

Project Sketch

Network for the Application of Integrated Urban Development Approaches in the CADSES-Region "NET-URBAN-CAD" (Working Title)

Project Sketch for the Preparation of a Project Proposal within the Framework of the Community Initiative INTERREG III B in the CADSES-Region

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1 Present and Future Tasks of Urban Development in Small and Medium Sized Cities

The report on recent trends and debates on the spatial development of the European territory published by the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (EPSON) and the Regional Policy Directorate General in 2004 identifies a range of different types of urban agglomerations in Europe. The enlarged European Union together with Romania and Bulgaria (EU 27) as well as Norway and Switzerland counts 1,595 Functional Urban Areas (FUA) with population numbers of 50,000 and more inhabitants and major functional importance. In addition to the about 80 identified European metropolitan growth regions, the regional and local FUA strongly influence the shape of the urban system in Europe.

These towns and cities play an important role in rural areas as well as outside large urban agglomerations or European metropolitan regions respectively. In these areas, small and medium sized cities of different size with generally 20,000 up to 150,000 inhabitants form central places and take over a number of important tasks, such as providing opportunities for commercial activities, offering services and social as well as medical infrastructure, and giving access to culture and employment.

European regional and urban development policies usually focus on large cities, urban agglomerations or European metropolitan regions respectively, where national services and functions, economic power and large proportions of the population are concentrated. Only little attention is being paid to development processes in towns and cities outside these areas, which – despite regional differences – vary greatly from those in large agglomerations and metropolitan regions.

This is due to an unbroken trend towards urbanisation in many European countries, the centralisation of superior national functions and the ongoing transformation of economic structures together with the decreasing role of the primary economic sector. At the same time, economically dynamic cities and urban regions all around Europe continue to obtain new functions and grow in significance. However, this development often takes place at the fringes and in the surrounding areas of the urban agglomeration rather than in the central core itself.

On the other hand, many European regions are faced with the risk that economic stagnation might cause a decrease in importance and functionality of towns and cities particularly in peripheral areas. This will further generate a deterioration of the quality of life, and moreover, it involves the danger of social, demographic, cultural and economic desolation and isolation of these towns and their surrounding rural areas.

Due to the situation of municipal and national households, and because of the complexity of the challenges that arise from the deterioration of the situation of the cities, the margins for political and administrative actions to guide the future development of these cities are rather small. In many cities, spheres of action are gradually limited to the fulfilment of the most essential tasks, such as securing basic provisions and services (administration, education, health care, etc.).

Moreover, a lot of necessary tasks require a minimum scale in order to be economically viable. In order to facilitate an appropriate standard of life, it is therefore regarded as inevitable to focus on urban centres that promise long-term efficiency. Some regions already try to concentrate these functions and tasks in 'appropriate' towns and cities, expecting that these will qualify as drivers for the surrounding region and other small towns.

However, traditional approaches and sectoral planning concepts are generally insufficient to allow for the development and formulation of feasible solutions and options to deal with the future challenges. Cities and regions that already maintain cross-sectoral and integrated development approaches, and that are able and willing to translate these into action, seem therefore most likely capable for handling the tasks of the future.

Integrated Urban Development Concepts (IUDC) specify the scope and contents of necessary actions and relate them to appropriate measures. They bring together and co-ordinate all fields of municipal policy that are relevant for spatial development and establish a close collaboration between them. Furthermore, special consideration is given to issues concerning the urban-rural relationship. Thus, a joined and therefore comprehensive and sustainable course of action can be established including all of the urban area and its respective hinterland. Because of the improved co-operation and a stronger prioritisation of objectives and measures, the efficient use of limited public resources can be guaranteed for the future.

During the present Structural Funds period the federal state of Brandenburg has taken important steps with regard to Mainstream and Objective 1 Funding and facilitated the preparation and implementation of integrated development approaches, for example with the programme "Neighbourhood Future" (*Zukunft im Stadtteil – ZiS*), financed by the European Regional Development Fund ERDF and aimed at the improvement of living conditions in quarters with specific needs. The Community Initiative URBAN II, in which about 70 cities or city districts participate, also targets neighbourhood level. The town of Luckenwalde (population approximately 20,000) in the federal state of Brandenburg is thereby the only place in the whole of Europe where the URBAN II programme covers the entire town.

2 Aim of the Project: Application of Integrated Approaches for Urban Development in an European Context

In the first step, the cities and towns in the CADSES-region, which take part in the project, establish bilateral partnerships with other network cities of approximately the same size and structure and with other external partners in a different member state. After that, the towns and cities work with their respective network partner in a collaborative way as regards both contents and organisation, and thus they support each other while formulating their individual Integrated Urban Development Concepts (IUDC).

As a result, the cities are put in a position that allows them to find solution and implementation strategies suited to meet their specific urban and regional challenges. Moreover, an intensive exchange between the network partners is being established at the very beginning, and thus, a smooth process of integration into the network is facilitated.

In a next step, the participating cities implement and apply the IUDC in a demonstrative manner with the purpose of examining their specific value and applicability. Furthermore, different ways of using the instrument of the IUDC will be identified. The bilateral co-operation with the partner city is being continued and further intensified during that phase.

Throughout the process of developing the Integrated Urban Development Concepts as well as during the phase of their exemplary implementation and application, the cities get professional assistance and join into the “Network for the Application of Integrated Development Approaches in the CADSES-Region (NET-URBAN-CAD)”. Furthermore, the integration and cooperation of a university faculty ensures the scientific approach.

The network facilitates the intensive exchange between the participating cities. As a result, a shared learning process takes place, in the course of which solution approaches to problems of urban development are being generated. Furthermore, it is the purpose of the IUDC to define tangible fields of use for resources from the EU Structural Funds of this very period (lasting until 2006, plus ‘n+2’-rule). Moreover, the IUDC support the preparation of the regional operational programmes for the next household budget period to come (2007 – 2013) both strategically and as regards contents.

The formulation and implementation of Integrated Urban Development Approaches as well as the establishment of the network and the continuous co-operation between national, regional and local institutions are promising ways to meet the future challenges in a transnational context.

Thus, an important contribution to the spatial integration and the social and economic cohesion in Europe is made. Moreover, the objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP) are met. The ESDP aim at strengthening the role of small and medium sized cities in rural areas as providers of basic social facilities and at improving interactions between towns and their surrounding areas by establishing a thorough and stable basis for the urban-rural relationship. Moreover, the project corresponds to the development strategy for the CADSES-region, especially with regard to Priority 1, Measure 1.2 "Shaping urban development, promoting urban networks and co-operation".

3 The Transnational Co-operation Approach

Selecting the project cities

In recent years, a lot of cities and regions in the CADSES-region that are located outside their respective capitals have experienced huge losses in population due to emigration processes together with low birth rates. Consequently, these towns and cities now face a demographic and sometimes also an economic shrinking process, as it can be seen in Eastern Germany, in parts of the Czech Republic, in Romania and Bulgaria. However, in other regions towns and cities experience economic growth while at the same time they continue to lose population, e.g. in parts of Hungary and Poland. In yet again different areas the progress made with restructuring the economy has generated more or less consolidation, as for example in Austria.

Thus, the situation varies greatly across urban areas and regions in the CADES-area, depending on the particular economic conditions and dynamics as well as on the specific phase of the urbanisation cycle (urbanisation – suburbanisation – de-suburbanisation – re-urbanisation) that the towns and cities are currently in.

Hence, it is envisaged for the project to win over towns and cities in the CADSES-region, which are able and willing to co-operate and to establish bilateral partnerships, and which are located in an area with by and large positive development perspectives. Suitable criteria for selecting the partner cities will include an overall comparability of characteristics, e.g. with regard to size (e.g. 20,000 to 150,000 inhabitants), spatial functions, and location outside large urban agglomerations.

Similarities in character and structure of the participating towns and cities will provide for better co-operation in the network. Additionally, they will further increase the benefits from participation for the cities since processes, mechanisms, issues and results will be comparable.

Development and Demonstrative Implementation of the IUDC

Within the framework of the overall project, the partner towns and cities will in a first step formulate comprehensive Integrated Urban Development Concepts that include the entire area (e.g. a town plus its rural hinterland) for their own borough in close co-operation with their respective network partner or partners. In order to do so, the cities will be supported financially out of the ERDF, and they will supplement these budgets out of their own resources (e.g. personnel, non-cash payment in kind, own financial contributions). The professional groundwork will be carried out on the basis of existing experiences, concepts and approaches from the specific countries, regions and cities, especially with regard to integrated planning and implementation approaches.

The applied procedures and processes, as well as the structure and contents of the IUDC have to be identical in order to allow for the comparison of the outcome, the generated effects and the applied approaches. Moreover, this consistency will bring about the successful exchange of results within the network. The necessary systematic and permanent co-ordination will be carried out within the framework of the bilateral partnerships.

Upon completion of the IUDC the project towns and cities will hold detailed approaches for action to tackle their specific tasks and challenges. They will implement either the entire IUDC or individual parts of particular relevance in a demonstrative manner. Again this will be done in close co-operation with other towns and cities in the network and according to a set of priorities or themes of special interest that will be defined jointly in the network. The network is further committed to obtain resources from the EU Structural Funds or national programmes and budgets respectively in order to support the implementation process.

Network of Integrated Urban Development

The co-operation of the towns and cities in bilateral partnerships as well as their involvement and active participation in the Network of Integrated Development are fundamental parts of the project. The network will be established at the very beginning of the project. In addition to the project cities, regional and national partner institutes, such as ministries and qualified organisations will be invited to become members of the network, and they will be supported by external advice. Its task will be to strategically, professionally and organisationally assist and support the cities during the process of drafting, coordinating and demonstratively implementing the IUDC.

The network will thus create the basis for a solution orientated and continuous exchange of experiences and knowledge in the European context. The main objectives therefore include the strengthening of transnational co-operation between decision makers in local authorities and other actors and stakeholders in urban and regional development. The cooperation of a university faculty ensures the scientific approach.

In the network the joint focus of the collaborative work will include the different background situations and framework conditions as well as the procedures, participation and communication strategies that will be applied in the process of creating the IUDC. Further fields of co-operation will include the different approaches towards guiding the development and results after implementation, particularly regarding the European context and that of the CADSES-region respectively.

The different steps, results and procedures will be presented within the network, and complications and problems during both, concept development and implementation will be communicated. Thus, a permanent exchange on a broad basis will be generated, which will allow the network partners to get an overview over effective measures and solution approaches. Schemes for targeting particular themes of special interests or individual cases, e.g. tourism development, revitalisation of derelict areas, transport planning or open space development, will be developed by the cities as part of their comprehensive overall strategies and implementation plans.

Expected Outcome

The transnational co-operation will prove to be of great benefit for the participating towns and cities and their respective actors. The exchange of experiences and the transfer of professional know-how therefore play an important role in improving the efficiency of policies and instruments of spatial development and for developing sustainable strategies.

The co-operation will allow for the exchange on subjects and problems of urban development that are similar across a range of the cities. However, in order to extend the scope and broaden the view of the experts, the discussion among the members will also include distinctive and unique lines of developments and individual urban characteristics, since raising awareness for the existence of variety and differences is also a vital part of knowledge transfer between cities.

In this, the IUDC will not only serve as a planning instrument for local authorities, but they will also form decision making tools for the distribution of funds on national and local level as well as for the use of EU Structural Funds in the project cities. In fact, ways

for using Structural Funds shall be defined, and the outcome should provide input for the development of the regional and operational programmes respectively.

Moreover, the results will contribute to the development and improvement and altogether to the qualification of urban development policies on a European, national and regional level. The cooperation with a university secures the scientific results and integration in a wider content.

4 Project Structure: Co-operating Partners and Organisation

Co-operation Partners

The project will bring together at least 10 to about 20 towns and cities from different European countries in the CADSES-region, so that at least five bilateral partnerships of towns and cities with approximately similar size and structure can be established. The selection process shall ensure that at least two up to a maximum of five cities from a minimum of four countries in the CADSES-area will be included in the network.

Furthermore, regional authorities and federal ministries that are responsible for urban development together with interested and qualified associations, universities, private organisations and foundations will be part of the project and the network respectively. Most important, however, is their willingness to actively participate.

Network organisation, qualified coordination of network actions as well as professional advice and support of the project cities and other network partners will be provided by an external consultant. The role of the Lead Partner could be taken over either by one of the project cities, or else by a nationally or internationally recognised institution.

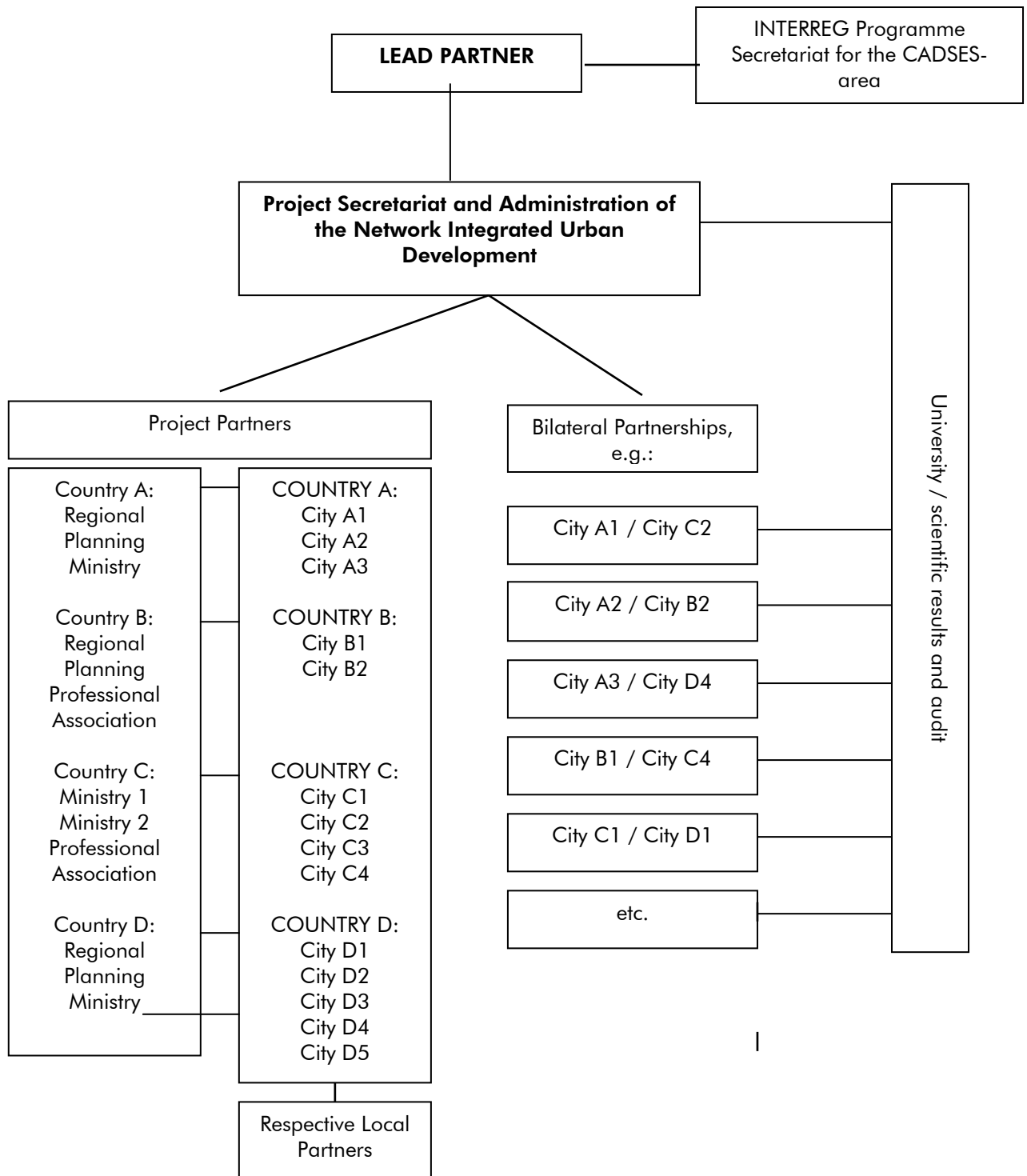
Additionally, the project cities will decide themselves whether they will delegate the development and implementation of their IUDC to a qualified consultant.

Organisation

The network will obtain its own headquarters or secretariat, which will be responsible for the general administration, the continuity of exchange, the organisation of special events as well as for contact and representation. These tasks will be assigned to the Lead Partner, who might also hand them over to a consultant by means of sub-contracting.

Thus, the project cities themselves will be relieved from administrative, financial and technical duties and can therefore concentrate on professional aspects.

The following diagram shows the organisation of the network.



Timeframe

The project is estimated to run for a duration of three years, starting in 2005. The following project phases are thereby envisaged:.

- Phase 1: Formation of bilateral partnerships, set-up of the secretariat and the organisational structure, determination of scope, procedures, etc. for developing the IUDC, Approx. 3 months
- Phase 2: Development and co-ordination of the IUDC
Approx. 12 months
- Phase 3: Compilation of IUDC results / transnational exchange
Approx. 3 months
- Phase 4: First implementation of the complete IUDC and/or approaches targeting specific themes and individual aspects
Approx. 12 months
- Phase 5: Assessment of phase 4, final evaluation
Approx. 6 months

5 Further Steps

Following this project sketch, the underlying approach will be rendered more precisely and, if necessary, further completed. Thus, it will be possible to agree on the Lead Partner, who will act as the project applicant to the Programme Secretariat of the CADSES-region.

In order to contact potential partner towns and cities in the CADSES-region, they have to be able to estimate possible benefits yet also necessary expenditures and required financial and time budgets based on a thorough and definite project scheme . It is only then that cooperation agreements with the partner cities can be established.

In order to find partners, the selection criteria, e.g. size of the town or city, might first be defined within broad boundaries, so that a wide range of potential partners can be obtained. Partner acquisition will be carried out through project presentations, for example at fairs and conferences, by internet presentation, yet also by contacting cities and other likely partners directly. Project submission and further specification will take place in accordance with fixed deadlines that need to be met.

Potsdam, November 2004