

Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest (MRI)

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The Metropolitan Research Institute was established in Budapest, Hungary in 1989. Gradually growing, MRI has become a recognized research workshop in the areas of urban development, and housing as well as local government financing and decentralization in Hungary. The Institute has been providing research and consultancy, organizing conferences and designing and providing training. The managing directors, József Hegedüs, economist and sociologist, András Ekés, urbanist and Iván Tosics, mathematician and sociologist, are highly experienced researchers in the areas of economic and political issues of housing, urban planning and urban management. Their papers are published in the best known international periodicals and are presented at the most important scientific forums.

The permanent research staff of MRI is made up of highly qualified economists, sociologists, and urban planners, which provides for the options of interdisciplinary work in both consultancy and research. In addition to its permanent research staff, the company hires outside experts on a temporary basis. The research capacity is strengthened by a highly qualified administrative and technical support staff: an office manager and a secretarial staff of two provide for background services for the projects.

MRI has been involved in the decentralization reforms in Hungary and in the SEE region, and provided for both research and consultancy for local and regional service delivery management and organization. It is founder of a network for local experts called National Association of Municipal Financial Officers in Hungary, and has been serving as trainer for the participating municipalities in the areas of local service delivery and methods for planning.

International Experience

Owing to their continuous working contacts and relations, the researchers and experts in the company have acquired broad international experience. Apart from the USA and Western European countries contacts exist with the following countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, and Russia.

MRI is included in a series of EU 5th, 6th and 7th Research Framework, and diverse other EU level international programmes:

- **UGIS** The project '*Urban Governance, Social Inclusion and Sustainability*' dealt with the consequences of Urban Development Programmes, especially regarding social inclusion and urban sustainability. The link between urban governance and the functioning of UDPs was analysed on the example of selected urban areas. (<http://www.ufsia.ac/be/ugis>).
- **RESTATE** The project '*Restructuring Large-scale Housing Estates in European Cities*' dealt with the past, present and future of the large housing estates in 10 European countries. Based on case-studies the problems and possibilities of these deteriorating areas were summarized (<http://www.restate.geog.uu.nl/project/>).
- **INTERACT** The project '*European Cities in Action*' concentrated on the way, how comprehensive, integrated strategic plans are implemented in European cities, involving a whole range of public and private partners. Those methods, procedures, structures ways of working were analyzed that can ensure that the strategic plan becomes reality (<http://www.interact-network.org>).
- **CUHP** The project '*Constructing Understandings of Homeless Populations*' had the main aim to create focused discussion on methodological procedures that provide

robust results when used to research homeless populations. Research findings and policy aims were summarized, leading to a substantive research proposal in the field of homelessness. (<https://www.cuhp.org>)

- **DWELLON** The project *Developing well chosen methods for crime prevention in urban districts*, was a framework programme to help police, the judiciary and professionals from the EU member states and candidate countries co-operate in criminal matters and in the fight against crime. MRI was involved in the project in partnership with one of the pilot urban rehabilitation programs of Budapest, District VIII.
- **OSIS** The Project *Origins of Security and Insecurity: The interplay of Housing systems with jobs, household structures, finance and social security* aimed at exploring the meaning and effects of home ownership on household strategies while evaluating macro-economic and institutional conditions for the development of such strategies. MRI participated in the project with a quantitative and qualitative data analysis on Hungary's features and performance and delivered an outlook for the Central and East European region. (<http://www.osis.bham.ac.uk>)
- **ESPON project 2.3.2.** The project aimed at the assessment of the situation in EU25 as well Romania, Bulgaria, Norway and Switzerland, as regards how efficient different integrated approaches and legal systems are in meeting common spatial development strategies and objectives such as polycentric urban system, improvement of access and connectivity, balancing urban rural needs, derelict urban areas, urban regeneration, use of natural and cultural assets and location on waste facilities. MRI undertook the evaluation of Hungary's current institutional setup and perspectives in the multi-national project. (<http://www.espon.eu>)
- **ESPON project 1.4.2,** Social Aspects of EU Territorial Development. The research meant to explore main elements related to social aspects of territorial dynamics, and to prepare for a future ESPON applied research project, to be financed in the next programming period. The study was dedicated to the provision of scientific information and guidance, necessary to implement in the future a sound spatial analysis of social patterns, trends, impacts and dynamics. In that perspective, the study focused on 4 key social components of territorial development: housing, education and training, employment and income distribution, and access to social services, services of general interest and mechanisms of public transfer. MRI accomplished the housing related part of the study. (<http://www.espon.eu>)
- **PLUREL** The main objectives of the Project *Peri-urban Land Use Relationships – Strategies and Sustainability Assessment Tools for Urban-Rural Linkages* is exploring Rural-Urban Regions (RUR), based on the concept of Functional Urban Region as an urban core and its surrounding commuting ring which can extend to include both the rural and peri-urban regions. The RUR, however, extends beyond today's rings of intense interaction with the core city and includes areas of recreational use, food supply and nature reserve functions in predominantly rural areas. PLUREL will generate an improved understanding of the complex relationships between rural, peri-urban and urban land uses within rural-urban regions of the EU25. It will focus on generating new insights about the functional relationships between drivers, pressures, status, impacts and responses (DPSIR) in urban, peri-urban and rural land use systems. MRI accomplishes a review on policy tools and best-practice cases. (<https://www.plurel.net>)
- **DEMHOW** The overall objective of the Project *Demographic Change and Housing Wealth* is, to investigate the ways in which, across member states, demographic change and housing wealth are linked: investigate how the composition of wealth has changed with respect, in particular with regard to changes in population, housing systems, state pension arrangements, and financial institutions, how housing assets have, up to this point, been used in old age what are the attitudes and institutional arrangements towards equity withdrawal in old age, and to use those investigations in order to contribute to policy evaluation and policy making. (<http://www.demhow.bham.ac.uk>)