European Common Indicators – Tool Summary

Authors

Add details of authors and organisation, indicating their origin in academia, industry, government or non-governmental organisation.

Name	Organisation	Origin
Valentina Tarzia	Ambiente Italia Research Institute	IND
-	Legambiente	NGO
-	Eurocities	GOV

Info

Date:
1999-2003

Place of origin:
Milan, Italy
But contributions and data from many European countries.

Homepage:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/common_indicators.htm
http://eci.ew.eea.europa.eu/

References:

- Ambiente Italia Research Institute, 2003. European Common Indicators: Towards a Local Sustainability Profile, Milano, Italy: European Commission.

Latest use:
Still on-going by voluntary submission on the website's database, but no details.

Download:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/pdf/eci_final_report.pdf

Description

"A prerequisite on the way towards sustainability is the need to measure impacts of urban activities and monitor progress on Local Agenda 21 (as an important component of the UN Summit in Rio and in Johannesburg follow-up)." [2003]
"The European Common Indicators initiative is focused on monitoring environmental sustainability at the local level. A set of 10 environmental sustainability indicators have been developed in conjunction with stakeholders and methodologies for collecting the data for each indicator have also been produced in different European languages." (website 1)
"This portal provides indicator-based information and data at city or local authority level. The objectives are:

- to establish a common entry point to web-based information to allow comparative analysis, enhance dissemination of city environmental performance, and elicit stakeholder participation to decision and policymaking processes;
- to identify and adopt a common European city/local administration indicator based SoE report format, and;
- to give remote publishing access to municipalities across Europe allowing them to post their reports on the web and update report content when needed." (website 2)

Key Theoretical Background

"The idea of a common publishing facility was first officially presented at the Hanover Conference in 2000 (Third Conference of the Sustainable Cities and Towns) as means for supporting the "European Common Indicators - Towards a Local Sustainability Profile", a project initiated by DG ENV in March-April 1999, and carried over by a Working Group under the umbrella of the Expert Group on the Urban Environment." (website 2)
"Indicators have been developed according to a bottom up approach since the very beginning of the project, involving local authorities as main actors in the process and improving synergies with existing indicators sets. This shows, on the one hand, to what extent its ethos is actually based upon understanding the real needs of municipalities, and on the other, the possibilities of achievement of policy objectives from actions that bridge more than one level of governance.
If, on the one hand, the ECIs scope is to fulfil the requirements of indicators envisaged in the current EU policy perspective - in as much as they intend to promote an integrated and harmonised approach across community policies - on the other, they aim to ensure local appropriateness, valuing local and lay knowledge and the principle of subsidiarity.
Both aspects can be traced back to the six Sustainability Principles permeating the indicators (see below). To qualify into the set, an indicator had to address at least three of them (= integration requirement). Over 1,000 indicators were analysed both against this requirement and against a list of general criteria. The most important, well-established indicators systems have served as a source of inspiration, as building blocks for the creation of a new system.
The outcome of the numerous and extensive consultation rounds with towns and cities, was the agreement on a list of 10 common issues/indicators (in the Project web site http://www.sustainable-cities.org/sub12a.html are stored all the documents produced in this process, including the lists of indicators analysed by the Working Group on Sustainable Indicators and submitted to various rounds of discussion, and how the Working Group on Sustainable Indicators, with a step by step selection, starting from a "Long List" - 18 themes, more then 100 sub indicators - then from a First proposal - 18 themes, about 30 sub indicators - arrived to the Final Proposal of 10 Issues/Indicators)." [2003]

SUD Framework

"In order to fulfil the mandate of setting up the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, DG Environment has convened four working groups which will support the formulation of the strategy. The themes of the working groups are:

1. Sustainable Urban Transport
2. Sustainable Urban Design - Land use, Regeneration, Retrofit
3. Sustainable Urban Construction
4. Sustainable Urban Management"

"Sustainability Concerns forming the basis for the indicators' selection (extract from "Checklist"):

1. equality and social inclusion (access for all to adequate and affordable basic services, e.g. education, employment, energy, health, housing, training, transport);
2. local governance/empowerment/democracy (participation of all sectors of the local community in local planning and decision making processes);
3. local/global relationship (meeting local needs locally, from production to consumption and disposal, meeting needs that cannot be met locally in a more sustainable way);
4. local economy (matching local skills and needs with employment availability and other facilities, in a way that poses minimum threat to natural resources and the environment);
5. environmental protection (adopting an eco-systems approach, minimising use of natural resources and land, generation of waste and emission of pollutants, enhancing bio-diversity);
6. cultural heritage/quality of the built environment (protection, preservation and rehabilitation of historic, cultural and architectural values, including buildings,

monuments, events, enhancing and safeguarding attractiveness and functionality of spaces and buildings).” [2003]

Towards a Local Sustainability Profile European Common Indicators		Principle n°					
n°	Issue/Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Citizens' Satisfaction with the Local Community	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔
2	Local Contribution to Global Climate Change (and/or local Ecological Footprint)	✔		✔	✔	✔	
3	Local Mobility and Passenger Transportation	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
4	Availability of Local Public Open Areas and Services	✔		✔		✔	✔
5	Quality of Local Air	✔				✔	✔
6	Children's Journeys to and from School	✔		✔	✔	✔	
7	Sustainable Management of the Local Authority and Local Businesses			✔	✔	✔	
8	Noise Pollution	✔				✔	✔
9	Sustainable Land Use	✔		✔		✔	✔
10	Products Promoting Sustainability	✔		✔	✔	✔	

Input

Mostly survey data provided by local authorities.

Methods

Describe which calculations, algorithms or software tools are used or recommended. Also specify at what scale/unit the indicators are aggregated.

Output

Nothing is specified in terms of presentation and synthesis of the results.

European Common Indicators – Tool Review

Comments on the tool regarding the various assessment criteria.

General

Background
Is based on wide European consultation of the people on the ground that implement and manage urban environments. Those are the issues of concern to them.

Application (Scale and Design Phase)
It's for policy and the scale is the city as a whole. But the principles should be taken into account, and all neighbourhoods should contribute positively to them.

Sustainability Principles
It is based on six principles that are holistic in themes, space and time. The assessment criteria are explicitly related to these principles and cover concerns of the urban population at the local city level.

Assessment Criteria
It is quite focused on relevance having only 10 assessment criteria, selected from a very large pool. This gives credibility to the tool and allows it at the same time to be more generally deployed. In this respect, another concern in the selection of criteria was the data availability.

Indicators and Calculation Methods
Most indicators stem from population surveys or from data only available through the monitoring of a site. These are not immediately applicable at the urban design phase, except if generated from design based simulation.
The only indicators that can be used for monitoring but already tested in the design phase are related to accessibility to services, open space and transport.

Output
No comments.

Specific topics
What are the aspects under scrutiny? Data to answer these questions needs to be collected into the criteria and indicator tables and analysed. Results summed up here and commented on.

Implementation
- Type:
- Aggregate Rating: full, issue, none
- Weighted indicators: fixed, custom, none
- Standardised output: table, chart
- Measurement unit: neighbourhood, grid, plot, building

Urban Form
- How many criteria/indicators are not related to urban form?
- How many criteria are related to buildings?
- How many/which criteria are related to public space?
- How many times does each dimension of urban form get addressed?
- Which/how many indicators cover several dimensions of urban form?

Mobility and Accessibility

- How many criteria include aspects of the mobility infrastructure and movement networks?
- How many criteria consider the concept of accessibility (by type)?
- How many criteria fail to mention accessibility, although it's implicit in the indicator calculation (by type)?
- Which criteria could potentially benefit from an accessibility indicator? Or an indicator from an accessibility component?

Local/Global Context

- How many criteria/indicators consider the context, local and regional?
- Which ones/how many fail to mention, but the context is implicit?
- Which ones/how many could potentially benefit from a wider regional perspective?