



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

PRE-EVENT BRIEF

ESPON Virtual Roundtable: Integrating the concept of Quality of Life to spatial planning and regional development

Virtual

6 May 2021, 10.00 - 13.10 (CEST)

Introduction



It is argued that policymakers at all scales of planning need to pay attention to the concept of Quality of Life (QoL) in order to assess the effects of strategies, plans, and projects on the places and lives of all citizens. The COVID-19 outbreak has brought into sharp focus the fact that life is a matter of survival, and not just about growth and flourishing. From March 2020 onwards, essential foundations of people’s QoL have been shaken by the pandemic.

Territorial Quality of Life (TQoL) is “the capability of living beings to survive and flourish in a place, thanks to the economic, social and ecological conditions that support life in that place” (ESPON, 2021). In order to operationalise this concept, ESPON developed a TQoL conceptual map including three dimensions: good life enablers, life survival (“maintenance”) and life flourishing. These dimensions are crossed with three spheres – personal, socio-economic and ecological – giving a matrix of QoL measurement domains and sub-domains (Figure 1). The three vertical dimensions of the measurement scheme can also be grouped in two pillars: the Quality of Life Enablers (first dimension) and the Quality of Life Outcomes (the other two dimensions).

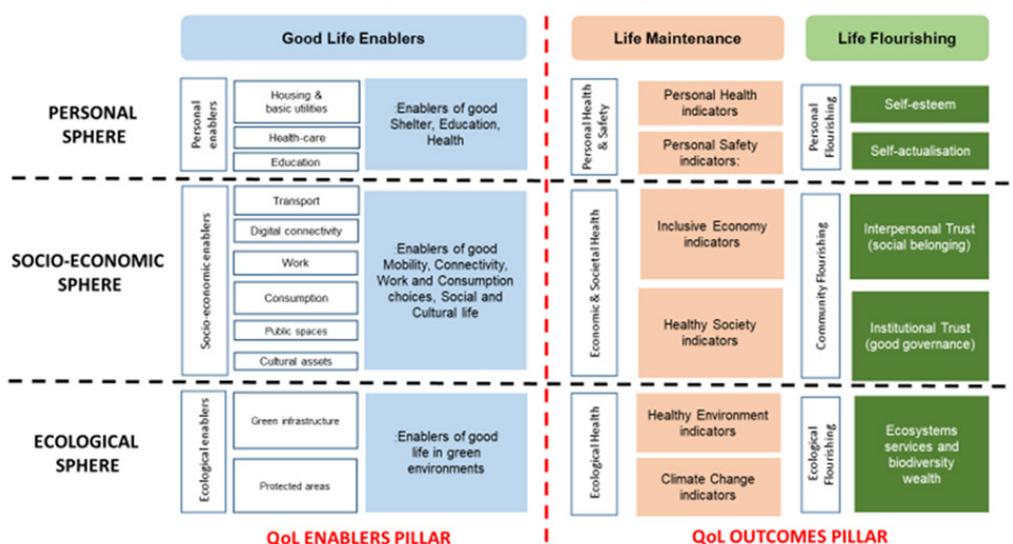


Figure 1. ESPON Territorial Quality of Life conceptual map

The conceptual map for measuring QoL can be used across different territorial levels, and the indicators used are based on data availability for each context. Scientific validity is a first criterion to apply to the selection of the indicators. At the same time, this process needs to be legitimated through a participatory process that engages policymakers, stakeholders, and citizens to create ownership. Only such a comprehensive approach can ensure both scientific relevance and legitimacy of the selected indicators, enhancing the acceptance of QoL measurement and easing its implementation and use in different policies.

With the knowledge that the assessment of the QoL will become more important at all scales of planning, this online workshop will bring together policymakers, planning practitioners, and whomever is interested to hear and discuss the results of the ESPON study on measuring Quality of Life in Europe at sub-national level, which includes 10 case studies. This event is based on working paper: “Is our life good enough? Measuring Territorial Quality of Life to support a future for all places and bring Europe closer to citizens”, which suggests a participatory process to ensure that the QoL measurement is legitimated by the citizens, reflecting their life needs and expectations. Eventually, the working paper is also meant to inform and inspire policymakers and stakeholders on how to operationalise and integrate QoL into policy processes at different levels.

Objective

Creating stronger links with the SDGs and QoL, as well as aligning them with development and sectoral plans, is needed for territorial strategy-making at both regional and local scales. Organised as part of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON), this online roundtable aims to present ESPON evidence and to discuss how QoL can be integrated in national and regional policy instruments targeting the aims of sustainability and 'liveability', as well as how TQoL can be measured at different geographical levels. In practical terms, this requires implementation of a place-based and citizen-centric approach.

The discussions during the workshop will address the following policy questions:

- **What is Territorial Quality of Life and how to measure it? Is the concept universal and applicable at different territorial scales? Which are the common measurement domains?**
- **How can citizen and public participation be considered in the process of selecting indicators and in the definition of Quality of Life for a certain place or territory?**
- **What good practices and experiences can be identified from the case studies carried out?**
- **What recommendations can be given to policymakers and stakeholders at different geographical levels?**
- **How to better embed Quality of Life in spatial planning instruments and practices?**

The roundtable addresses policymakers responsible for national and regional development in Slovenia and its neighbouring countries. It also invites experts and stakeholders that were involved in the ESPON Quality of Life project.

Structure and Input

The ESPON virtual roundtable 'Integrating the concept of Quality of Life to spatial planning and regional development' is structured into three parts:

- **Introduction and setting the scene:** Carlo Sessa (Isinnova, ESPON Quality of Life project) will introduce the topic, its relevance in regional development and its practical application in policy-making. He also will explain the conceptual map developed in the framework of the ESPON Quality of Life project and the dashboard tool. The latter will be done with practical examples on how to measure the Quality of Life. The second presentation by Tomaž Miklavčič (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia/ Representative of ESPON Contact Point Slovenia) will introduce the integration of Quality of Life into Slovenian spatial planning.
- **Second part:** three case studies from the ESPON [Quality of Life](#) project will show how the methodology for measuring Quality of Life has been tested and compared with existing measurement practices in the Netherlands, Wales, and Nova Gorica – Gorizia (Slovenia). These three case studies were carried out in different territorial contexts: the Netherlands has a layer of municipalities across the whole country, Wales is a diverse region comprising of rural areas and some urban centres, and Nova Gorica – Gorizia is a cross-border region.
- **Third part:** a roundtable discussion about good practices, policy implementation and reflections on how to integrate Quality of Life in various policies and spatial planning instruments.

Agenda

10:00 - 10:50

Plenary session

Moderated by Ingmar Pastak (University of Tartu)

Opening by Sandra Di Biaggio (ESPON EGTC) - 10 min

- *ESPON conceptual map on TQoL and Dashboard tool* (Carlo Sessa, ISINNOVA, ESPON QoL project) - 15 min
- *Spatial planning perspective* (Tomaž Miklavčič, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia) - 15 min
- Q&A - 10 min

10:50 - 11:00

Short break

11:00 - 11:45

Quality of Life in policy: case studies

(15 min each)

- The Netherlands (Maarten Kroesen, TU-Delft, ESPON QoL project)
- Wales (Haris Martinos, ESPON QoL project)
- Nova Gorica - Gorizia (Eva Harmel, ZAVITA, ESPON QoL project)

11:45 - 12:00

Short break

12:00 - 13:00

Roundtable discussion on how to integrate concept of territorial quality of life to local and regional policy implementation

Brainstorming and reflections among stakeholders and experts, and open discussion with the audience

Moderated by Tomaž Miklavčič

13:00 - 13:10

Conclusions by Carlo Sessa (Issinova, ESPON QoL project) and Blanka Bartol (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia)

References

The ESPON virtual roundtable 'Integrating the concept of Quality of Life to spatial planning and regional development' is structured into three parts:

EC (2020) – Report on Quality of Life in European Cities. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/work/qol2020/quality_life_european_cities_en.pdf

European Union (2020) - Territorial Agenda 2030 – a future for all places. <https://www.territorialagenda.eu/home.html>

ESPON (2012) - ESPON QoL – Quality of Life Measurements and Methodology. <https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2020/applied-research/quality-of-life>

Hanell T. (2018) - Regional Quality of Life in the EU. Comprehending the European space beyond GDP through the capability approach. PhD Thesis. Aalto University, School of Engineering, Department of Built Environment, Helsinki.

OECD (2019) - *The Economy of Well-being Creating opportunities for people's well-being and economic growth*. SDD Working Paper No. 102. Paris.



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The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

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