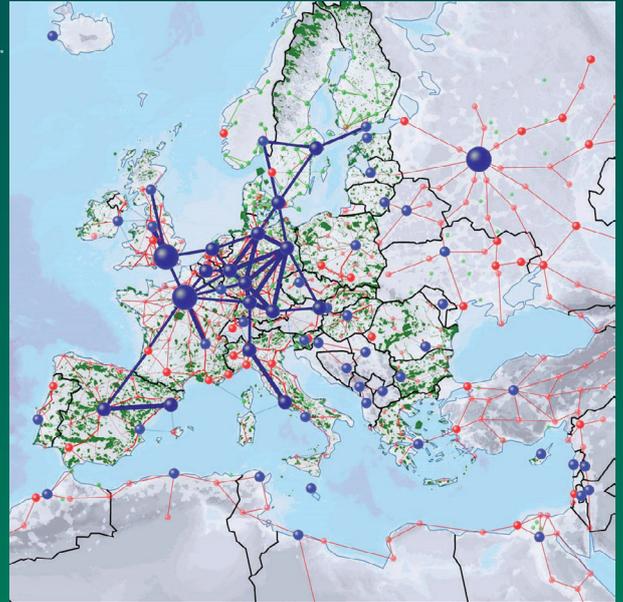
findings of the ET2050 project. He draw a vision of territorial development in Europe during the upcoming decades, which has been derived from the analysis and the evaluation of current trends and patterns of development.

Within the project, different scenarios of future development have been explored, and a strategy leading to more polycentricity was extracted as most advantageous option. Such a strategy would include the promotion of secondary cities and regions, the introduction of further decentralised, interconnected networks and the provision of support to less developed regions. With regard to the framework conditions it is assumed that technologic progress based on increasing productivity, a successful transition towards a low carbon economy and more efficient land and resource management is maintained.

To implement the strategy, a reform of structural and cohesion funds sensitive to macro-economic conditions and adopting an integrated place-based approach, as already started with the 2014–2020 funding period, would be fundamental. Additionally, there should be a framework territorial document and territorial shared planning and cooperation at cross-border, transnational (macro-regional) and European scale to support the vision of an open and polycentric Europe.

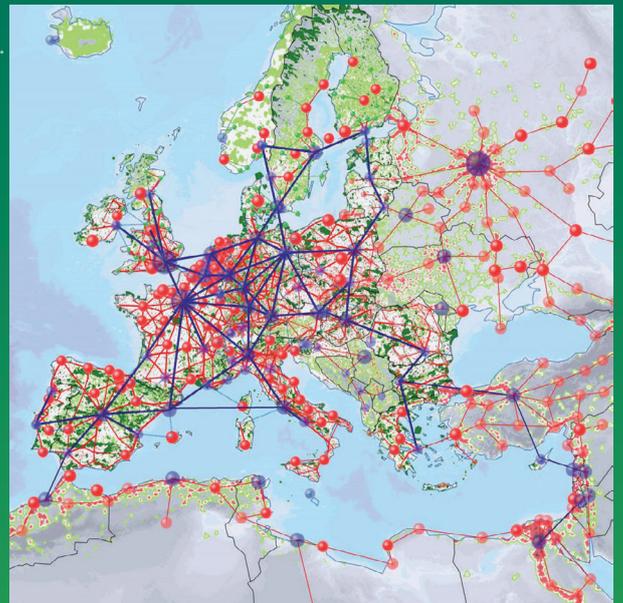
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**Promotion of global cities (2020)**



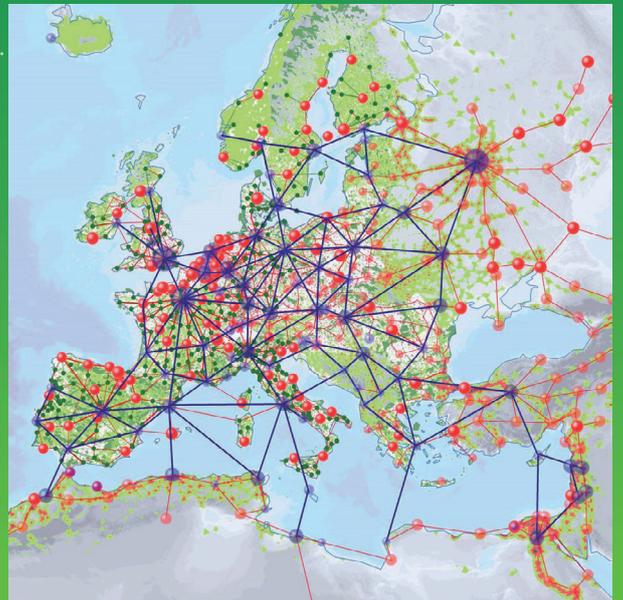
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**Promotion of networks of cities (2030)**



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**Promotion of rural and peripheral regions (2050)**



## Panel: Urban regions and EU Structural Funds in the 2014 – 2020 funding period



Initially, the results of a study analysing the 2014–2020 funding landscape in each partner region were introduced by Jonas Scholze (German Association for Housing, Urban and Spatial Development). It turns out that the instrument of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) will be applied only in **Wrocław** and **Prague**. In the **Graz** and **Torino** urban regions interesting options for peri-urban cooperation will be offered by national and regional Operational Programmes (OP). For the **Halle/Leipzig** urban region the application for innovative measures could be a promising option, since funding priorities laid down in the regional OP's of Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt are not coordinated with each other.

Reinhard Wölpert (City of Leipzig) described the coordinated development of sites for commercial and industrial use as core issue in the **Halle/Leipzig** region. Because Leipzig is the more attractive city to investors, plots are becoming rare. At the same time there are brownfields e.g. in Halle waiting for investments. So the challenge is to develop adequate sites as well beyond the own administrative borders in a win-win situation for both cities and smaller municipalities in between. With this regard it would be of great help if the regional governments in Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt would care for efficient coordination of their activities to facilitate cooperation.



Dr. Bernd Gassler (Graz Regional Management) reported from the **Graz** urban region which is very experienced in peri-urban cooperation. But the discussion about how to define the city region and how to solve its problems is still relevant. For example, the more rural area in the north of Graz is interested in linking the city and surrounding areas to strengthen each other. At the same time the area in the south of Graz has to cope with typical problems of an agglomeration area. He underlined that so far win-win effects have been realized through 'soft issues' like e.g. cycling trails and the protection of green areas. But the real challenges consist of the 'hard issues', which are connected to finances and the allocation of resources.

Dr. Magdalena Belof (Institute for Territorial Development) outlined the legal framework of spatial planning and territorial governance in Poland, which favors the independency and the decision-making power of local authorities. With this regard, as well in the **Wrocław** urban region the acceptance for sharing responsibility is rather low, and creating dialogue between neighbours remains a tough job – partly due to differences in financial power, partly even due to political reasons. In practice the difficulties materialize in everyday life and contradictive planning ambitions, which need to be moderated. The project helped to analyse and consolidate the knowledge about activities of cooperation in the urban region.



Milan Turba (Prague Institute of Planning and Development / Prague 9 City Council) presented the Prague Metropolitan Region with the core city of **Prague** and the Central Bohemian Region. Prague is the most dynamic and productive region in the Czech Republic, and the outskirts are of high relevance for the labour market and attract migration from the core city. The fragmentation of landscape and the increase of individual transport (despite a well-established public transport system) are the consequences, leading to the need for close cooperation. Therefore financial rules related e.g. to EU Structural Funds should motivate and stimulate the cooperation and facilitate the joint implementation of projects.

► **Panel: Urban regions and EU Structural Funds in the 2014 – 2020 funding period**



Marco Santangelo (Torino Politechnical University) introduced five main cooperation issues in the **Torino** urban region – spaces & places of new economy, integrated system of metropolitan mobility, green infrastructure, towards sustainability, quality of urban spaces and regeneration. He emphasized that the ITI instrument should be fitted to the needs of urban areas dealing with economic recovery. With regard to EU Structural funds, he outlined a vision of efficient governance, with specific tasks on each level of planning – from the metropolitan to the regional and macro-regional level, with city networks facilitating the cross-fertilisation, verification and adoption of experimental practices.

## Panel: Towards future cooperation – Are there arguments for a Central European macro-regional strategy?



Dr. Wilfried Görmar (Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development), Vladimír Bláha (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic), Davide Donati (Brussels Office of the Piedmont Region), Ugo Poli (Central European Initiative) and Andreu Ullied discussed the prospects of Central Europe against the background of initiatives for macro-regional cooperation in the EU. The discussion

was moderated by Prof. Dr. Stefanie Dühr (Radboud University Nijmegen), who introduced the results of research done within the project.

A documentation of the discussion and its results will appear in the final brochure of the project, which will be published in December 2014.

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