

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ESPON project 1.1.2: URBAN-RURAL RELATIONS IN EUROPE (2002-04)

(o) Political challenges for the ESPON projects

The Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, published in January 2001, presented for the first time a third territorial dimension of the cohesion (beside the economic and social cohesion), which calls for a better co-ordination of territorially relevant decisions. Stressing the persistence of territorial disparities within the Union, the report stated the need for a cohesion policy not limited to the less developed areas as well as the need to promote a more balanced and more sustainable development of the European territory.

The Second Cohesion Report represents in that respect a follow up of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), adopted at ministerial level in May 1999, calling for a better balance and polycentric development of the European territory.

The projects launched under the ESPON programme shall follow an integrated approach and, seen together, cover a wide range of issues, such as:

- Identifying the **decisive factors relevant for a more polycentric European territory**; accessibility of a wide range of services in the context of enlargement; integration of wider transnational spaces; promotion of dynamic urban growth centres; linking peripheral and disadvantaged areas with those centres; etc.
- Developing **territorial indicators and typologies** capable of identifying and measuring development trends as well as monitoring the political aim of a better balanced and polycentric EU territory
- Developing **tools supporting diagnoses of principal structural difficulties as well as potentialities**, such as disparities within cities and regenerating deprived urban areas; structural adjustment and diversification of rural areas; strategic alliances between neighbouring cities at transnational, national and regional scale; new partnerships between rural and urban areas; potential support from infrastructure networks in the field of transport, telecommunication, energy; etc.
- Investigating **territorial impacts of sectoral and structural policies** in order to enhance synergy and well-co-ordinated decisions relevant for territorial development within policy fields such as Structural Funds, agriculture, transport, environment, research and development; developing methods for measuring the territorial impact of sectoral and structural policies; etc.

- Developing **integrated tools in support of a balanced and polycentric territorial development**; approaches to enhance the potential of cities as drivers of regional development, new tools for integrated urban-rural development and planning, etc.

With the results of all the ESPON projects, the Commission and the Member States expect in particular to have at their disposal: **a diagnosis of the principal territorial trends** at EU scale as well as the difficulties and potentialities within the European territory as a whole; **a cartographic picture of the major territorial disparities** and of their respective intensity; a number of **territorial indicators and typologies assisting a setting of European priorities** for a balanced and polycentric enlarged European territory; some **integrated tools and appropriate instruments** (databases, indicators, methodologies for territorial impact analysis and systematic spatial analyses) to improve the spatial co-ordination of sector policies.

In this respect, the ESPON projects will serve as a strong scientific basis for the propositions of the Commission in the Third Report on Cohesion, at the end of 2003, in view of the reform of post-2007 Structural Funds.

(i) Relation to the ESPON 2006 Programme

The priorities describing the work-programme of the ESPON 2006 Programme are structured in four strands:

1. **Thematic projects** on the major spatial developments on the background of typologies of regions, and the situation of cities.
2. **Policy impact projects** on the spatial impact of Community sector policies and Member States' spatial development policy on types of regions with a focus on the institutional inter-linkages between the governmental levels and instrumental dimension of policies
3. **Co-ordinating and territorial cross-thematic projects** represent a key component of the programme. These projects evaluate the results of the other projects towards integrated results such as indicator systems and data, typologies of territories, spatial development scenarios. The cross section projects help to thematically co-ordinate the whole programme and add value to the results and to fill gaps, which are unavoidable when different themes are dealt with in different projects.
4. **Scientific briefing and networking** in order to explore the synergies between the national and EU source for research and research capacities.

This project belongs to the first strand and therefore holds a key position for the elaboration of the whole programme by the preparation of the common ground for the investigation of the basic spatial structure in Europe. Therefore a strong co-ordination with all other ongoing projects is needed, in particular with other projects within the same strand and with the coordinating and cross-thematic projects under priority three and the Co-ordination Unit.

ii) Thematic scope and context

The future of numerous rural areas is increasingly functionally interlinked with urban development. This is obvious in the densely populated areas (such as peri-urban zones) undergoing considerable urbanisation pressure. It is also relevant for more sparsely populated rural areas, which are under less visible urban influence. What is the future perspective for urban-rural relationships and the system of mutual exchange, where cities provide services, cultural activities, infrastructures and the major access to the labour market, while rural areas, still producing agricultural products, provide leisure potential and green spaces (amenities)? Will the viability of the rural areas depend increasingly on their proximity and their degree of exchange with urban areas? How can co-operation and partnerships support a sustainable development of rural areas?

The project shall further explore relations between urban and rural areas in terms of exchange processes, institutional links and interdependencies. These relations are of special interest on the background of the diverse structure of the EU territory and the neighbouring countries. They have developed substantially during the last decades, however differently within Europe in accordance to the diversity of spatial contexts.

The development potential and opportunities as well as difficulties for urban-rural relationships in the light of a sustainable development of regions provide an important point of reference for this project. The stronger functional integration between many neighbouring rural and urban areas seems to make a strong divide of rural and urban development issues a concept of the past. In stead, a more integrated approach might provide new opportunities for synergies through urban-rural partnerships, where the diversity of relationships to large extent defines potential partnerships.

The potential relations differ for rural territories in decline, some of them far from major towns and cities, and rural territories close to larger cities, in some cases an integrated part of an urban region. The potential for building new partnerships in support of polycentrism (dominantly at regional scale), and the opportunities for a sustainable urban-rural development within regions and larger territories constitutes a point of reference for inputs to policy development from this project.

The project is closely linked to ESPON action 1.1.1 dealing with other aspects of polycentric and balanced territorial development, particularly concerning methodology and data as well as providing inputs in support of polycentrism through strategic co-operation between neighbouring rural and urban territories. A strong co-operation and exchange of data and results must assure coherence and avoid double work.

Furthermore the work under action 2.1.3., territorial impact of the EU Agricultural Policy, has to be taken into account.

The ESDP policy aims under the guideline “Polycentric Spatial Development and a New Urban-Rural Relationship” are, together with the relevant policy options, central to this project. The project addresses all questions related to the ESDP related to the specific aspects of relationships between urban and rural areas.

Particular relevant for the project is the Study Programme on European Spatial Planning 1997-99 (SPESP). The results of this programme provide particular valuable access points to urban-rural relationships, being a specific theme in the SPESP programme. In addition, Ministers for Urban Affairs agreed at their meeting in November 2000 in Lille a multi-annual co-operation programme, which could act as a reference point for further specification and avoidance of double work.

Finally, the European Commission started in “The Second Report on Cohesion” the discussion on the notion “territorial cohesion”, which include a pursuit of a polycentric and better balanced European territory at all geographical scales. This project is foreseen to deliver an operational input to the further European debate on territorial cohesion.

iii) General objectives

The general objectives of the project are the following:

- a) To refer to the three fundamental objectives with in the ESDP with regard to balanced and sustainable spatial development: the economic and social cohesion, the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage and more balanced competitiveness of the European territory;
- b) To contribute to the identification of the existing spatial structure of the EU territory, in particular the degree and diversity of physical and functional polycentrism at different geographical scales, and to gain concrete and applicable information on the EU wide effects of spatially relevant development trends and their underlying determinates. Therefore, the project should be sustained by empirical, statistical and/or data analysis;
- c) To define concepts and to find appropriate territorial indicators, typologies and instruments as well as new methodologies to consider territorial information linked to polycentrism, to detect territories (preferably below NUTS 2) most negatively and positively affected by the identified trends with special reference to regions in terms of accessibility, polycentric development, environment, urban areas, territorial impact assessment; particular attention will be paid to areas exposed to extreme geographical positions and natural handicaps such as mountain areas, islands, ultra-peripheral regions; reflections should as well be included on relevant issues from the perspective of Europe and its territorial structure in a global or world-wide context;
- d) To develop possible orientations for policy responses, taking the diversity of the European territory into account, and considering institutional, instrumental and procedural aspects;
- e) To consider the provisions made and to provide input for the achievement of the horizontal projects under priority 3, such as tools for diagnosis and observation to be able to contribute to the forthcoming long term scenarios, as well as evaluation and assessment procedures.

In the efforts to meet these objectives the project shall make best use of existing research and relevant studies.

iv) Primary research issues envisaged

- Identification, gathering of existing and proposition of new territorial indicators and data and map-making methods to measure and display the state, trends and impacts of the developments referred to above for relationships between urban and rural areas. Compilation of national studies with European focus;
- Classification of European cities and their role in relation to surrounding rural areas in order to create a sufficient and comprehensive typology, which would allow properly defining urban-rural relationships¹ and concepts for the definition and measurement of urban and rural areas and their relations;
- Classification of European rural territories in order to obtain a sufficient typology based on the diversity of endogenous potential and problems in different parts of Europe, including territories with a peripheral location as well as islands and mountain areas;
- Development of a comprehensive typology of urban-rural relationships covering the EU territory as well as Candidate countries and neighbouring countries;
- Development of indicators for the definition of homogenous and functional areas and their relations (such as a European Functional Urban Area)², which require information on labour markets, retail, services, culture, housing and the resulting flows of people, goods, energy, information and finances. (Information on flows such as commuters should be available at NUTS 5 level).
- Geographical concentration of economic activities at regional scale as a concern, particular at regional scale, hampering territorial balance; social cohesion and increasing disparities and segregation as a EU wide concern also relevant to urban-rural relationships;
- The role of small and medium sized cities as development poles in rural territories in different (transnational) parts of the European territory, and the potential for reinforcement of regions by urban-rural partnerships in support of polycentrism and better territorial balance;
- Investigation of the phenomena of metropolisation and urban sprawl in relation to the urban – rural relation as another important issue under this measure. In this framework, the investigation of the concept “r-ur-ban” areas, where the characteristics of the urban and rural landscape are merged, should be considered.
- The potential, as part of a sustainable development, to increase joint economic dynamics in urban and surrounding rural areas, partly by exploring environmental qualities, natural and cultural assets, partly by exploring new location possibilities made available by the information technology;

¹ Ibidem, Annex 3.

² SPESP 2000 CD report on the typology of cities and urban-rural relationships, (point 3.3.)

- A further operationalisation and territorial diversification of the policy aims and options adopted in the ESDP, including an adaptation to the urban-rural diversities within the European territory.

(v) Expected results and timetable

The research undertaken during the interim reports is supposed mainly to work on the data available at the national statistical offices, Eurostat and other national and European institutions, and normally be based on existing administrative units. From 2003 until August 2004, the research should complement the missing territorial/regional data and complement tools and territorial indicators if possible beyond the NUTS classification and the NUTS 3 level.

One of the main objectives of the ESPON 2006 Programme is to focus on research with policy relevance and to contribute to the development of relevant policies. Therefore, the deliverables of the research project should be highly operational and coordinated in time, as far as possible, to fit into the relevant political agenda. The following timetable and specification of output is reflecting this objective:

September 2002 (first interim report):

- a) Consensus on indicators and data needed, after a precise analysis of the availability and comparability of data at Community level, to develop new database, including territorial indicators and the facilities needed for map-making. (For the analysis, the results of the study programme and the results of other ESPON projects in course, in particular under priority 3.1, should be taken into account). This task should also define the appropriate geographical level and technology required for data collection, taking into account the availability of relevant data;
- (b) A first detailed and comprehensive list of main requests for statistical and geographical data to be collected from Eurostat, the EEA and National Statistical Institutes and National Mapping Agencies before mid 2002;
- (c) A first overview on concepts, methodology and intended results, including the potential use of case studies.

February 2003 (second interim report):

- (d) Preliminary results on the basis of available territorial indicators, including European maps showing, as far as possible, the existing spatial structure of urban-rural relations, the degree of polycentrism at national/regional level as well as problems and dynamics related to urban and rural areas in different parts of the European territory;
- (e) A detailed overview on concepts and methodology and possible final results.
- (f) Establishment of a new database, so far based on indicators available and with the ability to produce European maps related to urban-rural relationships;
- (g) A second revised and extended request for further indicators to be collected (mainly) at Eurostat and the EEA.

August 2003 (third interim report):

- (h) Results achieved on the basis of the extended number of available territorial indicators, including European maps showing, as far as possible, the existing spatial structure of urban-rural diversities, the degree of polycentrism at national/regional level as well as problems and dynamics related to urban-rural relationships in different parts of the European territory; a profile of the functional and physical characteristics in the interface between urban and rural areas, the common economic base, accessibility to transport and knowledge, potential complementarities with larger cities close by as well as potential for increasing attractiveness through rural qualities, natural and cultural assets;
- (i) Detection of territorial typologies of urban-rural relationships revealing risks and potentials for the identified types;
- (j) Development of appropriate tools for the processing of the new data base, indicators and map-making, covering an enlarged EU (27 Member States);
- (k) Applicable systems for the monitoring of new trends of territorial developments in the context of the European territory, including candidate countries and neighbouring countries;
- (m) Conclusions and concrete ideas for policy responses on the territorial trends regarding urban-rural relationship at different scale and in different parts of the Union that could improve territorial cohesion.

August 2004 (final report):

- (n) An executive summary of the main results of the research undertaken and final recommendations for policy development;
- (o) Comprehensive presentation of territorial development trends facing urban-rural relationships as part of a polycentric and balanced development of the enlarged European Union;
- (p) Presentation of access points and concrete ideas for policy responses to the territorial trends facing urban-rural relationships in different parts of the Union that could improve territorial cohesion, including the possibilities for promoting urban-rural partnerships;
- (q) Presentation of the developed territorial indicators, concepts and typologies linked to urban-rural relationships, including maps;
- (s) Presentation of the final database and the mapping facilities developed, covering as far as possible an enlarged EU and neighbouring countries;
- (t) Listing of further data requirements and ideas of territorial indicators, concept and typologies as well as on further developments linked to the database and mapping facilities.

vi) Rationale and Structure

The following text has the role of shaping the mind of thinking in developing a proposal for undertaking the ESPON action 1.1.2.. The text is not meant to be exhaustive, but to serve the purpose of guiding the tenderer.

1. Approaches to the definition and methodology

As mentioned above rural and urban development is more and more interlinked and determined by various trends and factors. A major role in influencing urban-rural relationship plays the diversification and revitalisation of regions.

Cohesion policy effects the diversification of the rural economy, in addition to the policy of rural development financed under the CAP, which is centred on the adaptation of agriculture to the new economic realities as well as to the strengthening of the competitiveness of rural regions. The revitalisation of the rural areas and population maintenance pass through the development of new activities, in particular in the service sector. The diversification of numerous rural areas is in progress under the effect of the development of SMEs, tourism, services, accessibility etc. However it progresses with difficulty in the areas most disadvantaged where the entrepreneurial capacity and the attractiveness with respect to external investments are weak.

Urban-rural relationships take place on several spatial dimensions: regional, super-regional, inter-regional and transnational. The project should be based on these territorial dimensions, the typology mentioned below and the territorial scales referred to under ESPON action 1.1.1, global economic integration zones, urban development poles and urban functional areas.

As a first step a typology of the rural areas according to the major types of structural problems to which they are confronted should be elaborated. An interesting five categories territorial typology has been developed by the SPESP, which could be taken into account. According to another simpler indicative typology, three types of rural areas could be defined:

- Remote rural areas with considerable economic difficulties: low population density, depopulation, insufficiency of public and private services, insufficiency of infrastructures, unfavourable sector structure, bad accessibility, missing infrastructures, etc. These difficulties can be accentuated by natural disabilities (peripheral situation, mountains, climate, etc.) They are located far from population centres and require primarily integrated rural development actions.
- Intermediate rural areas threatened by the change or the decline of agriculture (areas still very dependent on agriculture, productive arable too slightly land,) or achieving a functional diversification. Larger towns and cities are mostly distant, while medium-sized and small towns are reasonably close. They require agricultural adjustment and reinforcement of their links and relationship with towns.
- Rural areas undergoing the pressure caused by the metropolisation and adjoining urban expansion (inhabitants commuting to work in urban areas in nearby towns, existing local markets for the production of rural entrepreneurs, etc.). These rural areas require, inter alia, reinforcement actions towards the relationships between the urban and rural areas aiming at improving quality of life and sustainable development.

To compare rural and urban areas throughout Europe, they have to be defined and delimited in a homogenous way. Too often comparisons between cities in Europe (and regions as well) turn out to be inoperative, because different limits of urban areas are used. One possibility here is to develop a common definition using the concept of functionally independent or functional entangled areas.³ Local commuting patterns could also act as a point of departure for delimiting Local Labour Market Areas (LLAs). Already in the SPESP study programme different possible solutions to this problem were discussed. This discussion needs enhancement in order to make an operationalisation possible, in close co-operation with ESPON project 1.1.1..

The conceptual work on urban-rural relations started by the OECD territorial indicators assessment and proposed during the SPESP study should be continued – aiming at the establishment of a conceptual framework revealing the impact of urban activities on rural development (u-r), the rural phenomena generated by rural activities (r-r) and urban phenomena generated by rural activities (r-u).

Through the focus on both internal and external relations the project has to take a dynamic position with regard to the selection of the appropriate regional dimension (see above). The project should therefore orientate towards a discussion of various typologies of measurement of territorial interdependencies and address its economic, social, cultural, as well as functional and physical dimensions.

2. Indicators and data

In that context it will be necessary to define the most relevant indicators to appreciate the intensity of the structural difficulties in the 3 types of areas as identified above (stress the urban-rural relations, in particular in the 3rd type of area of typology) while working on variables such as:

- urbanisation rates and settlement densities
- land pressure
- spatial distribution of the cities and of their size
- employment structure by sectors and type of activities
- intensity of the trade between cities and rural areas,
- density of the professional networks associating urban and rural companies
- accessibility (distance and time of travel between rural areas and urban areas)
- access to the infrastructures and to the services (health, education, etc.)
- degree of valorisation of rural natural spaces and agricultural products by towns

The aim is to define a "degree of influence" of cities on the countryside (and vice-versa) and to apply these indicators by mapping, including the intensity of difficulties of the rural areas within the European territory.

³ An OECD working group currently is working on systemising the concept functional areas for the OECD countries

In order to allow a more dynamic view of territorial relationships and changes, alternative regional frameworks should be analysed using statistical time series. As far as possible, these should be based on data for low geographical units (preferably below NUTS III) as a starting point for analyses covering all 15 current Member States and accession countries (12).

When one refers to the Commission's orientations, it appears that the question of urban-rural partnership corresponds to a level of analysis quite suitable for considering the challenges to be faced when aiming at territorial cohesion; this question allows to apprehend and report on both the multiplicity of European territories and the variety of spatial dynamics that standard European and national statistics, so far, do not consider.

In this perspective, the work must in the first place enable the definition of indicators, which differentiate processes of territorial developments and classification at different scales, including urban agglomerations and surrounding peripheral semi-urban areas as well as medium-sized cities and rural towns in rural territories stimulating their perspective role in regional expansion. Beyond a strictly urban and regional approach, territorial analysis of urban-rural relationships must also concern the international scale in order to fully understand how complementarities in urban dynamics can influence urban-rural relations in support of a polycentric Europe.

Spatial typologies developed in existing research projects and studies offer a valuable base for the investigation of urban-rural relations in different spatial contexts, such as the zone of high economic and social density, peripheral areas, countries in transformation, etc. Progress within the project shall be co-ordinated with ESPON project 3.1.

3. Quantitative and qualitative analysis

3.1. Diagnosis of potentials and difficulties

The territorial indicators developed build the basis for the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threads in urban-rural relationships and the effects on rural areas. How are rural areas influenced by these relationships? Concerning urban areas the study should refer to the work under ESPON project 1.1.1., while the diagnosis related to rural areas has to be carried out within this project.

Besides comparative work across EU Member States and candidate countries, the study should provide the base for addressing territorial dynamics. This is important for urban areas as for rural areas for which changes in exchange and inter-connection to other territories seem to be of outstanding relevance for future partnerships and common strategies. Whereas the concept of urban networking (and clustering of neighbouring cities) is widely accepted and implemented, the need for urban and rural areas to engage in partnerships is a dimension to enhance in territorial development.

Experience from local and small-scaled regional activities, like in particular the Community Initiatives LEADER and INTERREG, addresses networking and co-

operation as a main priority and an emerging issue for changes of regional development. A thorough analysis integrating trends for territorial relations, for rural/urban areas, for dynamic/lagging regions, small-scaled/large-sized (functional) geographical units should provide results with regard to the main driving forces and prerequisites for strategies on urban-rural partnerships as a factor in a polycentric and balanced territorial development.

3.2. Sustainable development and impact of sector policies

The diversity of exchange processes between rural and urban areas and the diversification of the urban-rural spatial pattern should be analysed including: a) intensity and quality of trade relations between towns and countryside; professional networking between urban and rural firms; access to labour market for rural citizens; b) role of small and medium-sized towns for accelerating the agricultural restructuring and the diversification of rural economies; valorisation of agricultural production niches by the towns; valorisation of rural natural and cultural amenities by the towns; c) role of providing services (health, education, culture, leisure, etc.) and access to services for revitalising rural areas; d) the potential of location of new enterprises in rural towns exploring (tele)communication networks.

In this context, the questions of **urban sprawl** and the sudden increase of mobility also generate the need for new tools, which enable to measure moving urban limits. Preliminary work have supported the idea that the division between centre and periphery must be replaced by an approach with a gradation of finer structures offering the production of new typologies giving a better account of the multiplicity of situations.⁴ Possibilities of quantification of flows (people, goods) between rural and urban areas and impact of those flows on the evolution of the areas should be explored.

The **transport** and **communications technologies** execute an impact on urban development, and the relations in the international urban hierarchy. An impact of larger cities on their surrounding urban and rural areas is probable. Based on the indicators elaborated, the project should examine this impact on urban-rural relationships. The hypothesis of higher order cities extending their spheres of influence to urban-rural relations should be addressed exploring diversities of impacts between EU countries and regions. This part of the study has to be linked with ESPON projects under measure 2.1, the territorial effects of sector policies.

The **impact** of the various rural development measures on the cohesion should be evaluated (including the quality of life in a rural environment, population maintenance, etc.), paying special attention on the Community value added of these measures. It will be primarily the measures of rural development under Objective 1 and 2 (rural objective, ex objective 5b). The findings should be integrated with results achieved in ESPON project 2.1.3. and 2.2.1. Once again the key question is, whether the present rural development measures strengthen complementarities in urban-rural relations and the basis for urban-rural partnerships or the opposite.

⁴ In this sphere, the previous phase of SPESP offers important access points

A more integrated and balanced EU cohesion policy should also pay attention to the “green quality”, especially in increasingly urbanised areas (notably the current “global integration zone” and metropolitan regions). This aspect should be taken into account in elaborating policy inputs to potential partnerships between urban and rural territories, in particular in order to ensure “**green areas**” between the important urban areas/networks and euro corridors in Europe, as well as for indicators, prognoses and models of administrative co-operation (co-ordination with projects under measure 1.3).

3.3. Historical and institutional aspects of urban–rural relations, governance

Besides conceptual clarification, the project should include the examination of the inherited variety of historical interdependencies between cities and their hinterland and the variety of political and administrative systems. The analysis of the various shapes of the urban-rural relationships (and potential partnerships) can not be restricted to the sphere of territorial analysis. The institutional structures and dynamics that encourage or undermine potential partnerships have to be considered as well. The qualitative elements of the analysis and the territorial indicators have to be complemented with the indicators on institutional factors.

Institutional, governance and fiscal aspects are to be appreciated: the level of spatial integration, the degree of co-operation and of partnership between urban and rural areas (in particular involving small and medium towns), integrated planning in large urban-rural functional areas, fiscal system, administrative barriers/borders. Moreover the effects of sector policies, such as the CAP (co-ordination with actions under measure 2.1), should be comprised.

The territorial governance appears rather different depending on Member States: a methodology on Europe wide comparative studies still needs to be developed. That also relates to the better knowledge of the tools of territorial planning involved in the urban-rural partnership, and on various forms of “cooperation between municipalities” (presently most advanced in clustering of towns and cities) as well as urban policies carried out at European level.

4. Orientations for policy recommendations

It must be recognised that currently the measures known as rural development cover primarily support for the farmers (individuals). Only some measures of Article 33 of the Regulation on rural development concern the rural socio-economic development in the broad sense.

In targeting inputs to policy development the project should consider the following:

The problem of concentration of funds: Should measures remain concentrated primarily on the farmers (5% of the working population on average in the U.E 15, more than 20% of the working population in the applicant countries)? Which arguments for distributing

the funding by other keys, such as on the total rural population or in relation to the environmental efforts, would support a more integrated urban-rural development?

How to better articulate the 2nd pillar of the CAP (rural development) and territories? Is it necessary to introduce stronger territorial components for the 2nd pillar to become a real rural development policy?

Is it necessary to establish a more clear separation between a cohesion policy aiming at the diversification of the rural economy (financed exclusively by the Structural Funds) and an agricultural development policy (financed by the CAP) focussing on the adaptation/adjustment of agriculture and the strengthening of competitiveness?

Above all, conclusions and recommendations should follow an integrated approach concerning policy measures. They should include agricultural, sector and structural policies taking into account horizontal EU objectives such as sustainable development and governance. The project should elaborate concrete and applicable recommendations on urban rural relations and partnerships for future cohesion policy and a more balanced polycentric development.

Recommendations should in particular include proposals for improvement of the current programming period of Structural Funds, proposals for future policy instruments in the framework of Structural Funds and Agriculture policy (rural development strand) and proposals for co-ordination with other Community policies and with national policies.

Conclusions on **potentials and difficulties** of urban-rural relations should be drawn taken into consideration the diversities within the European territory, and concrete recommendations should be formulated on how relationships could be strengthened and deepened for the profit of both areas, and how the exchange processes and the **institutional structure** could be organised in order to support partnership building.

The project has to refer to the fundamental objectives and the relevant policy options mentioned in the ESDP. A differentiation of ESDP policy aims related to the diversities within the European territory should be proposed. This also includes formulating concrete recommendations on how urban-rural partnerships could play a stronger role in integrated strategies for a better balanced and polycentric European territory, and how such partnerships could be supported by EU policies.

vii) Existing access points

The access points listed below can serve the purpose of providing the tenderer useful information for preparing a proposal. It is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but only as information that can be helpful in tracing additional useful background information.

- The results of the study programme (SPESP) with regards to urban-rural relationships and partnerships;

- The OECD working group on territorial questions, also investigating functional areas in an international comparative perspective;
- Leader (rural areas) and Interreg (transnational co-operation) could provide cases studies in order to better understand the urban-rural relationship from a European perspective;
- Some Interreg IIC and IIIB projects also dealing with this issue could provide some experience at transnational scale;
- Objective 1 and 2 (former 5b) programmes under Structural Funds;
- The (new) Commission's/Eurostat's Initiative on Environmental European Spatial Data Infrastructure (E-ESDI) can also considerably contribute.

In addition, an ESPON Data Navigator creating an overview, a handbook, giving information on principal data sources, contact points etc, is under elaboration. The Data Navigator is expected to cover, in principle, all countries in an enlarged European Union as well as neighbouring countries. The Data Navigator is scheduled to be finalised by August 2002.