

Report about the scope and distribution of large urban distressed areas in European cities

Deliverable 1

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Improving the quality of life in
Large Urban Distressed Areas

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1 Introduction

The main objective of this report is to consolidate the knowledge about the general framework and the distribution of large urban distressed areas (LUDA) in Europe. The elaboration of a preliminary definition for LUDA helps to find a common language within the project. The report is the first deliverable of the project LUDA – Improving the Quality of Life in Large Urban Distressed Areas. It is an outcome of work-package 1 “framework”.

The report contains three chapters. Chapter 1 “Definition and Key Problems of LUDA” gives an overview on issues of urban distress and distressed areas in scientific literature as well as in programmes and initiatives (1.1). From that a preliminary definition of LUDA (1.2) is elaborated and key problems of LUDA are derived (1.3). Chapter 2 analyses the distribution of LUDAs in Europe and characterises main patterns on different spatial levels. Brief conclusions are drawn in chapter 3.

The report D1 is based on a literature review carried out with the support of the scientific partners of the project in their respective countries. The aim of the literature review was to gain an insight into the perception of large distressed urban areas in different European countries, their key problems as well as their distribution on different spatial levels. Furthermore the partners were asked to shortly describe and analyse examples for the rehabilitation of LUDAs which reflect the specific conditions and planning approaches in their country (see Deliverable 2)¹. The main results of this literature review are summarised within this text and first conclusions for the further work within the project are drawn.

As the LUDA project grows it will involve further reference cities from other countries and extent its European net of practitioners and researchers. Still existing gaps of knowledge about urban distress in certain countries will be bridged during the next phases of the project. Thus, the future project work will also consider Scandinavian as well as the Benelux countries and further Eastern European countries that cannot be extensively considered at this point of the project.

2 Definition and Key Problems of LUDA

2.1 Definition of Urban Distress in Literature

The term **large urban distressed area** (LUDA) is not yet used in practice or scientific literature. However, urban distressed areas are a matter of discussion of a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and of US-American literature. Although European literature does not yet quote the term literally, the problems of urban distress are widely described and analyzed in almost all European countries. In practical terms, the European Community supports the economic and social regeneration of cities and neighbourhoods in crisis through its initiative URBAN. While some of the reviewed countries like the UK, Ireland, France and Germany have quite a history of aspects concerned with urban distressed areas for other countries such as Slovakia and Poland LUDAs are a relatively young phenomenon.

¹ Report D2 - Appraisal of Urban Rehabilitation Literature and Projects.

OECD study on distressed urban areas

On an international level urban distressed areas are recognised as a problem in the 1998 published OECD study “Integrating Distressed Urban Areas”. This study focuses on understanding the challenge of distressed urban areas with patterns of deprivation, mechanisms and cycles of decline, rising economic and social costs, as well as on policy options for the rehabilitation of these areas. Socio-spatial segregation and polarisation are recognized as one of the main problems for the origin of urban distressed areas within urban centres. This increased socio-spatial segregation may be a “by-product of economic liberalisation or an unanticipated product of immigration and housing policies that promote residential stratification” (OECD 1998, p. 61).

The OECD study stresses the difference between traditional perceptions of “slums” meaning cramped, low-quality housing areas close to the city centre often in industrial zones, and today’s urban distressed areas resulting from an interlocking mix of environmental, social and economic circumstances, sometimes exacerbated by public policies. According to a range of socio-economic variables, these areas exhibit characteristics that vary significantly from national and urban norms (OECD 1998, p. 11). The cumulative effects of concentrated social, economic and environmental problems limit the residents’ and local enterprises’ access to opportunities, resources and services that are considered standard in other parts of the city.

The intensity of deprivation appears to have increased in many OECD cities over the past two decades and research suggests that aggravation of problems is a systematic “spiral of decline” (OECD 1998, p. 15). See also Deliverable 2.

Urban distress in the US

The term urban distressed area or distressed area is widely used in the US, both, in scientific literature as well as for purposes of urban redevelopment programmes. Distressed areas are mostly situated in inner cities and often related to the perception of blight, slum, and poverty. Thus, they can be recognized as concentrations of cumulated and interdependent aspects of physical, economic, ecological and social blight (cf. Lichtenberger 1990, p. 16).

To determine urban distress mostly social criteria are used, e.g. high unemployment rate, low income, high poverty rate, low level of skills, high crime rate, etc. The origin of distress is particularly seen in the economic weakness of specific areas. Eventually social conflicts will force further economic problems, e.g. leaving businesses, commercial blight, and weak real estate markets. The focus of approaches for solutions therefore is on economic revitalization considering a strong role of the private sector as well as of neighbourhood initiatives.

Urban distress in Europe

Problems of urban distress are widely recognised in European scientific literature. Today, urban distress in European countries is seen in a comprehensive way. Problems are recognised as being an interlocking mix of social, economic, and environmental problems as well as issues of the urban structure. Urban distressed areas are widely associated with multiple deprivations and their problems are recognised in the context of urban regeneration.

According to the results of scientific and empiric literature analyses European distressed areas have several aspects in common:

- They are characterised by cumulating and interdependent problems.
- They are marked by social exclusion and economic marginalisation.
- They are often seen as results of socio-economic changes and the decline of older industrial areas.
- They have faced a spiral of decline.
- They are sub-standard in terms of the quality of living when compared to the average of cities and urban regions.
- They often contain underused areas.

However, differences arise from the specific historic, societal and economic backgrounds of respective countries. Problems of urban distress were early recognized in countries like the UK and Ireland which traditionally suffer from a wide range of social disparities. Already in the 1960's multiple-deprived areas based on environmental, economic and social indicators were described. The literature concentrated on issues of poverty and social exclusion in certain neighbourhoods, e.g. social housing areas (OECD 1998).

In other countries like Austria, Germany and partly France and Italy scientific literature in the beginning focused on questions of physical decline and physical rehabilitation of inner city neighbourhoods and on areas characterised by economic change and decline. However, growing polarisations of income and raising disparities due to economic transitions as well as concentrations of immigrants in certain areas created a wider interest in analysing social problems. Problems of large public sector housing have become an issue, too.

Although southern European countries like Spain and Portugal are characterised by degraded urban areas the problem of distress is scarcely recognized in literature. In opposite to other European countries specific problems arise in these distressed areas, e.g. conditions of habitability and illegal construction of buildings.

For former socialist Central and Eastern European Countries like Poland and Slovakia urban distressed areas are a relatively new phenomenon due to the low level of social differentiation and spatial segregation until the political changes in 1989/1990. Thus, the phenomenon is not much recognized in literature yet. Especially those areas are threatened by decay which are suffering under the process of economic and social transformation and which have lost their former basis of economic development. Specific problems are caused by large pre-fabricated housing estates mainly situated on the outskirts of the cities but as well in inner cities.

URBAN initiative

URBAN is a European Community initiative financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and co-financed by the European Structural Funds particularly addressing areas of urban distress. The initiative aims at the economic and social regeneration of cities and of neighbourhoods in crisis in order to promote sustainable urban development. It promotes an integrated approach to improve the quality of life in targeted areas with concentrations of social, environmental and economic problems. The initiative is divided into two programme periods: URBAN I (1994-1999) and URBAN II (2000-2006).

Eligible are urban areas with at least 20,000 inhabitants situated in regions eligible for objective-1 and objective-2-funding² which fulfil at least three out of the following nine criteria (Commission of the European Communities 2000):

- a high level of long-term unemployment,
- a low level of economic activity,
- a high level of poverty and exclusion,
- a specific need for conversion, due to local economic and social difficulties,
- a high number of immigrants, ethnic and minority groups, or refugees,
- a low level of education, significant skills deficiencies and high drop-out-rates from school,
- a high level of criminality and delinquency,
- precarious demographic trends,
- a particularly rundown environment.

References from single countries

UK

While the phenomenon of multiple deprivations in urban neighbourhoods has been described since the 1960's; economic conditions of the 1980's exacerbate social segregation and the 1990's showed areas of social exclusion with a quality of life becoming increasingly detached from the rest of society and facing an ongoing spiral of decline ("Bringing Britain Together" – national strategy). According to the national strategy there are 44 deprived local authority districts in England (Social Exclusion Unit 1998). In the UK competitiveness and cohesion are required aspects for programmes to sustain communities.

Ireland

According to the National Development Plan 2000-2006 urban distressed areas in Ireland can be defined as "The most economically and environmentally blighted areas usually centre-city areas or areas of extensive social housing in deprived suburbs". These areas are usually situated in prime city locations but do not attract activities such as employment or enterprise. Further studies and documents stress the importance to find solutions for the manifold social problems of urban distressed areas which have intensified in recent years, naming in particular marginalisation and social exclusion, concentration of poverty and disadvantage (regional document "Securing Dublin's Future: A Case for EU Funding Post 1999", local government strategy "A city of possibilities 2002-2012").

² Objective-1-regions are the less prosperous regions in Europe which lag behind in their development and where the gross domestic product (GDP) is 75% below the European average. Objective 2 of the Structural Funds aims to revitalise all areas facing structural or socio-economic difficulties, although their development level is quite close to the European average.

Germany

Due to its social welfare system Germany does not show social and spatial segregation and the evolution of urban ghettos in an advanced phase as the US, the UK or France. However, urban distress is a German issue, too, which is recognized in scientific literature. Three main development tendencies can be described as important with regard to urban distress:

- Social Polarisation and Segregation: As a main tendency of urban development a growing polarisation of income and therefore a growing number of poor households can be noticed (Roggenthin 2001; Renner, Walther 2000). These disparities are more and more becoming spatial disparities as well. However, in Germany distress is not always related with physical decline.
- Demographic and socio-cultural change: Germany suffers from an aging population. Aging as well as new household structures lead to new challenges for designing and restructuring living environments.
- Economic and structural change: Areas with a high danger of urban distress are on the one hand old industrial areas, like the Ruhr area (Butzin 1993). On the other hand, Eastern Germany still suffers from a severe economic decline after the political change in 1989 (Hannemann 2000).

Several German programmes and initiatives of the federal and state level are concerned with problems of urban distress, e.g. *Soziale Stadt* (The Socially Integrative City) or *Stadtumbau Ost* (Restructuring and Regeneration of East German Cities).

The German planning legislation uses the term urban deficits. Deficits occur where (1.) in its existing state of physical development or condition, an area fails to meet the general needs of the people living or working within it in respect of healthy living and working conditions and general safety, or (2.) an area is seriously impaired in its ability to meet the requirements placed on it as a consequence of its position and function (Federal Building Code [*BauGB*] as issued on August 18th 1997(BGBl. I p. 2081).

Austria

In Austria urban distressed areas are recognized in plans and programmes as urban problem areas (*Städtische Problemgebiete*), urban areas with special development needs (*Städtische Gebiete mit besonderem Entwicklungsbedarf*) or areas with structural problems (*Gebiete mit strukturellen Schwierigkeiten*) which show needs for economic and social revitalisation due to high rates of poverty, high unemployment rates, crime, low levels of education or environmental concerns.

France

In the 1970's/1980's issues of deindustrialisation and its negative impacts on socio-economic circumstances as well as on urban structural problems like vacant industrial land have been the main focus of discussion (Smith 1987; Preteceille, Swanstrom, 1990). The end of the 1980's saw negative social effects which arouse questions of public housing districts ("*quartier sociaux*") and devaluating processes. Within the scientific community policy analysis focused on the construction of local political actions and responses (Donzelot, Estèbe, 1994; Faure et al. 1998).

Italy

The Italian scientific literature on urban distress mentions essentially old industrial areas which were faced by the change of production methods in the 1950's and 1960's. Today, these areas remain the "empty containers". The central and local government is not capable to transform these areas due to a lack of economic sources, but also because of legal problems which discourage private investments. Currently the Italian literature on distressed urban areas is focused on urban rehabilitation, the reuse of industrial dismissed areas, instruments for public-private-co-operation in urban government and relations between operative programmes and strategic instruments of planning.

Spain and Portugal

Urban distressed areas in Spain and Portugal can be seen as degraded areas which are an impediment to urban development in a social and economic context. These are essentially areas with a heritage potential and assimilated problems of social order, conditions of habitability, conditions of access to basic infrastructures and integration into the urban context.

Slovakia and Poland

As stated before urban distress is a relatively new phenomenon in most Central European countries. Thus, main problems of the current urban development result from the overall economic and social transformation and the accelerated process of urbanisation. The main challenges are the restoration and revitalisation of larger housing estates and historic city centres, of brownfields, and of deindustrialised areas. The Slovakian National Regional Development Plan mentions "areas of deprivation" mostly located in old industrial cities and regions, characterised by a high rate of unemployment, economic deprivation and emigration from these regions. The Polish National Development Strategy for 2001-2006 mentions areas threatened by decay which are districts of large cities with working-class environments as well as industrial cities and monostructural cities which lost their former economic basis.

2.2 Preliminary Definition of Large Urban Distressed Area (LUDA)

Approaches to describe and define distressed urban areas in different European countries and in the US as well as results of the OECD study and further scientific and empiric analyses create a basis for the definition of large urban distressed areas. Described as follows is the preliminary draft for the definition of LUDA.

Defining large urban distressed areas is a precondition of any further work within the LUDA project. It serves to identify the main characteristics of these areas and helps to find a common knowledge and language basis. This approach has to be considered as an open definition, still leaving room for discussion and interpretation. As the LUDA project will gain progress the LUDA definition will be extended through further analyses of case studies and reference cities. It will also become more appropriate for practical applications by narrowing it to the core factors and significant criteria and indicators which still have to be defined.³ Furthermore the process dimension for the take-off of urban rehabilitation of LUDAs will be included into the definition.

A large urban distressed area (LUDA) is a large part of a city of multiple deprivations characterised by a quality of life below the average standard within its urban boundary but constituting a strategic factor in the functioning of a city.

LUDA means a considerable part of a city, larger than a neighbourhood or an ordinary rehabilitation area. LUDA suffer from multiple deprivations such as degraded housing, inadequate or improper facilities (e.g. infrastructure and transport), rundown or derelict industrial sites, environmental risks and problems (e.g. natural hazards, pollution), unattractive and disconnected urban structures, unemployment and weaknesses in social cohesion (e.g. poverty, low education standards, aging, poor health standards, dependency on welfare) which are detrimental to the sustainable development of the city as a whole.

Large urban distressed areas evolve over time and result from previous failures of public intervention, private investment and local community involvement leading to a dynamic and interlocking mix of environmental, social and economic circumstances, sometimes exacerbated by public policies. This mix of circumstances causes a high complexity of problems and intervention, discourages investment and job creation and encourages social alienation and exclusion, producing cycles of economic decline, social exclusion and environmental deterioration.

Large urban distressed areas are characterised by three main aspects: Their large dimension, the complexity of problems and the uncertainty of their future development.

1) Large Dimension

Due to their large dimension LUDAs have an impact on the urban region as a whole. This impact can either be explained by the spatial size of the area, their strategic and functional importance or with regard to time.

³ Report D2 (Appraisal of Urban Rehabilitation Literature and Projects) gives a preliminary approach on indicators for assessing the quality of life in LUDA.

Large in a spatial dimension

LUDAs are much larger than the rather compact urban rehabilitation areas which have mainly been addressed by urban planning and development programmes so far, they are larger than a neighbourhood but smaller than a whole city. The boundaries of LUDAs can be independent of administrative boundaries or boundaries of city districts but do not necessarily have to. Often several neighbourhoods and districts are part of a specific LUDA which is more characterised as a functional unit. LUDAs might be situated in the core as well as on the fringe of a city. “Cross-border LUDAs” are part of the territory of different municipalities.

Definition of boundaries of LUDAs

The boundaries of every LUDA will have to be defined in a flexible manner according to the specific problems of the respective LUDA as well as taking into account the specific situation within the country. Boundaries might not be clearly fixed; different aspects of distress might have a varying outreach over the area of the urban region. Within the core area of a LUDA various problems overlap at its borders single problems might predominate. Nevertheless, the analysis of change in a respective LUDA through specific criteria and indicators might require determining its boundaries in a fixed way by taking administrative boundaries into consideration.

Large in a functional dimension / LUDAs as a strategic factor

LUDAs are strategic factors in the functional fabric of a city and they feature structural effects on the city as a whole. These strategic factors can be specified in several ways, e.g. a LUDA can be

- a spatial or functional barrier within the cityscape,
- an aspect of a negative city image,
- a barrier for city development,
- a burden for the city budget,
- an area of social exclusion detrimental to social cohesion,
- of large dimension relative to the capacity of the administration to deal with and to control the situation.

Due to the functional impact and the complexity of problems LUDAs might need more intervention from city administration and private investors than other areas in the city. Because of the specific situation (e.g. size, crossing administrative boundaries etc.) traditional instruments of urban planning may not be applicable within these areas.

Large dimension with regard to time

The aspect of time is important for LUDAs in two different ways. First LUDAs evolve over a long period of time e.g. due to economic or demographic change or due to previous failures of public intervention, private investment and local community involvement. The urban decline must not be seen as a static phenomenon but as a downward cycle of economic decline, social exclusion and environmental deterioration (cf. D2: emergence of LUDA). By defining and analyzing the different steps and processes of the evolution of distressed areas the emergence of future LUDAs might be avoided. Second the rehabilitation of LUDAs will take a longer period of time and requires short-term as well as medium and long-term action.

2) Complexity of problems

LUDAs are characterised by an accumulation of problems, mainly by an interrelation of environmental, economic and social problems as well as problems of urban structure. Often they contain heterogeneous land use structures creating multiple land use conflicts. However, LUDAs are not limited to areas with an extensive mix of usage. Complex problems can even arise in mono-structured areas. Nevertheless, in its further work the LUDA project will concentrate on heterogeneous and multifunctional areas.

Variety and interrelation of problems

LUDAs are characterised by a negative situation or development in relation to the city as a whole. They suffer from a combination of manifold economic, ecological, social as well as urban structural problems. However a certain aspect of distress might be predominant and of course there are differences in types and intensities of problems from one LUDA to another. It also does not mean that all problems have to be applied for a respective LUDA (cf. 1.3 Key Problems).

Perception of LUDA from inside and outside

The perception of what LUDA is can be assessed differently by the inhabitants both from inside as well as from outside of a LUDA. From outside not much attention is paid to the differentiated situation within the LUDA but on the whole, it might be considered as a burden for the city. Inside of a LUDA the inhabitants recognise a heterogeneous and differentiated situation and judge it according to its effects on their daily life, seeking for an improvement of their quality of life by a variety of different approaches.

Stakeholder groups and interests

Further dimensions of the complexity of problems in LUDAs are the conflicting interests and undefined responsibilities of a variety of public and private stakeholders, such as municipal actors, private companies (commercial, industrial, service), investors, housing companies, NGOs and citizens.

Complexity of Intervention

The complex situation of problems within LUDAs as well as the large dimension also appears in the fact that it cannot be improved by a single development approach or a single group of actors. Improvement can also not be guaranteed only from activities within the area. Insofar solutions require holistic and long term strategic action including participation and co-operation of a multitude of different interests. This stresses the need for new forms of governance for the rehabilitation of LUDAs.

The complexity of urban issues and urban deprivation is likely to cause “a paralysis of action” which might only be resolved by deconstructing the urban problems and resolving them step by step.

3) Uncertainty of future development

LUDAs are characterised by uncertainty concerning future development of the area and a lack of visions concerning development options. This mainly results from the complexity of problems as well as the large dimension making future structural and functional changes in LUDAs almost unpredictable. The uncertainty in LUDAs also arises from a lack of suitable:

- ***Actual interests and ideas for further development***

- problematic civic involvement due to a lack of social cohesion,
- absence of appropriate data for prognosis,
- lack of visions and scenarios for the future of the area,
- lack of strategies, plans and projects.

- ***Methodologies and tools***

- lack of suitable instruments to handle the complexity of problems and the large dimension, e.g. due to restrictions by administrative boundaries,
- absence of suitable rehabilitation programmes,
- incorrect application of instruments for prognosis.

- ***Resources and investment strategies***

- lack of private and public investments as well as lack of funds due to uncertainty,
- unknown resources and opportunities in the area,
- unknown orientation of economic development in the regional and metropolitan area.

Further uncertainty arises from the unforeseen effects of urban rehabilitation measures. Due to the high complexity it is uncertain how the use of particular tools and methods will effect the situation within LUDAs.

2.3 Key Problems

The analysis of key problems is a main factor to describe the state and conditions of large urban distressed areas in European countries. Although problems vary in kind and intensity potential LUDAs across Europe show similar social, economic and environmental problems as well as problems of urban structure. These problems are often cumulating and inter-dependent. Key problems⁴ of LUDAs are described as follows:

Social problems

LUDAs across Europe show manifold problems related to social issues which often are first in mind when talking about urban distress. LUDAs are at the social periphery of society. While there exist differences concerning the intensity of problems between LUDAs in different countries, they are mostly the areas of a city which are most deprived. They form sub-standard areas even in relation to the national average.

LUDAs show signs of social distress being considered as “typical” for those areas: high unemployment, high dependence on social welfare, low income levels, and poor health conditions. In almost all countries problems exist concerning the integration of large immigrant or ethnic minority groups which are often concentrated in LUDAs. People living within LUDAs are widely disadvantaged due to educational under-achievement and low qualities of general school and vocational education. Thus, residents do not have equal chances compared to residents of other urban areas. All of these problems lead to social tension in LUDAs and are likely to cause delinquency and crime.

Economic problems

LUDAs are hit by economic marginalisation. Economic activities within LUDAs often have only local importance and are not adequately integrated to activities outside the area. If existing at all, larger companies within LUDAs are mostly characterised as old-industrial and belonging to economic sectors which are in crisis. This causes a high dependence on outside investment. However, those investments are missing due to a lack of attractiveness for private investors and developers and banks. The situation gets even worse if the public sector disregards specific infrastructural needs of a distressed urban area. All of these factors lead as well to further decreasing land values. Finally, a lack of investment narrows labour and job opportunities for the people living inside a LUDA.

Environmental problems

Although environmental standards in many European countries are considered as being relatively high, LUDAs belong to the areas with specific ecological problems. On the one hand high building densities and the tradition of being “poor areas” lead to a lack of green and open spaces. On the other hand LUDAs show concentrations of soil contamination as well as water and air pollution. Former industries within LUDA have caused contaminations which are now a problem for the clean-up of current brownfields and their reuse for residential or commercial activities. Existing industries within LUDAs are likely to be more

⁴ Key problems will play a further role in the LUDA project deliverable report D2 (Appraisal of Urban Rehabilitation Literature and Projects) being a basis to describe different types of large urban distressed areas as well as being a basis for the preliminary set of criteria and indicators.

polluting than industries in other areas. Due to their proximity to main traffic infrastructure (e.g. motorways or airports) LUDAs are furthermore hit by traffic pollution and noise.

Problems of urban structure

LUDAs are areas which bear precarious problems of urban structure. Housing as well as sanitary conditions are mostly sub-standard. This causes problems of the habitability of apartments and buildings as well as safety problems. Furthermore, the physical structure of buildings might not be appropriate for current uses and requirements. Consequently this leads to a high level of vacant residential and commercial space. From an urban development and planning point of view, LUDAs are areas with tremendous lacks concerning urban design, e.g. a lack of close-by recreational areas as well as socio-cultural facilities. In a citywide context LUDAs are functionally isolated due to physical, natural or socio-economic barriers which disconnect these areas from the rest of a city. Thus the functional structure of such an area might be inappropriate in accordance with its meaning for the city organism.

References and specifics from single countries

Further references and key problems that are likely to be specific for the respective European countries are characterized as follows:

UK

- Social issues: precarious social tension, high rates of lone parent households and underage pregnancy, high poverty rates among children, as well as problems related to large proportions of ethnic minorities,
- Educational issues: skills mismatch, educational under-achievement, poor literacy,
- Health issues: poor health conditions.

Ireland

- Urban structure issues: boarded up retail and residential premises,
- Infrastructure issues: inadequate access and inadequate means of services,
- Participation issues: low level of democratic processes and community involvement.

Germany

- Urban structure issues: empty and derelict residential and commercial buildings (especially in Eastern Germany),
- Demographic issues: precarious loss of population in distressed areas and aging of population (especially in Eastern Germany),
- Social issues: problems related to concentrations of ethnic minorities in inner city areas or large modern housing estates (especially in Western Germany).
- Economic issues: loss of small businesses, retail and services

Austria

- Institutional issues: uncertainty and/or fragmentation of ownership,
- Social issues: lack of integration of immigrant communities,
- Environmental issues: repeating disasters due to natural conditions, e.g. mountain rivers.

Italy

- Financial issues: tremendous costs of the conservation of historical and environmental heritage as unbearable burdens for local communities,
- Social issues: problems related to concentrations of ethnic minorities.

Portugal

- Physical state: bad building conditions and problems of habitability,
- Infrastructure issues: lack of appropriate facilities,
- Preservation issues: problems to maintain areas being important as cultural heritage,
- Economic and urban construction issues: problems with informal economic activities as well as illegal building construction.

Poland

- Urban structure issues: dispersion of settlements, redevelopment of post-military areas, destruction of historical buildings,
- Financial issues: precarious loss of property and building value.

Slovakia

- Environmental issues: contaminations (particularly soil contamination),
- Institutional issues: problems of ownership, unbearable exploitation of resources due to the privatization process,
- Societal issues: break up of former intact communities,
- Infrastructure issues: lack of appropriate service and transport infrastructure.

3 Distribution of Large Urban Distressed Areas in Europe

The analysis on “inner” characteristics of large urban distressed areas through the definition of LUDA and the description of key problems is not sufficient in order to describe LUDAs in a comprehensive way. The dimensions of problems related to urban distress become only aware by further analysing the distribution of LUDAs on different spatial levels: the European, the national, the regional and the local levels. This is a condition for assessing urban distress and finding appropriate means to improve the quality of life in these areas, as well.

General distribution patterns

The problems related to the creation of urban distressed areas are common features of all western societies. Therefore the existence of LUDAs can be noticed for EU countries as well as for accession countries in Central and Eastern Europe which have been facing processes of deprivation after the political changes in 1989/1990. The existence and distribution of LUDAs on a European level can also be recognised by initiatives, programmes and research projects, e.g. the URBAN initiative (1994-2006) or the research project FOCUS (The future of industrialised cities and regions undergoing structural changes) carried out between 1999 and 2001.

Figure 1: *General Patterns of Distribution of LUDAs on Different Spatial Levels*

European Level	- All over Europe with different intensities.
National Level	- Old-industrial areas (e.g. Midlands, Ruhr), - Traditionally disadvantaged regions in countries with strong regional disparities (e.g. Mezzogiorno in Italy) or areas at current economic periphery (e.g. Eastern Poland).
Regional Level	- Core areas of urban agglomerations, - In some cases entire urban regions.
Local Level	- Inner city areas close to downtowns with mainly older building stock, - Large housing estates at the urban fringe with large parts of social housing.

On the **national level** two main characteristics for the distribution of LUDAs can be stated:

Firstly, there are old industrial and one-industry areas which have been hit by processes of economic structural change. Although efforts for redevelopment are as old as the problems became obvious, the success of restructuring measures is only a moderate one. Still, unemployment and social welfare dependency is concentrated in these areas. They also lack adequate investments in fields of new industries and the service sector. Examples are: the Midlands in the UK, the Ruhr and the Saar area in Germany, and Nord-Pas-de-Calais in France.

Secondly, LUDAs might be concentrated in economically disadvantaged areas in countries which traditionally feature intense disparities between certain regions, or feature disparities between urbanised and rural areas in strongly centralised countries. These areas are either less economically developed and mainly depending on agriculture or again areas of older industries without headquarters or R&D facilities. Main examples of disadvantaged areas are the Mezzogiorno in Italy and the Eastern part of Poland. Due to the separation of Germany after World War 2 and the different economic development in the two German countries, there are strong disparities between the eastern and western part which will not be solved in the near future.

On the **regional level** potential LUDAs can be found widely in the core areas of urban agglomerations. Due to suburbanisation of affluent people to outlying neighbourhoods or municipalities concentrations of poor and disadvantaged residents in the core areas can be found in most European countries. Some regions which are characterised by old industries and one-industry companies can entirely be noticed as deprived regions.

Concerning the **city or local level** LUDAs across Europe are situated in two main locations: First, they can be found in inner city areas close to downtowns with older building stock or in some Central and Eastern European countries also with prefabricated housing blocks. These areas traditionally are working class neighbourhoods in which problems became severe after wealthier families moved to other areas of the cities or suburbs. Also, due to low land prices and rental costs these neighbourhoods became concentrations of immigrants or ethnic minorities. Second, LUDAs can be found around larger housing estates at the urban fringe built after World War 2 with large parts of social housing. In Western Europe these areas have shown concentrations of socially weak residents from the beginning. Originally, in Eastern Europe these areas were socially mixed and are now becoming more and more residential areas for socially weak people. Both types demonstrate severe lacks of socio-cultural as well as commercial infrastructure.

References from single countries

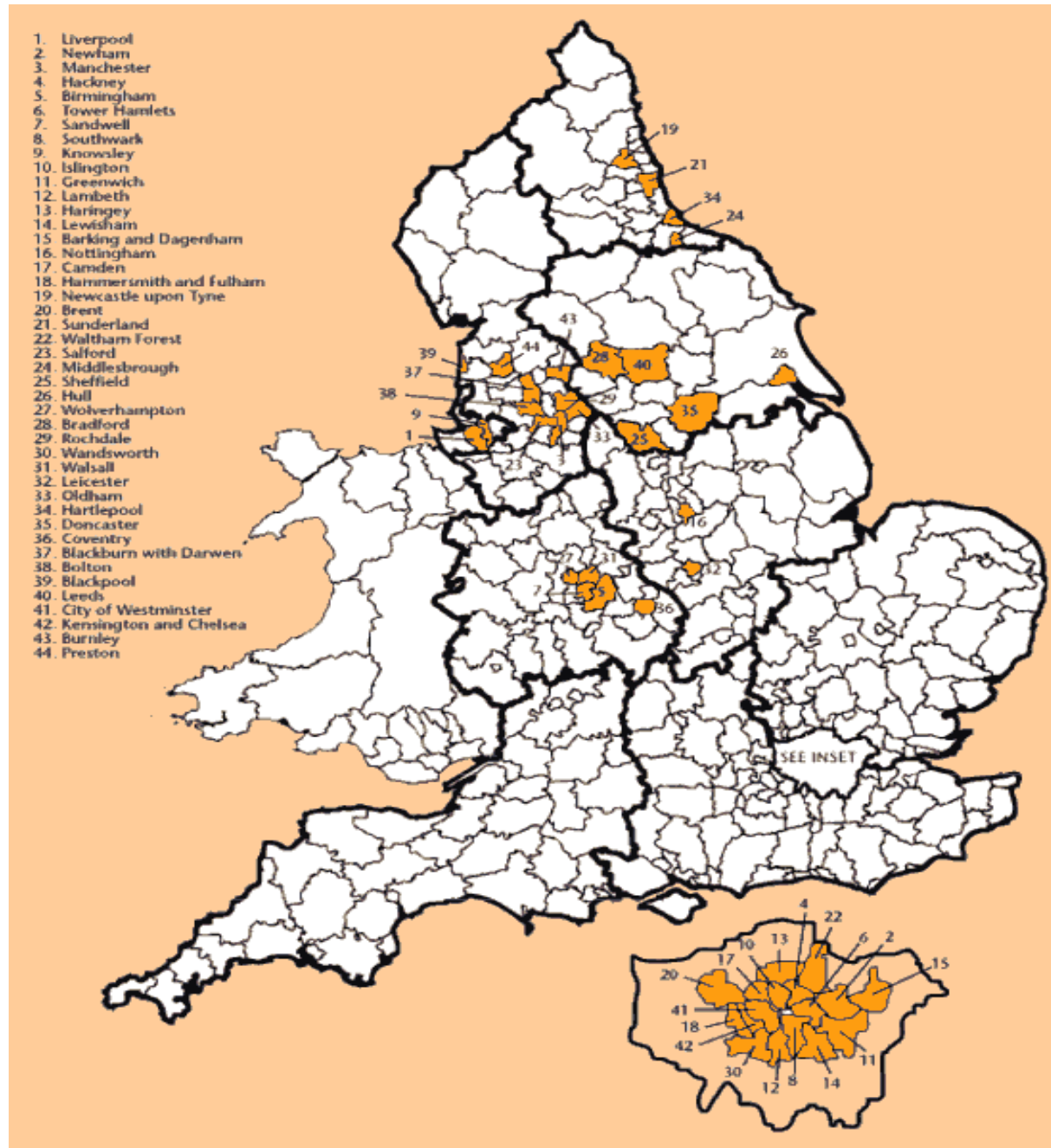
UK

According to the national strategy there are deprived areas in every ward but the highest concentration areas are in four regions of England: London (18 % of the most deprived wards) and three regions in the north and the midlands: the North East (19%), the North West (25.7%), and Yorkshire and Humberside (9%). See figure 2 below. Thus in the UK in general and in England in particular there is a north/south divide with economic prosperity and competitiveness in the south and more poverty in the north. This has led to two distinct housing problems: a shortage of affordable homes in the south and a falling demand for houses and abandonment of whole neighbourhoods in the north (Society Guardian). This regional inequality is evident in income rates, which are comparatively higher in the south compared to the north, with only London and the South East exceeding the average income per head in the UK (Urban Task Force 1999).

Taking a look on the structure of the deprived areas it can be stated that the majority of the most deprived wards are situated in urban areas, one-industry or no-industry towns and coal-mining areas. For example, parts of Manchester, which were once reliant on heavy industries, have experienced high unemployment, outward migration and empty housing.

In England LUDAs tend to be located in inner cities which were once the prime location for industry. The collapse of the manufacturing industry, coupled with the rising trend of counter urbanism from the 1970's meant that these areas suffered from both physical and socio-economic neglect. The rising trend for suburban living is highlighted in cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, which have experienced large-scale, persistent population loss over the last 30 years. Yet these cities are also experiencing the largest inward commuting, highlighting the fact that people prefer to live well away from their place of work.

Figure 2: Most deprived English local authority districts according to the Index of Local Deprivation (descending order of deprivation) [source: Social Exclusion Unit 1998]



Germany

On the national level two main disparities can be stated: first, disparities between the East and the West due to the separation of Germany after World War 2, and second, disparities between the North and the South. Both disparities exist at the same time and, thus, overlay each other. The reunified Germany after 1990 shows strong disparities between the economically strong West and the weaker Eastern part. In the West economic changes in the 1960's and 1970's and especially the upswing of service sector industries have advantaged the southern part. In the East, the Southern part is traditionally more developed than the North. These disparities can also be analysed and differentiated in the spatial distribution of welfare benefits in Germany (Klagge 2001).

The distribution of LUDAs in Germany can be recognized from the participation of different areas within different regeneration and development programmes, as well (see figure 3). Urban districts participating in the programme *Socially Integrative City* (started in 1999) are distributed over the whole area of Germany but show a concentration within bigger cities and urban agglomerations. Less prosperous *Objective-1-regions* can be found in the Eastern Germany (in Berlin until 2005). *Objective-2-Regions* facing structural or socio-economic difficulties are mainly situated at the former German-German border as well as on the north-western fringe and in the old industrial regions (e.g. Ruhr area, Saar area).

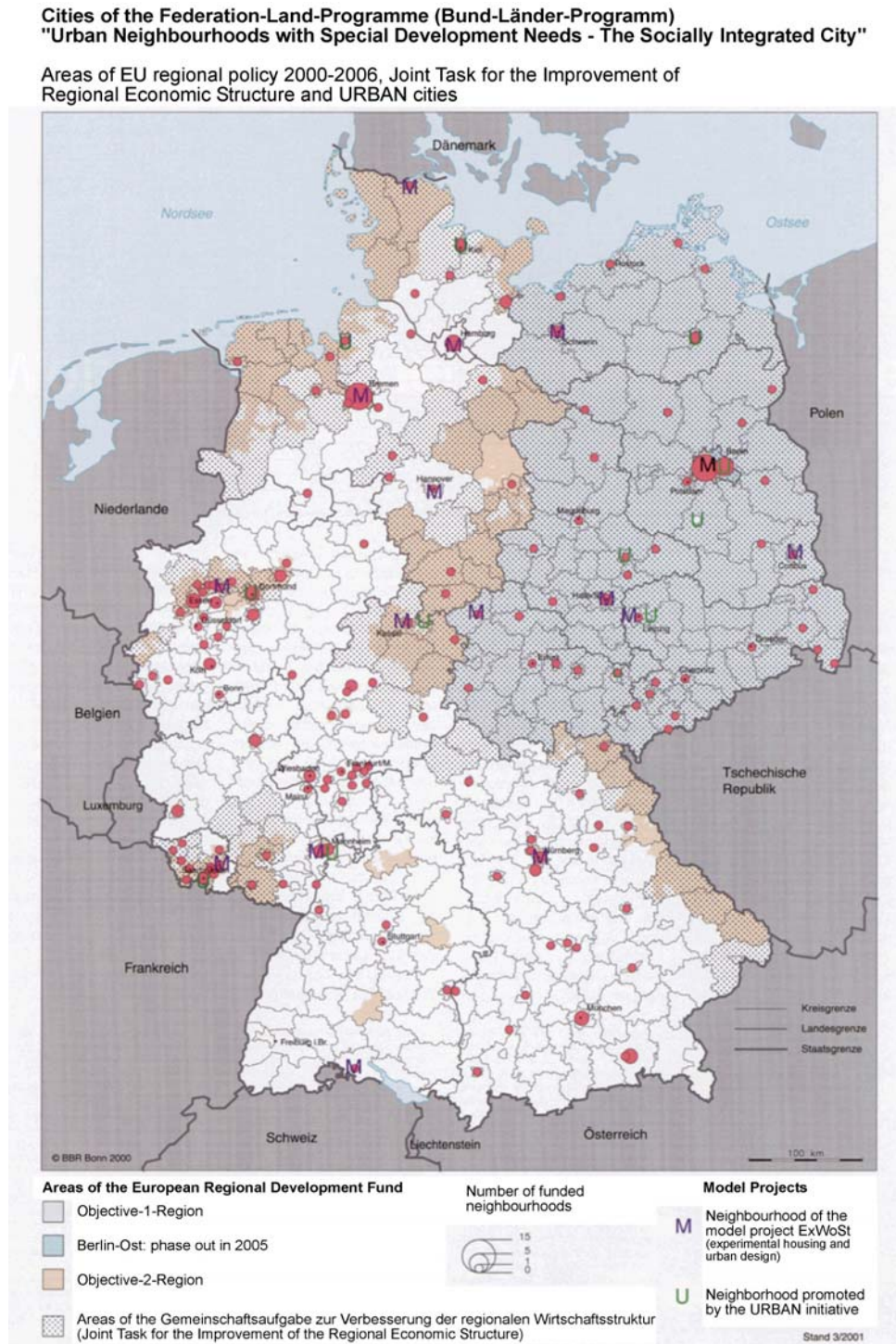
Areas participating in the URBAN programme are quite evenly distributed over Germany. However, two main types can be recognized: previous industrial centres in the old industrial regions and cities in the Eastern part of Germany severely affected by demographic and structural change.

The *Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur* (Joint task for the improvement of regional economic structure) supports regions lagging behind in growth and employment by subsidising commercial and public investment (Lintz, Schmude 2000). This programme promotes development in whole Eastern Germany, at the former German-German border and in old industrial regions of Western Germany.

On the regional level highest welfare dependency can be noticed in the core areas of the urban agglomerations due to concentrations of groups with a high risk of poverty such as migrants or lone parent families. On the local level concentration of distress mainly concerns two types of city districts: first, dense mixed use residential and industrial districts near the downtown erected in the last third of the 19th century and second, mono-functional and prefabricated residential areas at the urban fringe dominated by social housing (Klagge 2001).

Austria

Due to specific location of Austria and the typical pattern of urban development, large urban distressed areas may be found only in the main cities of the country: Wien, Klagenfurt, Eisenstadt, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Graz and Linz. Within the cities problem areas are found mostly in suburbs with rapid and chaotic developments or in the historical core parts of the cities with mixed land use of high density, high level of social disabilities, as well as non-suitable infrastructure and traffic solutions.

Figure 3: Areas receiving urban rehabilitation funds in Germany (source: BBR 2001)

Italy

On the national level a strong polarisation between the more developed north and the less developed south influences the development of urban areas in Italy. This general pattern is reflected in programmes for urban and regional redevelopment, e.g. 12 of the 16 Italian cities involved in the European programme URBAN 1 are situated in the Mezzogiorno. Besides, LUDAs might be particularly recognized in industrial dismissed areas.

Within the cities distressed urban areas can be found in historical central areas as well as in new housing estates in peripheral parts of the urban regions.

Czech Republic and Slovakia

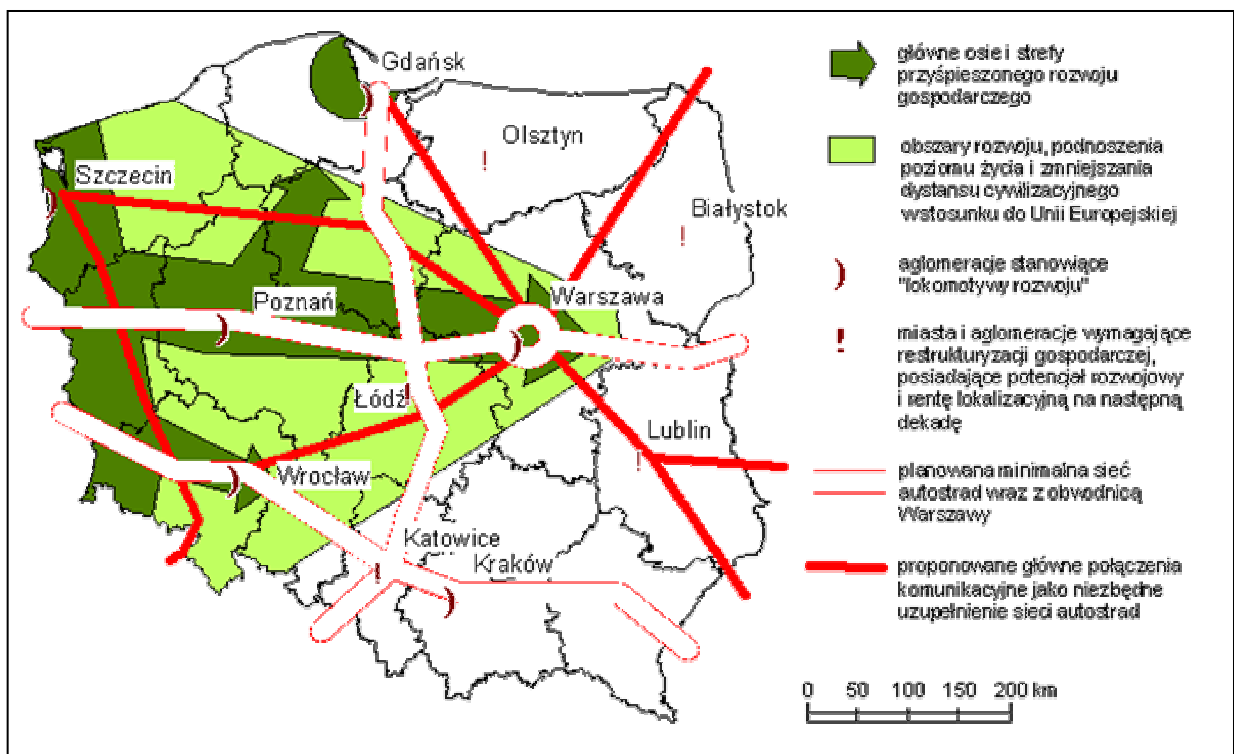
While all regions of the Czech Republic and Slovakia are affected by economic restructuring processes after the political changes, potential LUDAs are mainly situated at the centres of the settlement system which were historically connected to the process of extensive industrialisation and urbanisation. It concerns mainly the northwest and north of Bohemia (around Plzeň, Most and Teplice, Northern Moravia) and North-eastern Slovakia as well as the central region of the river Váh and South-eastern Slovakia.

Under the process of transformation primarily engineering factories, companies of heavy chemistry and plants of building industry, iron production as well as mines have left behind big areas of distress as a consequence of technological changes, calming of production, changes of production or closing down. To overcome the economic problems is the most difficult task in these areas.

On the local level two main types of distribution can be recognised: On the one hand potential LUDAs are located in the core of larger urban areas. These areas which were formerly characterised by industrial activities are mostly situated close to downtown. The building stock can be old (around the turn to the 20th century) or contains larger housing estates from the socialist time. On the other hand potential LUDAs can contain huge prefabricated satellite towns situated on the fringes of the urban areas.

Figure 4: Spatial structure of Poland on the beginning of 21st century
(source: IGPIK 2000)

Legend: [dark green] major axis and areas of the rapid economical development, [green] areas of increasing quality of life, [] city agglomerations – centres of development, [!] cities and agglomerations where the economical redevelopment is needed.



Poland

Traditionally Poland shows territorial polarisation between the more industrial developed western part and the less industrial eastern part (Okraska 2000). The areas closest to the border to Germany have the greatest “location rent” for future development. Along the eastern border, some contemporary improvements have only little impact in compensating the negative influence of several decades of the “eastern wall” (Węclawowicz 2001). The most important impacts on urban development have their locations in the international corridors crossing the territory of Poland from west to east (see figure 4).

Most difficulties occur in those cities which have lost their previous economic base led by big companies that sometimes employed several thousands of people. The concentration of such problems with serious consequences for the labour market and development possibilities for whole regions especially occurs in former one-industry areas, e.g. the south-eastern (e.g. Katowice region) and eastern part of Poland as well as in the Łódź area. Another category of deprived areas represent small cities, mostly in Eastern Poland, with underdeveloped functions and without guarantee for the inhabitants to get access to an adequate educational, cultural and health care infrastructure.

Within the cities the most important element of social and spatial differentiation is still the difference in demographical structure, especially a difference between demographically “old” and “young” areas. The fundamental spatial element causing differences in demographical structures of areas is the distance from the city centre. Central districts are mostly characterised by the highest share of old and socially weak population. The periphery areas are characterised by a crucially higher share of young population and children (ZPORR).

4 Conclusions

Today urban distress in European countries is widely described in scientific literature as well as empiric analyses. The phenomenon of urban distress is seen in a comprehensive way and approaches for solutions have become more integrated. In so far, the understanding of urban distressed areas differs strongly from the traditional perceptions of socially degraded slums or ghettos.

Although urban distress is recognised, it is observed and assessed in very different ways in the respective European countries. Reasons for it can be found in different traditions and backgrounds, the severity of problems or understandings of dealing with certain aspects. The following main groups of countries can be noticed according to the data that could be analysed during the first six months of the project:

- Countries with traditionally strong problems of urban distress (e.g. UK, Ireland, France) or countries with traditionally less severe but currently growing problems of urban distress (e.g. Austria, Germany, Italy) and with broad research as well as comprehensive approaches in urban planning.
- Countries with strong or growing problems of urban distress but scarce problem recognition in research and / or urban planning practice (e.g. Spain, Portugal).
- Countries with problems of urban distress as a relatively new phenomenon and therefore scarce problem recognition in research and urban planning (mostly former socialist countries, e.g. Slovakia, Poland).

References from other European regions, like the Scandinavian and Benelux, will follow as the project will gain research progress. This might extent the statements above.

The specific phenomenon of large urban distressed areas is not described yet literally but nevertheless recognised – more or less consciously. Literature as well as programme analyses point up that urban distress is not limited to small urban neighbourhoods. Social exclusion and economic marginalisation are main characteristics of these larger areas which often have faced a spiral of decline during the last decades. However, at the moment a specific “approach” cannot be recognised to describe LUDAs or to specify ways of their rehabilitation.

Despite differences in kind and intensity potential LUDAs all over Europe have quite similar aspects in common. Thus, LUDAs are not restricted to certain countries; urban distress is a European wide problem. Case study areas and other examples from different countries show interlocking and interdependent problem categories combining social, economic and ecological issues as well as issues of the urban structure.

In the result, large areas emerge which are sub-standard in terms of the quality of life when compared to the average of cities and urban regions. More research will be carried out to clarify how problems are interrelated with each other and which problems are actual key problems of LUDA that have to be dealt with first and more intensively. Again, these key problems as well as key strategies and measure might differ from one country to another and from one situation to another. Specific conditions and backgrounds require a specific treatment.

The phenomenon's European wide importance can be underlined by analysing the distribution patterns of LUDA. As mentioned above all observed countries have to deal with such larger areas of urban distress. While LUDA might be found in almost all urban agglomerations they are especially concentrated in cities situated in old-industrial areas and within traditionally disadvantaged or currently peripheral regions. LUDA can be restricted to core areas of urban agglomerations but do not necessarily have to. Thus, they can be a cross-border problem of several municipalities. In this field, further investigation is needed on finding reasons for the current distribution pattern of LUDA and on answering questions of how LUDA emergence or extension can be better prevented or stemmed.

To sum it up, this report gives a first overview on the scope and distribution of LUDA in European cities according to the research results during the first six months of the LUDA project. Key aspects of LUDA have been described and a first preliminary definition of LUDA has been found. The report shows in what way further research within the project is needed to precise certain generally open statements.

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<http://ww2.audit-commission.gov.uk>

Ballymun Regeneration Ltd

<http://www.brl.ie>

BEQUEST Toolkit

<http://research.scpm.salford.ac.uk/bqtoolkit/index.htm>

Bradford City Council

<http://www.bradford.gov.uk>

CAF/Agenda-Transfer

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City of Dublin

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New East Manchester

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