



WP3 Inception

Output 3.6 Report on Key Features of Investigated TP's Policies and Plans

Final Version

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D3.6 Report on Key Features of Investigated TP's Policies and Plans



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Short Description:

An in depth analysis of the current working tools, at different institutional level - from national planning acts until local urban policies, when present, and regulative instruments are going to be done. It will be a proper screening of policies and plans generating effects on involved territories. Level of integration and capability of making synergy of these different tools is going to be investigated and even the link between policy design and decision makers are going to be examined. One (1) report illustrating all policies and plans acting on the areas on involved territorial partners is going to be drafted. One (1) report describing the key features of investigated policies and the connection with decision making actors is going to be drafted.

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Abbreviation List

CKP - cities knowledge platform

ST/UA - Strategic Territorial/Urban Agendas

TP – Territorial Partner

SEE – South Eastern Europe

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

UC – Urban Centers

1 Summary of WP3

The aim of WP 3 as an inception phase is characterized by different activities, analytical and cognitive ones, to achieve the objectives of STATUS project such as:

- tackling the problem of incoherent urban and regional development in SEE,
- developing place-based strategies by different participatory planning tools,
- reducing the widening development gap of SEE cities,
- guiding and supporting Territorial Partners to develop a sustainable and Strategic Territorial/ Urban Agendas (ST/UA), Urban Centers (UC) and the SEE cities knowledge platform (CKP).

Different methods of qualitative analyses (like stakeholder analyses in report 3.1.) and SWOT analysis will be used not just in terms of networking but also as an opportunity for achieving a more in depth knowledge of the state of the art of local urban issues. At the end all these activities they will provide a clear framework of available data, current planning tools and pool of local actors characterizing the partner cities planning areas.

WP 3 Inception consists of two main activities:

Activity 3.1.
Collecting data and identifying actors

Activity 3.2.
Analysis of current urban plans and policies in involved territories

2 Brief overview of activities

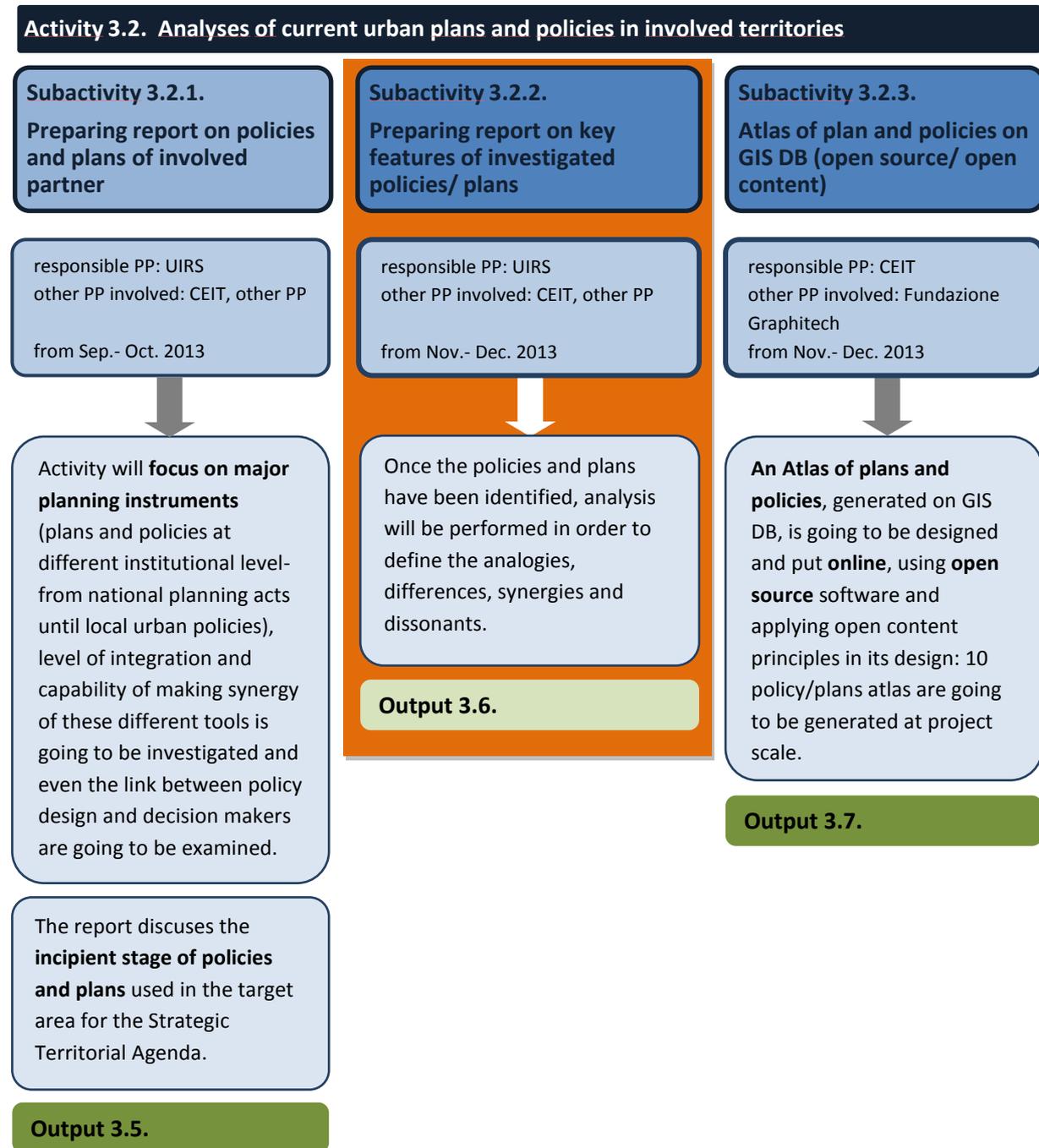


Figure 1: Overview of activity, own graphic

3 Introduction

An in depth analysis of the current working tools, at different institutional level - from national planning acts to local urban policies, when present, and regulative instruments are the topic of this report. It represents a screening of policies and plans generating effects on involved territories. The level of integration and capability of making synergy of these different tools were investigated and even the links between policy design and decision makers were examined. The D3.5 report is illustrating all policies and plans acting on the areas on involved territorial partners and D3.6 report is describing key features of investigated policies and the connection with decision making actors.

4 Administrative Structure of Involved Countries

4.1 Introduction

The chapter gives a basic overview of the administrative structure of all involved countries. The main characteristics are highlighted for each case and thus the level of administrative centralization of the state is revealed.

4.2 Short Description of the Whole Administrative Structure of Involved Countries

4.2.1 Romania

Romania's administration system is relatively centralised. The territory is organised into counties (with appointed prefects by a central government and elected county councils), towns/municipalities (local council as deliberative and mayor as executive authority) and communes (the smallest units; min number of inhabitants to declare a commune is 1.500; a commune is represented by an elected mayor and local councillors). The state is also divided into development regions, not for administrative reasons but for statistical ones and in order to coordinate regional development and access regional funding.

4.2.2 Italy

Italy is an unitary state and administratively divided into regions (represented by a regional council with elected or appointed councillors, elected president and an executive committee), provinces (represented by an elected provincial council, an elected president of a province and an executive committee) and communes (represented by an elected local council, an elected mayor and an executive committee). Even if the regional level of governance is very strong in Italy, the main powers in terms of spatial planning are at a local and national level of governance.

4.2.3 Greece

The Greek administrative system has undergone major changes lately and the number of units at all levels of governance has considerably decreased. Up to date Greek territory is organised into 7 decentralised administrations, 13 regions and 325 municipalities, the last two fully self-governed, while the decentralised administrations are run by a general secretary appointed by the Greek Government. Decentralised administration is run by a government-appointed general secretary and an advisory council which has an auxiliary role only. Regions are run by an elected regional governor and an elected regional council. Municipalities are further divided into Municipal Units and even further into Communities. They are run by an elected municipal council and an elected mayor.

4.2.4 Austria

Austrian administrative system is based on the federal principle on one hand and on local-self administration on the other. Austria is divided into federal states (9 units) with federal state

administrations and municipalities (2.359 units) with local self-administration municipal administrations. Additionally there are 99 administrative districts which are mostly an integration part of the federal state administration. Besides the federal constitution each Austrian federal state has its own constitution and the federal States' governments have legislative powers. The main powers in terms of spatial planning are at a local level.

4.2.5 Montenegro

Montenegro has a two level administrative system – besides state government there are 21 municipalities with their local governments. The municipal authorities are composed of elected municipal's assembly members and a mayor elected by assembly members.

4.2.6 Serbia

Serbia is a unitary state, administratively organised into 5 regions/autonomous provinces (3 of them directly subordinated to national authorities), 25 districts (the form of state authority with no powers of their own) and 161 municipalities/cities (the basic units of local self-government).

4.2.7 Moldova

In accordance with the Constitution the territory of Moldova is divided into administrative/territorial units following the principles of local autonomy, decentralization of public services, eligibility of local public administration authorities and consultation of citizens on local problems of specific interest. The public authorities of the administrative/territorial units are organs with general and specific competencies and constitute the system of local public administration. There are still obstacles in realizing rights and obligations of local public authorities as a result of a past centralized system under the Soviet rule.

4.3 General observations:

All seven administrative systems (of Austria, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia) are structured into a **multi-level administrative structure**. Most of them (Austrian, Greek, Italian, Serbian and Romanian) have three or four levels administration systems (state – region/county – municipality - commune), while Montenegro has a two level administration system.

The states practice different forms of local self-governance - all of them at a level of local communities, while some of them also at higher regional levels (e.g. Austria and Italy with a strong federal/regional level of governance). On the other hand there are countries where the regional level of governance is purely an extension of a central state government (e.g. Serbia) or is absent (e.g. Montenegro).

Rather often the capital cities have an exclusive administrative status compared to other cities or forms of local self-governance in the state (e.g. Bucharest, Belgrade).

5 Planning system

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter contains a basic understanding of the planning systems in the partnering countries and its influence on the preparation and implementation of strategic territorial agendas.

5.2 Short Description of a Planning System

5.2.1 Romania

In Romania the state government with its institutions - such as Ministry of regional development and public administration and Ministry of internal affairs - is in charge of developing and implementing national spatial planning documents (e.g. Spatial planning of the national territory and supporting documents). The counties are in charge of County spatial planning plans while local administrative units prepare the urban development programs for the localities and provide specific urban plans and regulations. According to the needs the local administrative units associate with one another and can prepare territorial development strategies.

5.2.2 Italy

Italy introduced some reforms to the planning system which gave the regions the central role in spatial planning and the urban policies development, while the central government provides coordination (including relations with EU policies), financial support and takes an advisory position. In the current system there are three levels of planning instruments: Regional territorial plans, Provincial territorial coordination plans and Communal urban plans.

5.2.3 Greece

The Greek planning system is structured into three levels: national, regional and sub-regional (local). At a national level the main documents are National economic and social development plans, the National Planning Document (General Framework of Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development) and Sectoral Regional Plans (Special frameworks of Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development). At a regional level some key documents are Regional Operational Plans, Regional Spatial Plans and Master Plans (regulatory plans). A number of planning documents is available at a municipal level, e.g. Municipality Operational Plan, General Urban Plan, City Plan (a generic term for a variety of plans all of which are detailed zoning plans).

5.2.4 Austria

Austrian planning approach is closely related to the decentralised nature of Austrian state. At the same time it adopts the germanic planning traditions based on a comprehensive integrated approach with a variety of planning documents from national to local level. The main feature of spatial planning is the competence of the municipalities at local level. The local authorities (municipalities)

are liable and have power in spatial planning and formal control, while the national level plays an important role in decision making and sectorial policies making.

5.2.5 Montenegro

In Montenegro spatial planning is conducted at two levels – national and local. The umbrella document is the Spatial plan of Montenegro, accompanied by three other types of planning documentation: Special purpose spatial plan, Detailed spatial plan and National study of location. The highest local planning document is Spatial and urban plan of a local self-government unit, additionally there are three other local planning documents of lower order: Detailed urban plan, Urban design and Local study of location.

5.2.6 Serbia

The Serbian planning system is applied at three levels: national, regional and local. The following types of spatial plans are in use: Spatial plan of the Republic, Regional spatial plans, Spatial plan of Local Communities and Spatial plan for specific-purpose areas.

5.2.7 Moldova

The National Land Use Plan, developed by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, is a binding documents for all levels of planning. The zonal spatial plans are binding for the rayons and municipalities that comprise the respective zones, the rayonal plans are binding for the respective rayons and the municipalities on their territories, and the local plans are binding for the respective municipalities.

5.3 General observations

The reviewed planning systems follows the same and rather strict logic of a hierarchical order and clearly structured planning documentation, while in practice different levels of local self-governance in the field of spatial planning exist.

There are major differences in the roles and responsibilities of different levels of spatial administration throughout the countries – while in some countries the national level is mainly in a role of advisor and coordinator of the spatial planning processes and the main decision making is done at regional or local level (e.g. Austria, Italy) in some other cases the planning approach is markedly liable to a top-down approach (e.g. Serbia, Moldova).

In some planning systems the territorial units are encouraged to associate and prepare common territorial development strategies (e.g. Romania), but the task proves to be a demanding one in terms of distributing the responsibilities and competences among cooperating bodies.

6 History of Planning Instruments, Policies and Plans

6.1 Introduction

A review of the evolution of spatial planning as a discipline and a set of documents and tools is given in this chapter in order to better understand the historic backgrounds of the current planning systems in the partnering countries.

6.2 History of Planning Instruments, Policies and Plans of Involved Countries

6.2.1 Romania

There have been three phases in the evolution of the Romanian planning system. The first one until the inter-war period is marked by the development of cities through an elaboration of general urban plans. The second phase started in 1947 and was characterized by a strong centralization of the state and introduction of planned economy regime. The Soviet model was followed in that period and completely new administrative units with no grounding in any form of historic predecessors were set up. A (re)turn from this approach came in 1968 and after when new laws on administrative organization were adapted. The third phase started with the fall of communism in 1989. Some key laws and other documents were introduced to set grounding to a contemporary spatial planning system (e.g. Spatial Plan for the National Territory).

6.2.2 Italy

Spatial planning as such is determined at the national level in Italy by the 1942 law, which defined three types of spatial planning documentation: Spatial Co-ordination Plans, General Regulatory Spatial Plans and Detailed Implementation Plans. From 1990s onwards important changes to the system were introduced: provinces as an intermediate level between a region and a municipality were introduced and regions started to practice a two-step planning process (master plans to consist of two documents – structural and programmatic/development plan). In accordance with the new planning paradigms (participative approaches, environmental issues, sustainable development etc.) new tools and methodologies have been introduced in Italian planning practice from late 1990s. An important one was the introduction of the bottom-up policies by the national government. Another important one was the introduction of the horizontal (different local players) and vertical (different public bodies/agencies) coordination of actors.

6.2.3 Greece

In Greece major towns/cities got their first plans after the liberation in 1832, while the first legislative decree was introduced in 1923. The first law on strategic urban planning in Greece was adopted in

1979 and put an emphasis on separation of planning levels (from strategic to detailed). The initial hierarchical system of planning in Greece was set in 1983. The law from 1997 demanded a more strategic approach to urban planning and introduced important tools for strategic planning such as Master plan, General urban plans, Open city spatial and Residential organization plans.

6.2.4 Austria

In Austria most laws related to spatial planning at national level were introduced in 1950s and 1960s and have been amended and revised many times then after. The first Austrian Spatial planning concept was adopted in 1981 with a main objective to address the disparities within the country. The second was adopted in 1991 with a main objective to increase efficiency. A new Spatial planning concept is in progress. The intentions to set up federal spatial planning authorities never worked out in Austria due to its constitutional and political framework.

6.2.5 Montenegro and Serbia

The past planning tradition of Montenegro and Serbia mainly relates to the times of the ex kingdom and then federal state of Yugoslavia. The first Civil-building code was introduced in 1931 and regulated the planning methods for cities. In 1965 the first law on spatial planning was adopted and later changed twice (in 1974 and 1988). The period from 1960s to 1990s was an ambitious period in terms of spatial planning characterised by an elaboration of regional and spatial plans as well as development of the spatial planning methodologies. The 1990s Yugoslavian crisis resulted in changed socio-economic conditions which affected the spatial planning considerably. Frequent amendments to the procedures and responsibilities in a decision making processes marked the period. In Montenegro a major change came in 2008 with an abolishment of a Master plan at a local level and replacement and merging with other spatial planning documents into Spatial and urban plan of the local government. In Serbia a new law on spatial planning was introduced in 2009 with an intention to cover the whole state territory with the plans at all levels.

6.2.6 Moldova

Moldova experienced a super-centralized system after the WWII under the Soviet regime, where all the authorities were subdued to the party-state. There was no real separation of power or autonomy of the various social fields and actors. After 1991 the decentralization process started. The current situation is a result of decades long system of a centralized power which is undergoing fundamental changes. It is characterized by complicated set of developments, partial progress unconsolidated in everyday practice, legislative ambiguities and confusion on how to execute some competences.

6.3 General observations

The appearance of the first planning instruments and documents varies throughout the countries – the ones with the longest urban traditions (e.g. ancient Greece) are among the first to introduce official planning documents.

A general move from a hierarchical top-down and regulatory approach to more bottom-up approaches with an emphasis on coordination between various stakeholders is evident in some countries through times (e.g. Italy) and not always in a straightforward way (e.g. Moldova). It is partly based on the fact that the complexity of the spatial planning issues is increasing (environmental issues, economic constraints etc.) and partly from the public pressure demanding a say in the processes.

The direct interdependence between the socio-economic and political situation in the country and its planning system is well reflected in the case of the newly commenced states of Montenegro and Serbia.

7 Current Planning Instruments, Policies and Plans at Different Administrative Levels

7.1 Introduction

The review in this chapter offers a basic insight into the relevant elements of the current national planning systems at different planning levels in all partnering countries. The aim is to give supporting information for a better understanding of the current situation of the case studies described in chapter 9.

7.2 Current Planning Instruments, Policies and Plans on Different Administrative Levels of Involved Countries

7.2.1 Romania

In Romania the hierarchy of the documents follows the administrative structure of the state. At a national level the government develops priority programs, directives and sectorial policies, the central planning document is a National plan for territorial planning and forms the bases for the Zonal territorial planning plans and County territorial planning plans. The urban certificate, a compulsory informing act containing the juridical, economic and building conditions is issued by the local authority in accordance with the General urban plan (Master plan) and Local regulations for urban planning, which details the provisions of the general plan. For central and protected areas a Zonal urban plan is put in power and is compulsory. A Detailed urban plan is worked out for some sections of settlements when stipulated in general or zonal plan.

7.2.2 Italy

In Italy the state administration has the role of a coordinator and a guide in urban planning matters rather than a planner in a strict sense of a term, nevertheless it develops concrete programs for national-level action in specific sectors. At a regional level, the central document is a Regional territorial plan, it is a strategic document defining the objectives of the socio-economic development, regional spatial system management, environmental and territorial sustainability, resources protection and it also directs the development actions. The Provincial territorial coordination plan is a central planning document at a provincial level, it is more location-specific and represents a shared point of reference for the communes to define their specific roles, including over-communal level – it forms basis for the territorial cooperation. At the level of a municipality the urban development is regulated by the Municipality urban plan, usually an executive document defining the operational control and conditions of soil transformation through building permits. A number of other instruments accompany the basic planning documents (e.g. at a regional level Territorial landscape plan, Urban development plans, Local development plans, Area social plans).

7.2.3 Greece

In Greece the main spatial planning related documents at the national level are National economic and social development plans (giving broad directions on regional development and spatial planning), General framework of spatial planning and sustainable development (National planning document naming strategic factors of a long term spatial development, reviews and values spatial consequences of supra- and national policies and defines main priorities of a future 15-year development) and Special frameworks of spatial planning and sustainable development (Sectoral regional plans). At a regional level 5-year regional operational plans are prepared by obligation, they define the common cores of intervention in the territory of a region by sectors and in accordance with national guidelines. In 1996, Regional spatial plans were introduced in Greece to express general spatial policy in the context of economic and social development plans. Metropolitan agglomerations have also got regulatory strategic plans. At a municipal level a number of instruments are developed (e.g. Municipality operational plan, General urban plan, City plan, Non-plan procedural policy instruments such as Transfer of development rights etc.).

7.2.4 Austria

In Austria there is no legally binding spatial planning document as national planning is constrained to Sectoral planning frameworks. Nevertheless, the Austrian spatial concept which describes planning situation at all levels and in all relevant sectors is published once in a decade by Austrian conference on spatial planning (ÖROK) – the last one published in 2011. At the regional level there are three main planning documents: State development plans (States' official decrees, comprehensively covering the whole territory), Regional development plans and Sectoral planning (based on state's or governmental decree). At a local level all municipalities are empowered to prepare their local Spatial development plans and Land use plans, they are approved by the federal States. Zoning plans are prepared for the built up area and lands to be developed. Subordinated to the zoning plan is a Building regulation plan. It is prepared for the designated parts of the lands covered by the zoning plan. Additionally to the administrative planning levels, planning de facto relies on other frameworks too (e.g. transnational region, cross-border region, Local Agenda 21).

7.2.5 Montenegro

Two main spatial planning documents in Montenegro are the Spatial plan of Montenegro 2020 (the umbrella document superior to all other planning documents) and the Spatial plans of municipalities. In 2007 a Special purpose spatial plan of the coastal zone was introduced covering all six coastal municipalities of Montenegro. The technical criteria regarding contents and formats of planning documents are detailed in a Rulebook on detailed contents and format of planning documents from 2010 for both national and municipal levels of consideration.

7.2.6 Serbia

The national level spatial planning document in Serbia is Spatial plan of Republic of Serbia. It defines main territorial development priorities and sets bases for horizontal and vertical coordination through planning levels. All other planning documents are subordinate to this document. At a regional level the territorial specifics are covered in Regional spatial plans and in Spatial plans for specific-purpose areas (for the areas of specific demands in terms of organization, use and protection



of space). The local administrative units determine a development of their territories in Spatial plans of local communities. All spatial planning documents in Serbia except the latest contain a Program of implementation of spatial plan where implementation measures and activities for a 5-year period are defined.

7.2.7 Moldova

The national Ministry of Construction and Regional Development develops and promotes policy papers in the following fields: land use and planning, urban planning, architecture, design works, construction, production of building materials, housing and regional development. Its role is to hold them in line with the European standards. It also develops the National Land Use Plan on the basis of synthesis of regional and local policies and plans. It coordinates general and zonal urban plans and develops and monitors the National Regional Development Strategy. In cooperation with regional development councils it also coordinates the development of regional development policies and programs. National Spatial Plan hasn't been fully approved in Moldova, nevertheless it is binding for all levels of planning. Other types of documentation are zonal spatial plans, rayonal spatial plans, inter-municipal plans and plans for cities, towns and communes. At a regional level the following documents are prepared: National Regional Development Strategy and the Single Programming Document. At the local level the Urban Development Plans for communities as well as Land Use Plans are adopted.

7.3 General observations

The structure of the planning documentation in all of the countries follows the administrative framework of the planning sector and is hierarchically structured (different levels from national to communal).

Most often national government sets priorities and basic guidelines as well as coordinates and guides sectorial policies. At the same time local specific decisions are taken by the highest national authorities only for some strategically or otherwise important locations - generally these decisions are taken by the local authorities.

Additionally to the administrative levels of planning a number of other influential planning frameworks intervene (EU cooperations and sectoral regulations, international and locally adopted Agendas etc).

The instruments developed within the spatial planning systems of the respected countries have been to an extent developed in order to facilitate the cooperation between various administrative as well as sectoral levels of planning – indicating how challenging and difficult the reconciliations in urban planning may be.

There are some technical–detailing instruments in place prescribing graphic standardisation, land use categories etc.

8 Detailed Description of the Impact of the Most Important Planning Plans, Instruments and Policies on the Area of Intervention

According to the reports the majority of the documentation has the status of a formal document and there are **more positive than negative impacts** of the existing planning documentation in the case studies areas.

Among **positive impacts** of the documents at a **general (national/state) level of planning**, the following aspects can be pointed out: definition of long-term planning objectives, a strategic insight into the strengths and opportunities of a wider territories, coordination of sectoral politics, frameworking of the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects, determination of the key stakeholders and their main roles, assurance of the democratic measures in decision making and involvement of communities, protection of main resources and most valuable cultural heritage and linking the national spatial planning policies to the European regulations and directives. Some **negative** aspects of the planning documentation at a national level are the imposition of constraints to the possible developments and opportunities and uncritical/exclusive promotion of some sectors on the account of the others (e.g. tourism development vs protection of natural resources).

At the *middle levels of planning (regional/county/province level)* the **positive** impacts are:

- identification of possible investment sources,
- inter-sectoral approach to spatial development,
- support to (cross-border) cooperation among different administrative units,
- identification of the key networks and infrastructures and their future development,
- identification of common development zones within the wider territories,
- concretisation of the sustainability measures (e. g. mobility, nature protection),
- capitalisation of the existing efforts in terms of networking the players to achieve common goals.

Some **negative aspects** were mentioned too, such as the (informal) status of some important documents that thus stay powerless, the systemic failure to carry out the spatial planning provisions due to the lack of the personnel or institutions to implement them, unclear positioning of regional plans (e.g. in relation to national documents), and inadequate harmonization with the same level documents in the neighboring territories. Apart from this, it is to be argued that in some countries (i.e. Serbia and Greece) 5-year strategies are rather short-termed for the regional level.

The **positive impacts** of the planning documentation at a *local/municipal/community* level are identification and building-up of concrete projects, orientation to solutions to existing problems, clarification of planning rules, prescription of the regimes of natural and cultural heritage, building/settlement extension, land identification and measures for the qualitative improvements of



the settlements. Among **negative** impacts are the contentual issues in terms of inappropriate solutions prescribed by the document, the lack of action planning in order to make things happen, prolongation of the official procedures and resolution of some issues not enough-into detail. Given the application within rigid boundaries at local level, correlation with the documentations of neighboring municipalities / local administrative units is also crucial and oftentimes not treated with the necessary level of importance.

9 Changes of Existing or Preparation of New Documentation Foreseen

Alba Iulia needs to develop or improve and update some key documents related to urban planning and developments (e.g. creating the Municipal Development strategy, updating the General urban plan). The documents need to support the combined actions at different levels of elaboration (national, county, local).

The **Baia Mare Metropolitan Area** aims at developing an integrated place-based strategy with a 2030 horizon in order to stimulate the development of the Functional Urban Area of the city, within the 2014-2020 European and National framework for sustainable urban and rural development and competitiveness.

In **Abruzzo** participation issues (in both communal and sectoral terms) may be put on a table and the planning instruments have to be updated to define design frameworks for specific requirements of the territory. There are some methodological issues too which, if approached differently, may open contentual questions too. In general a more strategic and coordinated approach is desired. The dynamics of space need to be better integrated into the documents.

In the case of **Foggia** the existing documents are sufficient to trigger new documents that will support the networking of actions and actors to find common solutions. A revision of executive plan proposed by the Province of Foggia is suggested.

Kavala foresees the integration of STATUS project outputs and especially the interventions of the Strategic urban agenda into the process of modification of General urban plan of Kavala. In general it is believed that the slow but steady process of better horizontal and vertical coordination of Greek planning system is on a good way, but the financing resources and competences of sub-national structures need to be addressed and resolved.

The Municipality of **Herceg Novi** decided to make a spatial and urban plan of the municipality. Some regional planning is foreseen to commence in Montenegro too in the future (e.g. Special purpose spatial plan covering all six coastal municipalities of Montenegro).

Balti aims to improve and update the General Urban Plan as well as Economic and Social Development Program according to the new requirements, financing opportunities and possible cooperation with neighboring territories. Similarly the methodology of implementation of urbanistic documentation needs to be revised. More participatory approaches to spatial planning need to be developed and better databases and monitoring mechanisms set up.

9.1 General observations

Updating the existing documents is foreseen in the majority of cases, namely in terms of integration of new knowledge and reactions to new realities in the territories.

Some improvements are suggested in the field the administrative structure in some cases to better coordinate vertical and horizontal communication among stakeholders.

Some methodological issues have been identified that need to be addressed and thus possibly lead to rethinking of contents of some existing and legally binding documents.

10 Conclusions

A general review of administrative planning systems as well as a more in-depth review of the planning policies, instruments and plans once more revealed the variety across the continent in terms of the structure of the planning system, its legal documents and tools that are in use, as well as administrative processing and contents covered by the planning documents. This can be partly explained with major variations in the historic socio-economic development as well as political circumstances across the continent - their influence on the past as well as present territorial planning activities and regimes is substantial. In general the eastern countries faced more changes through the times and consequently modified their planning systems more frequently than western countries. Nevertheless the drivers of the changes as well as challenges of the planning systems nowadays are similar. They are pertinent to economic and environmental issues as well as EU territorial development policies and funding schemes. The growing need for a better cooperation in administrative, territorial and content-related terms is omni-present across the reviewed countries and forces to seek the new ways of cooperation between various professions, administrative and political levels as well as territories. Some traditional planning instruments prove to be inadequate in addressing these challenges and a need for the innovative approaches is apparent.