KITCASP
Key Indicators for Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning

Targeted Analysis 2013/2/20

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Part D | Appendix F
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1  What is KITCASP?

KITCASP is a research project sponsored by the ESPON\(^1\) Programme. The main aim of the project was to develop a set of key indicators for territorial cohesion that could be used to inform strategic spatial policy at the national level. Territorial cohesion is a headline EU policy objective which seeks to reduce of socio-economic regional imbalances; promote environmental sustainability; and improve governance processes – all of which are also key objectives of spatial planning. The project was initiated by five stakeholder institutions representing different nations within the EU whom were seeking better ways of monitoring the effectiveness of their spatial planning policies. The work was undertaken by an international research team on the basis of individual case studies in the five stakeholder nations led by the Scottish Government and also consisting of stakeholders in the Ireland, Basque Country, Iceland, and Latvia. The project started in February 2012 and closed with a final conference in Scotland in October 2013.

There was close co-operation between the research team and the stakeholder institutions and also significant consultation with spatial planning practitioners, policymakers and researchers within each case study nation. The process revealed interesting similarities and differences across the different case studies in terms of spatial development priorities, policy agendas and data availability. It also provided useful insights into the use of indicators as a means of preparing and monitoring strategic spatial policy that will be relevant to practitioners and decision makers throughout Europe.

2  What is in this user guide?

The user guide is intended to provide user-friendly advice for spatial planning practitioners and other interested policymakers on the use of ESPON data and indicators in the preparation and monitoring of spatial strategies and territorial development policies. The use of indicators in spatial planning is first discussed before the concept and rationale for the KITCASP indicators is explained. Transferable lessons are drawn that are potentially relevant to other national contexts as well as being relevant to stakeholders at different levels of governance. Guidance is also provided on how the KITCASP indicators can be

\(^1\)ESPON is the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion and is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The mission of the ESPON Programme is to support policy development in relation to territorial development and cohesion by the provision of a robust evidence base and identifying territorial development trends, challenges and opportunities.
applied and how practitioners throughout Europe can develop a bespoke set of indicators that are appropriate to their own specific territorial context.

3 How to use this guide

One of the key preferences expressed by stakeholders during the KITCASP project was the need for simplicity and clarity of approach. Indicators enable the evaluation of policy strategies and the assessment of the achievement of policy aims and must be capable of being easily communicated to a range of audiences. Simplicity and usability has therefore become a cornerstone of thinking, resulting in the identification of a limited number of headline indicators linked to spatial planning storylines in each country. The simplicity of the approach continues with these guidelines. Complexity has been deliberately avoided in favour of clear concise explanations of the most important and relevant issues.

The guidelines offer practitioners readable advice whether they are seeking general information about the use of indicators, whether they are intending to apply the KITCASP indicators or whether they are seeking to develop a set of bespoke indicators relevant for a specific territorial context. The structure of the guidelines is intended to help practitioners by being divided into easy to find sections focusing on each of these issues and based on the experience of the KITCASP project in developing indicators for the case study nations.

Using key indicators in spatial planning

4 What are indicators?

The key purpose of indicators is to translate complex relationships and phenomena in a way that is easy to understand and provides usable and reliable signals about important spatial development trends over time. Indicators need to be analysed so that decision makers can make an informed choice about whether a specific policy or objective is, or has been, successful or whether it needs to be adapted or even abandoned.

There is no such thing as a perfect indicator. In order to be effective indicators need blend of scientific accuracy with demands for concise information and require careful interpretation, in the round. Ultimately indicators are intended to inform decision making in relation to spatial policy and can help to measure dynamic spatial development processes and spatial planning outcomes.
In the context of territorial cohesion and spatial planning, the final set of indicators needs to be, as far as possible, quantifiable and spatially-specific. Stakeholders in all case studies valued the simplicity of the KITCASP approach and usually favoured the use of single rather than complex composite indicators.

Indicators can focus on different aspects of policy making and implementation. Process indicators, for example, seek to measure the effects of a policy, strategy or concept within the governance system. This type of indicator relates to an understanding of territorial cohesion as a process for coordinating the spatial impacts of sectoral policies. Despite a clear recognition of the importance of such processes of governance to successful territorial cohesion, KITCASP stakeholders felt that such complex socio-political considerations could be best captured through a context specific basis. The preferred, therefore, was to develop a focus on spatial planning outcomes rather than process indicators.

Outcome indicators focus on the eventual benefits to society that policy proposals are intended to achieve. An example might be the total number of house completions in relation to a set target within a given period. Such indicators relate directly to issues that spatial policy is seeking to address and also provide a necessary evidence base for future policy intervention. However, it is widely accepted that sometimes such outcomes cannot be directly or easily measured. For example, quality of life is a desirable policy outcome, but not easy to measure. In such cases the solution will be to specify other indicator outputs that can act as an intermediate proxy indicator, signposting progress toward long-term aims.

It is equally important to remember that it may be difficult to attribute particular outcomes to specific policy interventions, because the effects of spatial policies are often linked to other governance interventions and be influenced by wider and underlying social, economic and environmental change processes. The most informative evidence base for spatial policy will consist of robust and dynamic indicators capable of capturing change over time. They should also have the flexibility to be adapted and adjusted to emerging planning and development priorities.

5 How can indicators assist spatial planning?

There has been a general shift towards evidence informed public policy in many policy domains including spatial planning since the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999. The ESDP was the first time that a spatial vision had been elaborated for the EU space and despite being heralded as a good example of contemporary spatial planning there was criticism that the vision was not
sufficiently grounded in evidence. ESPON was set up partly in response to such criticism with the intention that it would generate spatial research and data that would provide a robust evidence base upon which future spatial policy could be based.

The diversity of territorial, socio-economic and institutional contexts across Europe means that defining a common set of pan European indicators is extremely challenging and all indicators need to be interpreted in light of the relevant context. The most effective indicators are likely to be those linked to a specific priority policy theme and the KITCASP approach has focused primarily on key policy themes that resonate at both European and national levels in a combination of a top-down and bottom-up approach. The aim of providing a coherent set of pan European indicators determined that links to European policy agendas are essential.

6 What can’t indicators do?

Indicators are not intended to identify which policy option should be selected or to provide answers to specific questions. Indicators are simply a tool or an aid to decision making and always need to be interpreted taking into account a diversity of factors, including the political, governance, territorial and socio-economic contexts within which they are situated. Indicators do not provide decision makers with answers but they provide them with information that can help them to make informed decisions. The role of the spatial planner is often to help decision makers to select and interpret indicators in relation to the relevant spatial policy priorities and agendas. The diversity of spatial policy goals and the differences in ways and units of measurement in different territories provide clear hurdles to the provision of a coherent and comparable set of indicators that can be applied throughout Europe.
Aim and objectives of KITCASP

It was never the intention that KITCASP would create a comprehensive database of indicators for territorial cohesion and spatial planning at the European level or at the level of the individual case study territories. Rather the intention of the project was to show what was possible and to identify issues in relation to data gaps and limitations. More specifically its aims are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Aims and objectives of KITCASP

1. Review the current use of spatial data by government and public agencies in stakeholder countries and identify any data gaps, uncertainties or limitations

2. Examine the extent to which ESPON data has informed national spatial planning strategies and territorial development policy in each case.

3. Develop guidelines on the use of indicators and ESPON data in territorial policy development at the national level.

4. Identify a core set of key indicators for territorial cohesion and spatial planning, drawing on ESPON research and datasets available in the stakeholder countries.

5. Consider how the capacity for spatial analysis can be strengthened and harmonised at the national level.

6. Examine how national analytical experience and expertise can inform and take forward the EU Territorial Agenda and the implications for future ESPON research.
Methodology: developing the indicators

The KITCASP methodology was developed by the research team and despite slight variations in how the methodology was applied to different case study territories, the overall approach followed the framework identified in the diagram below. The methodology can be applied to diverse contexts and can therefore provide inspiration for those seeking to develop their own set of indicators.

Figure 2: KITCASP step-by-step methodology

- **Step 1: Formulating Approach**
  - Literature review and definition of approach
  - Identify key policy priorities and objectives

- **Step 2: Identifying Themes**
  - Host stakeholder workshop 1
  - Identify key policy drivers and spatial planning themes
  - Discuss potential data sources

- **Step 3: Provisional Indicators**
  - Identify provisional indicators and start to gather data
  - Evaluate integrity of data
  - Cross check data against EU, national and sub-national policy drivers

- **Step 4: Validating Indicators**
  - Host stakeholder workshop 2 and consult other users
  - Validate, modify and fine tune indicators
  - Identify and appraise data limitations

- **Step 5: Monitoring Systems**
  - Populate indicator tables with data
  - Address data limitations and confirm monitoring framework
  - Establish data portal
Economic recovery emerged as a key policy driver, which requires visions and priorities to be realigned to address the consequences of the present post-recession economy. The promotion of economic competitiveness, resilience and job creation are high on European policy agendas and those of all case study territories, with stakeholders in Ireland pointing out that this was likely to be challenging within a context of significantly reduced budgetary resources.

The current difficult economic climate places pressures on long-standing policy goals such as the promotion of more balanced patterns of regional development. Nevertheless, the pursuit of territorial equity remains strong in the rhetoric of the various policy documents. The over concentration of development in the capital regions remains a significant threat to cohesion, especially in Iceland, Ireland and Latvia where the capital regions are particularly dominant. Potential tensions are apparent in recent policy documents in Latvia between the simultaneous pursuit of more balanced patterns of development and at the same time strengthening the international competitiveness of Riga. The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve natural resource management, protect landscapes, habitats and biodiversity and promote environmental sustainability were identified as influential policy drivers in all cases.

The need to improve strategic spatial planning practice and processes was identified as a policy driver in Ireland and Iceland, and managing demographic change was identified in Latvia and Scotland. These drivers are also likely to be relevant to the other case study territories though they were not identified explicitly by stakeholders during the workshops. The specific local context in some cases determined specific policy drivers being identified, the referendum to determine the question of Scotland’s independence in 2014 and the importance of maritime and coastal issues in Iceland being examples of more territory specific policy drivers.
An important element in the KITCASP approach was the identification of a list of contemporary policy themes that can be used to group indicators for territorial cohesion. Initially a list of potential themes was identified on the basis of a review of key spatial planning documents and preliminary discussions with the stakeholders in each case study. These were then combined into a list of common themes as follows:

**Figure 3: KITCASP indicator thematic areas**

- **Economic competitiveness and resilience**
  - Employment, adaptability, diversification, enabling economic activity, economic cooperation, collaboration and innovation

- **Social cohesion and quality of life**
  - People, equality, well-being, access to services, choice, connecting to work/schools, green areas, healthy living

- **Integrated spatial development**
  - Balanced regional development, settlement-infrastructure alignment, serving local needs, compact cities, polycentricity, territorial capacities and assets

- **Environmental resource management**
  - Landscape protection, climate change adaption and mitigation, low-carbon economy, sustainability, biodiversity, land, water and air quality

KITCASP adopted a simple approach that would be easy to understand, to use and to adapt to different territorial contexts. A storyline or rationale for the choice of each theme was developed around a series of keywords identified by the research team. A maximum of five indicators were identified per theme so that the overall dataset remained of manageable proportions. Both the themes and the indicators were identified initially for the individual case studies after an analysis of relevant spatial planning priorities and agendas and detailed discussions with stakeholders. A comparative analysis was then undertaken on the individual themes and provisional indicator sets before these were combined into a global indicator set, which is one of the key outputs of KITCASP.
**Theme 1: Economic competitiveness and resilience**

Economic recovery was identified as a key overarching theme in all case study regions. There is a strong emphasis on the need to strengthen economic competitiveness and to create employment opportunities. Stakeholders in Scotland argued that resilience was more relevant than competitiveness as the latter is a more subjective term and can change with evolving economic circumstances.

Indicators to reflect economic performance are well established in most countries throughout Europe and also at the European level. Indicators for productivity, employment, trade and economic structure are commonly used and in recent years there has been an increased focus on innovation and research, which resonates with the increased prioritisation at the European level of smart growth in pursuit of a knowledge-based economy.

Despite being far from unproblematic, GDP/GVA per capita is a commonly used and widely recognised indicator of economic prosperity. The number of people in work is fundamental to any assessment to economic well-being and so was chosen as a core indicator. This indicator can also usefully pick up upon economic activity rates and potentially connects purposefully to health concerns and more general issues of well-being.

The Europe 2020 Strategy identifies a target of 3% of GDP expenditure on research and development in order to promote innovation and the pursuit of a knowledge-based economy, making it a salient focus for a core economic indicator.

Many stakeholders agreed that an indicator to reflect Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) would resonate with policymakers though there was some doubt about the value of such an indicator when significant investments could simply displace economic activity and jobs from elsewhere within a territory. In addition, high levels of FDI could be interpreted as reflecting economic vulnerability to globalisation and lack of resilience. An indicator measuring the importance of exports, or some balance of imports/exports measure was therefore considered more appropriate. The key point is that as well as endogenous factors, indicators need also recognise the importance of attracting exogenous resources and capacities to the territory.
The fifth core indicator under this theme is economic structure and this provides important contextual information about the extent of economic specialization or diversity, though careful interpretation is required as either could be considered to be a relative strength or vulnerability. Similarly the issue of proportion of employment across private, public and voluntary sectors is an interesting indicator. Again, some might judge proportion of public sector employment as vulnerability, but alternatively such employment has historically been a stable and often relatively well paid and skilled part of local economic well-being and resilience.

**Theme 2: Managed Spatial Development**

This thematic area contains a diverse range of ideas, concepts and policy ambitions and measurement and evaluation in some instances is somewhat problematic. The drivers underpinning this thematic area in many ways came from the stakeholder regions which either have high levels of urban primacy (Iceland, Ireland, Latvia) or a strong political imperative to balance development across a number of competing regional urban centres (Bilbao, San Sebastian and Vitoria in the Basque region of Spain). Even where the compactness of a city or polycentricity of a territory can be measured, this cannot necessarily be interpreted as a good or a bad thing as spatial planning is far more complex than that.

The dynamics of population change is always important to spatial planning and the distribution of this across the settlement hierarchy speaks to issues of polycentricity and settlement-infrastructure alignment. Population density is a far less dynamic indicator though undoubtedly provides useful contextual insights into the characteristics of a territory. Levels of house building will always be of concern to spatial planners and so is included as a core indicator. Ideally one might equate this with need, be that population growth rates or through further differentiation of house building type and demand, but that probably would require a bespoke housing index.

Transportation and the way people move around are important to spatial planning and attempts to combat climate change and fossil fuel dependence. A core indicator reflecting modal split resonates with the increased focus on both the EU and individual territories on the development of a low carbon economy. Mobility issues are increasingly important to European 2020 ‘SMART” growth objectives, regional policy and rural development priorities as well as allocation mechanisms for EU Infrastructural Funds.
A measure of land-use change provides useful contextual insights into the characteristics of areas and a valuable means of comparison with other parts of Europe. This indicator also signals ‘territorial capacities and assets’, which are suggestive of key landscape features and cultural heritage assets and inventories of ‘scheduled monuments’, ‘designated areas’ and general ‘land use’ records are one means of capturing such features.

Indicators that capture ‘access to services’ speak to a range of planning issues, including polycentricity, urban compaction, sustainability and social equity. The rhetoric of spatial planning usually emphasises the importance of local high quality service provision and this often contrasts with the reality of increasingly centralised and specialized services whereby distances are likely to increase as more marginal services in remote areas become unviable. Drive times to key services (doctor, petrol station, post office, primary school, secondary school and retail centre) will therefore provide useful insights into these issues.

**Theme 3: Social Cohesion and Quality of Life**

This thematic area is arguably relatively straightforward, although debates over subjective and objective measures of quality of life, absolute and relative measures of equality or the nature of ‘cohesion’ are bound to stalk such considerations. It should be noted that access to services was located in the previous thematic because driving time to services signals issues of settlement dispersal and hierarchy.

Judging the skills base of the labour market resonates with the themes focusing on economic performance as well as social cohesion and quality of life. Participation in higher education is one means of measuring this. Indicators relating to poverty provide an easy to understand outcome measure that has significant implications for social cohesion and quality of life.

There has been significant interest in various countries in recent years in measures that broaden the concept of prosperity to include the more abstract concepts of wellbeing and quality of life. The accessibility of publically managed green space in urban areas is thus increasingly linked to quality of life, health and wellbeing. Such spaces are important resources for formal and informal sport, leisure and recreation. The provision of such space resonates with the role of spatial planners in place making.
There has also been considerable work undertaken on the development of wellbeing indexes, which are usually a composite of factors relating to housing, physical environment, personal development opportunities and neighbourhood and community.

Finally the dependency ratio provides useful insights into early years and aging population themes and both link strongly to economic performance and future social service provision challenges.

**Theme 4: Environmental Resource Management**

The focus upon environmental features of territories is clearly signalled by this thematic area. Nevertheless, potential policy contradictions should be recognised. For example, the pursuit of a low carbon economy through renewable energy technologies and strategies can have significant impacts upon some measures of landscape quality and management. Tensions between environmental and economic agendas are apparent in many territories throughout Europe.

Core indicators for renewable energy production, greenhouse gas emissions, population at risk of flooding and municipal waste recycling all provide headline assessments relevant to climate change objectives and processes of mitigation and adaption. The number and status of protected habitats and species provides some insight into biodiversity and broader issues of environmental management. The EU wide status of many such habitats also provides a useful basis for comparison.

### 11 Choosing indicators

The choice of indicators is extremely important and a filtering process was applied in the KITCASP to ensure that the chosen indicators were relevant and appropriate. The filtering process assessed the extent to which potential indicators addressed a series of key questions set out in Figure 4.
12 Data availability and management issues

The development of indicator sets and monitoring frameworks for spatial policy will be an ever evolving iterative process as new agendas, challenges and opportunities emerge and others fade. Data availability has shaped the choice of indicators in some territories where time or other resource constraints have determined that a pragmatic approach has been adopted and readily available indicators have been used. However, the absence of data is not necessarily a reason for not selecting a particular indicator for inclusion and a wish list of indicators underpinned by a robust rationale can be a useful means of justifying resources for data collection and to put a pressure on agencies responsible for that task.

Spatial development trends often manifest over a long period of time and data collection and interpretation can be time and resource intensive. Nevertheless, data should be collected at appropriate intervals so that they can provide time series information that is sensitive to change. One of the key issues to emerge from KITCASP was the importance of the spatial resolution of available data. If data is to be useful in informing strategic spatial policy then it needs to be available at an appropriate
resolution and often mapping such indicators at NUTS I, NUTS II or even NUTS III level is of limited use, depending on the nature of the indicator.

**Developing your own indicators**

13 Checklist of key considerations

The key considerations in relation to the choice of indicators are that they are clear and easy to interpret, spatially relevant, applicable, measurable and analytically sound. The questions in Figure 6 provide a useful checklist for the selection of indicators.

![Figure 6: Checklist for indicator selection](image)

14 Where to get data?

The cross-sector and multi-disciplinary nature of spatial planning determines that there are invariably a vast array of potential datasets with relevant data available within a particular territory. Some territories have dedicated datasets designed to assist with the monitoring and evaluation of spatial policy, whereas in other territories practitioners are required to take a more pragmatic approach and make use of data
from other sources that has been collected for other purposes. Data collected in relation to the territorial development index in Latvia is an example of the former whereas the monitoring framework in relation to the National Planning Framework documents in Scotland relied on data from numerous sources not specifically designed for planning purposes. A similar situation applies to Iceland where low population number and population density put constraints on resources available for such purposes.

Territories rarely appear to be getting the full use of existing research and stakeholders are often unaware of the full extent and nature of the data, either across diverse sources or even within the same institutional context. An inventory or centralised database of what is available and a requirement to upload relevant research and data would offer significant benefits both at the EU level and at the level of individual territories.

There is an increasing amount of data available at the European level from sources such as Eurostat and the European Environment Agency that can be used to inform strategic spatial planning at the national level. The spatial resolution at which data is available is a key issue. Data available at NUTS I, II or III levels is primarily useful for situating a territory in its broader European context rather than for a fine grained analysis of spatial development trends within a specific territory. The comparability of data available at the European level can also be questionable, though data collection and availability is likely to become more harmonised over time.

Data available at the European level will usually need to be supplemented by national level data to allow a more fine grained analysis for the purpose of informing strategic spatial planning at the national level. National statistical offices and sub-national observatories are often the most useful sources of statistical data. In addition many government departments will have their own thematic datasets. Other potential sources include local authorities, interest groups, think tanks, private consultants and charities.

15 Maintenance and monitoring

The European Union’s Territorial Agenda 2020 (TA2020) recognises that the Europe 2020 targets can only be achieved if the territorial dimension of the strategy is taken into account as development challenges and opportunities in different territories vary. TA2020 also stresses the need for improved territorially sensitive spatial monitoring as part of the proposed Europe 2020 surveillance regime to better coordinate evidence-based planning efforts to achieve country-specific targets.

The Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion calls for “higher-quality, better-functioning monitoring and evaluation systems” as being crucial for moving towards a more strategic and results-oriented approach to cohesion policy. The increased focus on indicators and monitoring is also reflected in the nature of ESPON
projects that have emerged in recent years and projects such as INTERCO (Indicators for Territorial Cohesion), SIESTA (Spatial Indicators for a ‘Europe 2020 Strategy’ Territorial Analysis), EU-LUPA (European Land Use Patterns), ReRisk (Regions at Risk of Energy Poverty), DEMIFER (Demographic and Migatory Flows Affecting European Regions and Cities), PURR (Potential of Rural Regions); and TPM (Territorial Performance Monitoring) have all been examined during the KITCASP project.

The detailed territorial profiles of the KITCASP case study territories revealed a diversity of existing spatial monitoring arrangements and that some territories have more extensive pre-existing data gathering systems and monitoring arrangements in-situ than others. The use of existing datasets has the advantage that indicators are more likely to be currently applied and understood by planners and policy-makers and that a monitoring system is likely to be in place to ensure regular data gathering and reporting.

The applicability and usability of indicators is directly dependent on the quality, quantity and timeliness of data collected and the project highlighted some of the data gaps and limitations in the stakeholder territories. The eight NUTS III Regional Authorities in Ireland are currently in the process of developing a common framework for monitoring and indicator development in relation to the implementation of Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and an increasingly integrated monitoring framework will be established over the coming years. There is an increased emphasis in many countries including all of the KITCASP case study territories in the development of key spatial data infrastructure in the form of publically accessible data portals to support evidence-based spatial planning.

An appropriate spatial monitoring framework must satisfy both the demands for an analytical base for sound spatial analysis, and also the varying political demands enabling the evaluation of policy strategies and the assessment of the achievement of policy aims. In addition, the desire for more comprehensive datasets needs to be seen within the context of continuing financial austerity under which it is likely that human and financial resources for collecting and monitoring data will be severely limited. Territories therefore need to be realistic and pragmatic, to use data that is available, easy to collect and understand where possible and to be aware of the resource implications and try to avoid time and resource intensive monitoring practices. The development of key indicators which are essential to tracking the implementation of important policies can be help justify and prioritise data collection.
The ESPON 2013 Programme is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It shall support policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and a harmonious development of the European territory.