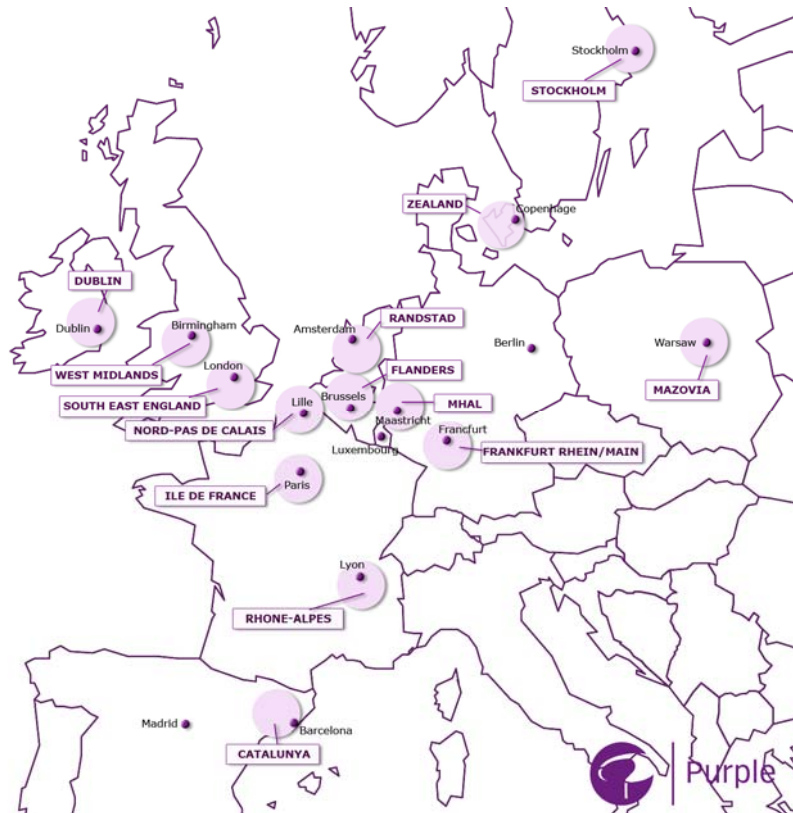


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## PURPLE's response to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion

### Realising the potential of Europe's peri-urban regions



**PURPLE – Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe** - is a network of 14 European regions which has been working for five years to promote recognition for Europe's peri-urban dimension. PURPLE suggests that peri-urban regions face some specific territorial challenges and risks, and that these need better recognition. Specific policies are needed to ensure a balanced development of peri-urban areas with the aim of bringing multiple benefits both for the citizens of the EU's cities and urban conglomerations, as well as those living and working nearby.

*Members of the PURPLE transregional network are the knowledge regions Randstad (NL), Flanders (B), Stockholm (S), Mazovia (PL), Catalunya (E), Nord Pas de Calais (F), Île-de-France (F), Frankfurt-Rhein/Main (D), South East England (UK), West Midlands (UK), Rhône-Alpes (F), Dublin (I), the Euregion Maastricht-Heerlen/Hasselt-Aachen-Liège (MHAL, NL/B/D) and Zealand (DK). PURPLE is also linked to the networks Terres en Villes and Arc Latin.*

## 1. PURPLE, peri-urban and territorial assets

As stated in the Green Paper *‘Territorial Cohesion is about making sure citizens are able to make the most of inherent features of these territories. As such, it is a means of transforming diversity into an asset that contributes to sustainable development of the entire EU.’ ‘Increasingly, competitiveness and prosperity depend on the capacity of the people and businesses located there to make the best use of all of territorial assets.’*

Peri-urban regions are located at the interface between the urban and rural and bring these worlds together. They are economically diverse, densely populated and often encompass high value landscapes. They are the location of resources – including food, transport infrastructure, fuel, water and open space – for adjacent urban populations, yet they are also under increasing pressure from urban expansion which threatens these important assets.

A balanced and sustainable territorial development of peri-urban regions will contribute to the quality of life in these areas as well as in adjacent and surrounding areas (urban and rural). Harmonious development which maximises the full growth potential of the diverse territorial assets of peri-urban regions (physical, human and social capital as well as natural resources) can help to meet key EU challenges including climate change, globalisation and demographic change.

The multifunctionality of peri-urban areas makes them dynamic and identifies them as growth areas for EU prosperity. There is great potential here for the EU as a whole. But the complexity of peri-urban areas presents challenges of economic, environmental and social sustainability. However such complexity should be no excuse for a failure to develop specific policy responses which can manage it better. An integrated approach and appropriate policies to deal with both complexity and multifunctionality of these territories are essential.

### Assets of peri-urban areas:

- *they contain the success factors of Europe’s metropolitan regions*
- *potential for local food production and supply systems from farm to table*
- *high quality and valuable open space and landscapes near to cities or within metropolitan areas for access, recreation and education*
- *stewardship, life cycle management and long-term sustainability of resources – energy, water supplies, productive agricultural and horticultural land, and woodlands/forests*
- *infrastructure to meet changing population needs over wide areas (waste disposal, intermodal transport links, water supplies etc)*
- *potential, with appropriate spatial policies, to accommodate future demographic changes, migration trends and growing and changing (urban) populations*
- *locations of and for smart enterprises including those using flexible working and home working and cutting edge logistical and communication technologies*
- *above all, peri-urban areas have accessibility*

## 2. PURPLE, Peri-urban and territorial challenges and risks

Peri-urban territorial assets are also at risk, and PURPLE suggests that future EU structural and sectoral policies have to take such risks into account in an integrated and coordinated way:

- **Spatial** – to avoid urban encroachment, manage open space, and resolve conflicting demands through cooperation and dialogue
- **Agricultural/horticultural** - to stimulate food production (a vital response to global price rises and shortages), improve food quality, ensure identity and security, create new and shorter food chains, and maximise potential for energy products
- **Economic** - to stimulate diversification and innovation, but minimise negative environmental and other impacts
- **Social and demographic** – to address issues of public health, integration, inclusion and education
- **Environmental** – to recognise and manage natural assets and landscape conservation, secure fragile biodiversity and natural resources including water, air and soil quality
- **Climatic** – to ensure long term sustainability

## 3. Concentration

The Green Paper states that ‘*economic activity is more concentrated across the EU than population*’. The consequences and the pressures that arise from this unbalanced structure are a feature of peri-urban territories (urban sprawl, transport congestion, and environmental problems such as pollution...).

PURPLE stresses the importance of viable peri-urban agriculture, but also recognises that the economic strength of peri-urban territory, much of which is situated within the most dynamic metropolitan areas of the EU, is broad based and is essential to the well-being of the EU.

Peri-urban regions are striving for a sustainable territorial development by stimulating positive assets both urban and rural in a balanced way. An example of this is to further improve land management efficiency and food production to bring benefits to large nearby populations – and ultimately the EU as a whole.

## 4. Connecting territories

Connection between territories is seen as an essential dimension to the territorial cohesion of the EU, but this should respect the role of different levels of governance. Peri-urban areas are key links in the territorial cohesion chain, connecting urban areas with rural areas and creating many opportunities to develop sustainable supply chains and efficient exploitation of resources. Such opportunities are seen for example in food production, marketing and distribution, renewable energy, waste disposal and recycling and intermodal transport.

## 5. Cooperation

*‘The problems of connectivity and concentration can only be effectively addressed with strong cooperation at various levels’*

*‘Public policy can help territories to make the best use of their assets. In addition, it can help them to **jointly respond to common challenges**...’*

The PURPLE network can only agree with such statement. Cooperation is our core business. We would suggest there is a growing need for the EU’s cities to develop a close relationship with their peri-urban hinterlands, so they can work together on the strategies needed to promote balanced development and encourage prosperity. Given their proximity to large local markets and their capacity for innovation and diversification, peri-urban areas have the potential to feed more of their city-dwelling neighbours and have a crucial role to play in meeting today’s food challenges. Alongside food production, peri-urban regions can meet important environmental and recreational/amenity functions, as well as functions that respond to the ‘new challenges’ – climate change, energy from biomass, water resource etc.

PURPLE would argue that mechanisms such as the Interreg programmes which stimulate cooperation, including transnational cooperation, and enable different bodies and levels of governance to explore new ways of working together, remain of the utmost importance for future territorial cohesion.

## **6. PURPLE and the OECD urban-rural typology**

The OECD urban-rural typology of “intermediate regions” and “predominantly rural regions, close to a city” refers to typical peri-urban regions, but does not adequately reflect the peri-urban dimension of many EU territories.

A full audit of peri-urban assets and associated risks as summarised above could lead to the development of more meaningful indicators for example on: demographic data, migration trends (city to rural area and vice versa), urban encroachment, availability and use of open space, production and consumption (food, materials, resources), transport (public and private) and public health. These in turn would inform the creation of future policies which take account of the reality and complexity of peri-urban territories.

PURPLE is willing to work on developing indicators to help understand peri-urban territorial assets and risks.

## **7. Peri-urban regions – the EU’s laboratory**

PURPLE believes the time has come, at the European level, to think beyond rural and urban typologies and to recognise that peri-urban regions, a melting pot of urban and rural trends, are key to the equilibrium of the EU territory as a whole and to the well-being of its citizens.

PURPLE sees peri-urban areas as a potential laboratory for territorial cohesion. They require tailored policies which respond to their complex territorial challenges. A debate involving all levels of governance on the development of such policies might point to solutions for the EU as a whole.

**[www.purple-eu.org](http://www.purple-eu.org)**