A Regulation for the Urban Audit - a blessing or a curse?

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Structure of the talk

1. Why a legal base?
2. What was achieved since a year
3. Next steps
Chapter 1

Reasons for a legal base for urban statistics
Dimensions of the Urban Audit

- More than 300 variables collected from Member States
  - Cover many demographic, economic and social aspects in European cities

- Data collections
  - Annual data collection of 38 variables since 2010

- Three spatial units
  - 369 core cities
  - larger urban zones (=including the city hinterland)
  - sub-city information (reduced dataset)
Current situation of Urban Audit

- The Urban Audit project has been started more than 10 years ago in successive data collection rounds.
- **Ambitious** objective to provide a comprehensive statistical picture of urban life in more than 350 cities with over 300 indicators.
- The Urban Audit data has been **intensively used in EU Policy** context and analyses.
- Urban Audit has been very useful in defining **harmonised concepts** for core cities, larger urban zones and sub-city districts.
- Currently the 4th data collection is ongoing. Data dissemination to be expected in 2011.
Major challenges in the Urban Audit

- **Data delivery delays**
  - As a consequence the quality control, which needs a critical mass of data, is very delayed

- **Comparability** of the data is questioned by some
  - This reduces the usability of the data for political analysis

- **Missing data** is a problem for all countries
  - Different gaps in different countries due to diverging social and statistical history
  - Estimations required – some countries estimate a lot, others don’t estimate at all
Part of estimation in data delivery
Why can’t we go on like in the past 10 years?

- After ten years the Urban Audit collection is no longer a pilot study.
- The weak points mentioned before need to be tackled.
- In several Member States no human resources are provided if there is no legal obligation to produce these statistics.
- In general some worrying signs of waning support for Urban Audit.
Difficult context

- Severe resource constraints in Member States and Eurostat
- The economic crisis has led to a re-focusing of priorities in statistics (Economic governance, Europe 2020, Stiglitz Report)
- The importance of Urban Audit for EU policy making and national policy is not fully accepted by all
Chapter 2

What we achieved in the last 12 months
Initiative towards a legal basis

- Discussion of the necessity of a legal base in the Working Group meeting of October 2009
- Creation of a Task Force with delegates from Germany, Greece, France, United Kingdom and DG REGIO
- Draft concepts for:
  - Regulation with a selection of key variables
  - Gentlemen’s Agreement for voluntary indicators and proposal for financing
Why both a Regulation and a Gentlemen’s Agreement?

- In case of a Regulation, **no financial support** is possible
  - Logic: if there is a legal obligation, there is no funding
- On the other hand, financial support is a **condition sine qua non** for the Urban Audit since 10 years
  - Urban Audit data collection is different from other statistical collections: many stakeholders involved, not only central and regional offices, but to a large extend also the cities
- In a Gentlemen’s Agreement the National Statistical Offices **promise to do their best** to send the data, i.e. no binding obligation
- **Funding is possible** in a GA
Chapter 3

Next steps
Where are we now?

- **Set-back** for legal base in near future, since there are clear signs that there is **not sufficient support** from Member States.
- Need for a consistent and convincing strategy to sub-national statistics.
- Need to show clearly the added value of Urban Audit within the larger context of statistics, EU policy and national policy.
- Need to implicate National Statistical Offices in the debate.
- **Current data collection round is assured and progressing.**
- Timeframe of about 2 years to succeed.
Thank you for your attention!

Any Questions?