



Newsletter no. 2 'Testing the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities' , May 2011



At this moment in the testing phase cities are busy organising their testing activities, are well under way in the testing, have already had an on-site visit by the Nicis testing team, are organising the on-site visits and are providing feedback with the feedback button. In this second newsletter we follow these testing activities of the test cities. Three test cities (Gabrovo, Newcastle and Rethymnon) tell us how they are organising the testing of the RFSC. Together with the five examples in the first newsletter (Plovdiv, Umeå, Hradec Kralove, Helsinki-Espoo and Dzierzoniow) cities are provided with many ideas how cities can organise the testing. Also the on-site visits provide a lot of information about the testing and what cities want to test. Already the first on-site visits in Germany, Austria, Romania, Spain and Malta took place. You can learn about these visits in this newsletter. During the contacts with the test cities and the on-site visits questions are asked and observations are made. This makes it possible to give some guidelines that might support the cities in their (further) testing. Useful for the further testing are also the FAQ's in the annex of this newsletter. Furthermore, we give you a short overview of the type of feedback we are receiving by the feedback buttons. The last item of this newsletter gives you an update of the upcoming events.

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Three different examples how to organise the testing phase

Gabrovo (Bulgaria)

While the first on-site visits have already been started (see elsewhere in the Newsletter) Nicis Institute has been informed of innovative and positive experiences of the RFSC testing phase in other test cities. Ms Desislava Koleva (Chief of Economic Development Department) explained how Gabrovo is organising the testing phase and gives some first indications of the potential value added of the RFSC for the city of Gabrovo in Bulgaria.



According to Ms Koleva the main goal to join the RFSC testing phase is **to find an innovative approach** for improvement of the city environment and increasing the administrative capacity of Gabrovo Municipality to solve urban development and environmental problems. In a time of reductions of public spending and a challenging global economic climate joining the testing phase of RFSC could give Gabrovo a **'real opportunity' to test the municipal strategy for sustainable development**. Possible objectives and appropriate instruments can be defined with the help of the RFSC.

The organization of the testing phase in Gabrovo is ambitious and 'integrated'. **Five** qualified **experts** from **multiple departments** in the municipality work at least six hours a week (per expert) to test the RFSC. Once a week the experts come together to share their experiences and pose questions to each other concerning the RFSC. The experts are not only from different departments but do also have a different educational background. **Deputy Mayor** Dobrin Savchev, who also attended the Launching Event, is the **leader of the** Gabrovo testing **team**.

Regarding the first impressions of usability and usefulness of the RFSC website the Gabrovo testing team already found some parts of the RFSC website which can be improved.

Newcastle (United Kingdom)

Newcastle is one of the most active cities involved in the testing phase. We came into contact with Mr Kit England (Policy and Information Officer, Central Policy Unit) who explained us how they organised the testing phase in Newcastle and what are their first impressions of the RFSC.

"We have organised a **series of workshops** to **test different elements** of the tool with different groups and different policies and strategies within the city council" according to Mr. England.

The city of Newcastle uses the different sections

of the tool for a variety of purposes, depending on the process of the projects. For example, some tools will **test** the **Climate Change Strategy** while others test the **Sustainable Community Strategy**. Newcastle is also **planning** to develop a **Movement and Access Plan** and is particularly running a **workshop using** the **'Check the Integrated Approach'** tool for this Plan.



“Our motivation to use and test the RFSC is that the city of Newcastle made a commitment to be as sustainable as possible and the City Council has the objective to **incorporate sustainability** across its **plans** and **policies**”. Therefore, both **high-level staff** as well as **Council Members** will be **involved** in the testing phase of the RFSC. The specialists in Wellbeing and Health, Economy, Climate Change and Social Inclusion are particularly involved from the Council.

The first impressions of the RFSC website are in general good, according to Mr. England. Of course, some sections seem more useful than others but the general approach allows some **judgment on a consistent set of criteria**. Once the workshops have been finished Newcastle will have more ideas and suggestions which will be given as feedback by the City Council as a whole, taking into account specific observations.

Rethymnon (Greece)

In order to make the most out of the testing period and maximize the forthcoming results of the method proposed by the RFSC, Rethymnon formed a **working team** of **five city representatives** at the higher technical, administrative and political level. **Team leader** is the **vice mayor** in charge of City's Urban Planning and Development Mr. Tsimbiskakis. The testing is co-led by the head of the municipality's technical administration. The other members of our testing team are representatives from the municipality's urban development bureau, the IT department and administrative department. Each member of the team is working on the **testing** of the RFSC individually using a **pre-selected development project**. **Every week** there is a **meeting** where we exchange our views and discuss each member's experience with the testing of the RFSC.



The motivation for the municipality of Rethymnon to join the testing of the RFSC is that they started some years ago with sustainable urban development focusing on projects for integrated urban development of **deprived neighbourhoods** in the city, like the old city of Rethymnon. Apart from the projects that have already been implemented, local authorities have developed various local **monitoring tools** and **processes** in order to establish an **integrated approach** as a holistic and global view of the

policy of the city contributing to the financial, social and territorial cohesion of the municipality as a whole. The tools and approaches include the development of a **strategic plan for the sustainable transportation** development in the city and the ongoing review of the **strategic urban development plan** (the main territorial planning tool of the city). Thus the main motivation for us to join the testing phase of the RFSC is to help and participate in the development of **an effective tool** that will help our city to effectively address the main economic, social and environmental challenges and to **explore new ways** in introducing an integrated approach in the local environment.

From our experiences until now we believe that the RFSC website is a **useful tool** that will help us significantly to develop and introduce an **integrated approach** in the local environment. Moreover we believe that the RFSC will be useful in **promoting cooperation** with other European cities facing correspondent challenges in order to share and learn from each other exchanging good examples and experiences.

First experiences from the on-site visits

So far on-site visits are carried out in Germany, Austria, Romania, Spain and Malta-Gozo.

On-site visit German and Austrian test cities

On 13 April the test cities of Germany (Arnsberg, Düsseldorf, Leipzig, Ludwigsburg, Munich and Trier) and of Austria (Vienna) met with the Nicis team. Also the national contact persons of Germany and Austria were present, as well as a representative of the DG Regional Policy of the European Commission. In total 23 people attended the combined on-site visit from 10 to 17 hrs in Munich. Most of the test cities planned to start the "real" testing after the on-site visit.



The meeting started with three presentations of representatives of Munich about Munich's urban planning, sustainable development indicators and the Zentrales Informations Management Analyse System (ZIMAS) of the Statistical Office of Munich. After the presentations Nicis showed and demonstrates the RFSC.

All cities are interested in the **monitoring system tool** and the key indicators of the RFSC. This part of the tool roused even enthusiasm among some of the participants. "It is very impressive that in the RFSC the 33 key indicators are linked to the 25 key objectives. Although, we developed a sophisticated set of sustainable development indicators in 2007 in Munich we did not succeed in achieving this until now". "The **limited set of key indicators** is a **good idea**. When tens or may be hundreds of European cities are using these indicators in the future a true learning process can start. Not the indicator as such is important but the communication between cities about why do you score higher and why am I scoring lower. Learning starts with explaining and understanding the differences in the same indicators between cities. This is more important than discussions about the value, the definition or the scaling of an indicator". Nicis expects after the on-site visit a lot of feedback from the German and Austrian test cities about the monitoring tool of the RFSC.

In demonstrating and discussing parts of the RFSC there was also positive feedback about the **interdependency** part in the RFSC ('develop your strategy/project' and 'check the integrated approach'). Also the **spider diagram** and the **dashboard** in 'check the integrated approach' received positive remarks. "The spider diagram and the dashboard over the four pillars in 'check the integrated approach' is an enormous progress compared with existing tools. This could stimulate thinking about city development in a system-like approach. This can be very helpful for internal discussions and for discussions among cities".



On a more critical note the meeting with the German and Austrian test cities revealed that using the **city profile and city characteristics** of the RFSC is of no particular use for the German and Austrian test cities. Their dynamic urban planning methods and the dialogues they are organising around the development of these plans demand a lot of work and can not be done again in testing the RFSC. "We can only allocate staff time to the testing of the RFSC when there is a clear added value for our city". **The usefulness** of using the **city profile** and **city characteristics** of the RFSC **is not clear**. The participants did

not discover yet that the city characteristics (concerns and reasons for concern) are linked with 'check the relevance of your choices' in 'develop your strategy/project'. Also critical remarks were made about the value added of submitting illustrations.

With all test cities **appointments** were made about what they are going to test of the RFSC in the coming weeks. One test city will check the indicator part of the RFSC and provide some reflections about its usefulness. Another test city will look at the social and environmental objectives and indicators; these are not well developed and included in their actual urban planning. Another test city will test the functionality of the RFSC with three projects. Another test city will try the RFSC for the consultation they have to carry out for the redevelopment potential in the inner city. And another test city will test their existing strategy with the RFSC and will have a look at the monitoring tool of the RFSC. "The environmental objectives are not good integrated in our urban development plan. May be the RFSC could give ideas to improve this part of their strategy/plan". Another test city will test the monitoring part of the RFSC and they will provide feedback about their experiences. Also they will try to find with the RFSC a peer city and examples for a particular project.

On-site visit to the Romanian test cities

Four Romanian cities are visited in one week: 18 April Zalau, 19 April Deva, 20 April Craiova and 21 April Brăila

Zalau (18 April)

On April 18th Nicis had a meeting with **seven representatives** of the city of **Zalau**, including the vice mayor Daniela Cota and the city manager Raov Historescu. Zalau participates in the testing to **check projects and strategies** and to **check the tools** they are using for strategies and projects. Secondly they would like to know how other cities solve problems. They would like to use experiences of other cities and they want to use the RFSC (**find peer city**) to find partners for European projects. For Zalau the RFSC looks rather familiar because they introduced already the four pillars themselves in 2008.



Before the on-site visit Rodica Cuirte and Ramona Butocovan of Zalau city were already very active in testing the RFSC. They had **printed** and **read the user guide** before starting to use the RFSC, filled in their city profile and all cells of characterize your city and added a lot of data of Zalau in columns 1 (characteristics) and column 2 (actions). Rodica and Ramona also started to **fill in two projects**. During the on-site visit important remarks, observations and recommendations were already communicated to Nicis.

The testers in Zalau will **use one login and password** so that they can see what their colleagues filled in. For the coming weeks the testers in Zalau will give a thorough **check of the indicators in all four pillars**. They will **check more projects** with the RFSC and they will **submit one illustration**. They decided to **use all parts** of the RFSC because they want to **learn**.

Deva (19 April)

In **Deva eighteen persons** were invited by Mrs Corina Violeta Opreșiu (city manager) and Mrs Camelia Rosca (contact person of Deva) to be present at the meeting with Nicis. The participants were representing the municipality, the City Council, stakeholders and the Romanian ministry of Regional Development and Tourism. There was also **strong participation of the press** (newspaper and local television).

The city of Deva wants to make use of the RFSC to **develop a strategy of sustainable development**



that is not only a piece of paper but is **applicable in practice**. In the development of the strategy they want to use focus groups to include stakeholders. With this goal in mind Nicis demonstrated how the RFSC can be used to develop such a strategy.

After the on-site visit **eight people** from different departments **will test the RFSC**. They will use **one login and password**. Deva will also **submit an illustration** to the RFSC.

Craiova (20 April)

There were no testing activities in Craiova until this day (10 April). The contact person of Craiova for the testing became ill and was unable to start the testing activities of the RFSC in Craiova. The **vice-mayor** Teodor Nicușor Sas found a solution to start the testing in Craiova and invited **eight persons** from **different departments and services** in Craiova and two representatives from the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism. Craiova will start testing after the on-site visit and the explanation of the RFSC by Nicis.

The goals of Craiova in testing the RFSC are to **check** and to **compare** their **plan of integrated urban development** with the elements of the RFSC, to contact other cities about strategies and projects and to check projects. Nicis demonstrated the functionality of the RFSC with these goals in mind. The participants were enthusiastic about the **interdependencies**; they saw the value added of this part of the tool. They also will **submit** the park rehabilitation (the project was visited) as **an illustration**. And they will **check several projects** with the RFSC.

Brăila (21 April)

Before the on-site visit (21 April) no real testing of the RFSC took place in **Brăila** because of organisational difficulties. During the on-site visit Nicis had a short discussion with the **Mayor** (Mr Aurel Gabriel Simionescu) about the RFSC and his on-site visit to Brăila.

Marion Ion invited **ten persons** from **different departments** of the **city**, representatives of the **county** and an independent architect for the meeting with Nicis. The main motive for Brăila for testing and using the RFSC is to **improve the obligatory Plan Urbanistic General** (PUG) for the coming ten years. Nicis demonstrated intensively to all participants the RFSC with this goal of Brăila in mind.



After the presentation and demonstration of the RFSC during the on-site visit and the Eastern holiday they will start testing the RFSC in Brăila. They will also **test future projects and existing projects** with the RFSC. Marion Ion will involve **seven persons** in the **testing**: four people from different departments of the city of Brăila and three people from the county council. **Each week** they will have **meeting** with all the testers to exchange experiences and to coordinate the use of the RFSC. **Each** of the **testers** will have **his of her own login and password**. Marion Ion will be the person that will coordinate the testing activities in Brăila.

On-site visit to the Spanish test cities

On the 27th of April the test cities of Spain (Córdoba, Fuenlabrada, La Coruña, Málaga and Vitoria-Gasteiz) met together in Madrid for a first technical on-site visit with the Nicis team. Also the national contact person for Spain was present. In general the cities show **different levels of their RFSC-experience**, but all were able to give reviews, remarks and observations. The test cities provided information in which stage of the testing process they are. Some of the cities (Málaga and Fuenlabrada) prepared a short power point **presentation**. Each city was given the opportunity to share its experiences with the RFSC both in terms of content and technology. Issues, observations, problems, suggestions and challenges were discussed by the testing-participants and Nicis Institute in a constructive, pleasant and lively atmosphere.



All the cities put effort to work with the RFSC and tried to understand the usefulness and the implications of the different tools. Some of the Spanish test cities choose to test before the on-site visit their **city profile** and city characteristics (La Coruña, Málaga), others were working already with a **specific project** (Fuenlabrada) or were still discovering all the tools while using the RFSC. There were critical remarks, but the overall attitude is positive and the instrument could develop into an useful tool for the cities for instance to **monitor** their sustainable progress or to **find a peer**

city to share their challenges and objectives. Some of the cities organized **a team** (within one department) to work with the RFSC, to become familiar with the tools and to assess if the tools are suitable for their purposes. If we summarize the comments we can define that the technical part (the navigation) of the RFSC suits and will give less problems. The **content** (more compact, less text-volume, more users friendly) and the **accessibility** (Spanish language, less demanding, practical and on the right spot displayed info and a common login access) of the RFSC **needs to be improved** to motivate the technicians and policymakers to use the tool for their purposes, to recognize the benefits, to reinforce the emergency to use it and most of all to enjoy working with. **In general there is a belief that the RFSC have added value** and that by some adjustments (a Spanish version!) the accessibility will enhance and due to visualize the benefits related to the different objectives. Some cities decided to translate part of the RFSC into Spanish to improve the testing. Nicis suggested the cities to disseminate the information about the RFSC (the leaflets, the presentations held at the launching event and the newsletters) to the departments they want to involve in testing the RFSC.

On-site visit to San Lawrenz (Malta-Gozo)

On 10 May an on-site visit took place to San Lawrenz, the smallest test-city of all cities testing the RFSC. San Lawrenz may be a village of just 532 inhabitants on the beautiful island of Gozo, Malta, it is nonetheless a prime example of the cliché "where a small village can be great". San Lawrenz has with a lot of enthusiasm taken up the task of **testing** their **concrete integral project** for the **future sustainable development** of the village and its surroundings.

San Lawrenz – not withstanding their size and available capacity - faces **many of the same challenges** as we hear from other test-cities: for example finding the right balance between input and (expected) outcome, some parts of the RFSC being more applicable than others and putting the use of the RFSC in the right local, national and even European context. But also, San Lawrenz offers us lessons to be

learned. In the preparation and (ongoing) implementation phase of their project, **citizens** of the village **are continuously informed** and **involved**, the **identity of the village** is being used (and **promoted**) as an important instrument and the **project encompasses all four pillars of the RFSC in an integral manner**.

Before deciding to want to become a test-city, there were many questions on the added value of the RFSC: would it not become a (relative) administrative burden, will it be useful for smaller villages, will it not overlap or compete with existing instruments, and so on. And even though

San Lawrenz feels that the use of the RFSC can be very much improved (by for example being more targeted towards guiding a city, by providing a quick scan-modus for the design phase of a project and by creating a learning curve within the tool), it intends to benefit from the tool – to **find peer cities**, to **inform European cities** on their local initiatives and to **create an European network** around their village.

In short, the added value of the tool might – in the eyes of our Maltese testers – be sufficiently increased in the future, the added value of participation of San Lawrenz as the smallest test-city is without a doubt.



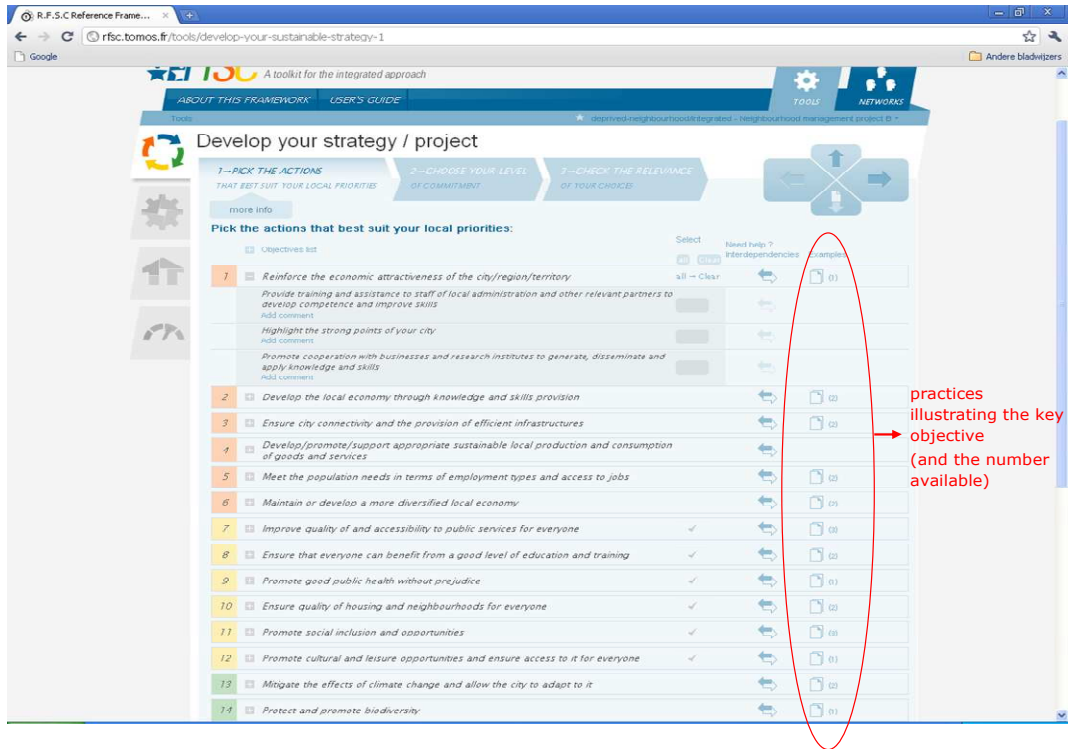
Guidelines from the testing team and the test cities

More peer cities in database

Many test cities are interested to find peer cities and to exchange experiences. During the testing phase peer cities are added step by step by the test cities as they fill in their city profile. So each month more peer cities will be available. So it can be useful for you to check regularly the RFSC website for test cities.

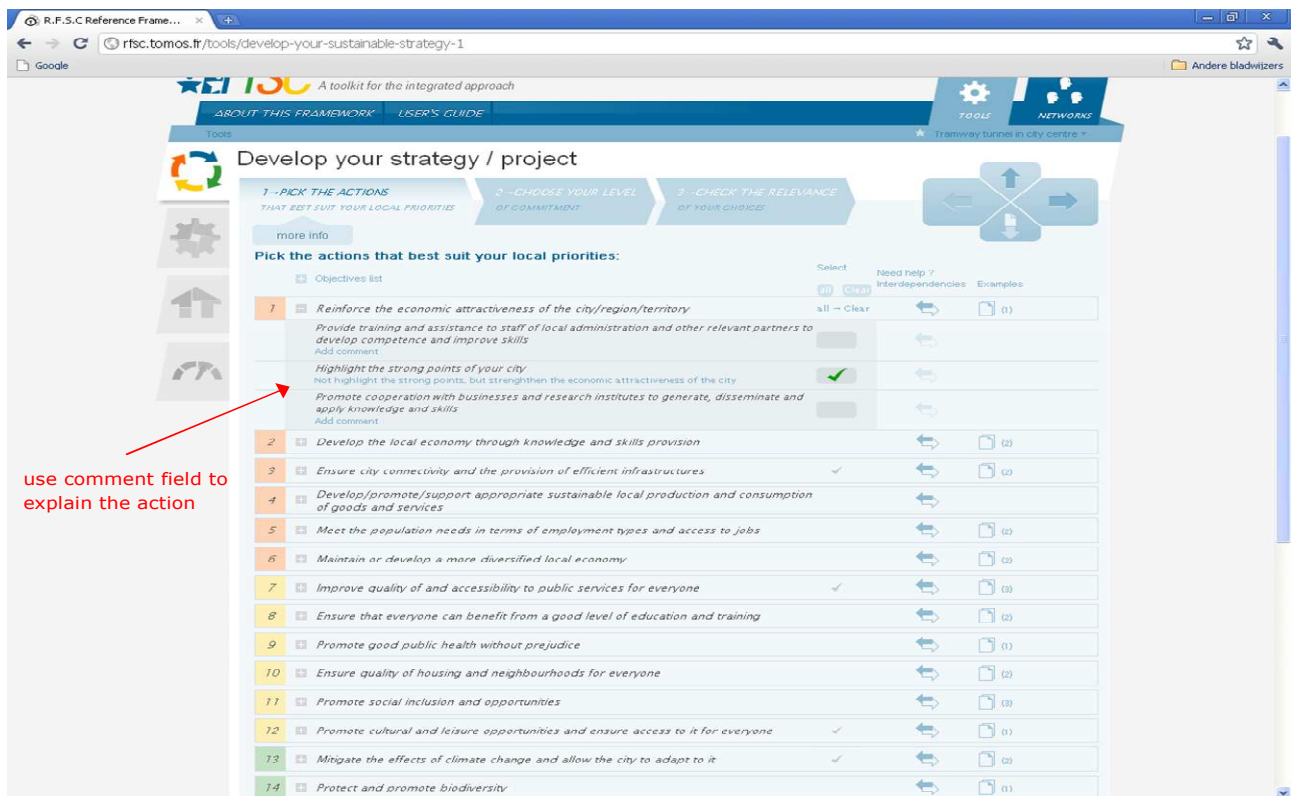
The added value of more 'illustrations' in the catalogue of illustrations

Many test cities want to learn from each other and want to exchange experiences. In the RFSC this can be done with the illustrations. Step by step the illustrations are added in the catalogue of illustrations after submission and validation. Learning is also facilitated because these illustrations are shown by the key objectives in the first step of developing your strategy or project. The key objectives that characterize the practice are used to inform you about useful experiences for your strategy or project. Stepwise, we might expect that the number of illustrations linked to the key objectives and actions will increase (see screen below).



What to do when the first level of objectives (25) are relevant for our strategy or project and the second level of objectives (86) are much less so?

In general, you have to keep in mind that the 25 first level of objectives are more abstract than the 86 second level of objectives. So, it is not strange that the abstract objectives fit more easily with your strategy or project. Still in develop your strategy/project you have to click the second level of objectives and actions that best suit your local priorities. If these more detailed, second level of objectives do not fit exactly with your strategy or project you can follow the temporarily solution explained in the next screen of the RFSC.



In the project 'tramway tunnel in city center' of one of the test cities of the Nicis team the project is undertaken to reinforce the economic attractiveness of the city/region/territory (first level of objectives).

The three second level of objectives presented in the RFSC under 'reinforce the economic attractiveness' do not well describe the city's objectives with the tramway tunnel. So in this example one of the second level of objectives (highlight the strong points of your city) is selected and the comment field is used to explain to my colleagues that this should be read as "our tunnel project does not highlight the strong points of our city, but strengthens the economic attractiveness of the city as a whole". Now again a useful dialogue among all participants is possible and everybody knows why this is an important action/project for our city.

Questions and observations like this are extremely useful as feedback. This can be valuable information to improve the prototype of the RFSC. As you know, you can send feedback to the Nicis team by the 'Feedback!' button, you can give feedback during the on-site visit or you can send an email to testingRFSC@nicis.nl with your results and comments.

Useful information coming in from the page feedback button

Feedback on the tool of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC) is of utmost importance to come with clear conclusions and recommendations for the final version of the RFSC. The 66 test cities are in a unique frontrunner position to provide qualitative feedback to the RFSC testing tool in order to be able to improve the RFSC. All feedback is most welcome, whether it is about the nature of the indicators, the interdependencies, the wording of objectives, the user guide, the lay-out of pages et cetera, et cetera. Every remark, observation and recommendation will be treated with equal importance by Nicis Institute.

To give you a glimpse of some of the feedback that has already been submitted, hereby some examples and statistics.

- Approximately in 60 per cent of the two hundred feedbacks on pages the testers indicate that the page is clear and that they know what to do; in approximately 40 per cent of the feedbacks on pages the testers have suggestions for improvement.
- In the 'monitor progress' part of the website some cities have reacted on the different key indicators; 30 percent is happy with the indicator that he/she gives feedback upon, 60 percent is 'partly' happy and 10 percent is not happy with the indicator; 60 percent at least gives reasons why he/she is not (or partly) happy with the indicator and 40 percent gives suggestions for improvement.
- 27 percent of the suggestions for improvement in the 'check the integrated approach' relate to the graphs.
- In the 'deprived neighbourhoods' part of the website one of the test cities who gave feedback said that the "more info" box helped to orientate on the page.
- Three testers gave feedback on the 'characterize your city' part; their feedback was that it is not possible to 'un-tick' the cell in Internet Explorer and only in Firefox.
- In the 'develop your strategy' part one of the suggestions for improvement is: "please give an explanation why my strategy is likely to be unbalanced regarding urban sustainability".
- 78 percent of the test cities who gave feedback on the 'user guide' found the information of the page 'clear'.

Upcoming events and next steps

On-site visits planned

- 12 May: Dzierzoniów and Bytom together in Dzierzoniów in Poland
- 20 May: Rethymnon, Samothrace and Velventos together in Rethymnon (Greece)
- 31 May: Belfast (UK)
- 2 June: Gabrovo (Bulgaria)
- 3 June: Plovdiv (Bulgaria)
- 7 June: Lahti (Finland)
- 8 June: Umeå (Sweden)
- 9 June: Trier (Germany)
- 16 June: Jogeva (Estonia)
- 17 June: Valmiera (Latvia)
- June (end): Brno, Hradec Kralove, Litomerice (Czech Republic)
- 22 June: Helsinki-Espoo (Finland)
- June (end): Luxembourg, Seraing and Brussels (Luxembourg and Belgium)
- 1 July: Serpa, Maia and Barreiro together in Lisbon (Portugal)
- 11 July: Warsaw en Tczew together in Warsaw (Poland)
- July: Cordoba, Fuenlabrada, La Coruna, Malaga and Vitoria-Gasteiz together in Madrid (Spain).

At this moment it is not clear yet when the on-site visits will take place for the other test cities in Hungary, UK, France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Slovenia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Cyprus. The testing team of Nicis Institute is busy with the national contact persons and the test cities to organise the visit(s). It is important that the on-site visits take place before the second half of July. After mid July the on-site visit is of very limited use for the RFSC testing phase and the final report of the testing phase.

Mid-June

Mid June the monitoring tool of the RFSC will give you the possibility to select also secondary indicators besides the already existing 33 key indicators. These secondary indicators will be linked to the 86 second level of objectives. This option to select for your monitoring tool also secondary indicators will co-exist besides the key indicators linked to the 25 first level objectives that are already part of the RFSC.

Remote usability testing (third week of June)

In the third week of June sixteen testers will help us to discover improvements in the usability of the RFSC. We will ask the volunteers to install temporarily a small piece software (Teamviewer) on their computer. This makes it possible for our laboratory to carry out the remote usability test of the RFSC with the testers. During 90 minutes the volunteers will carry out tasks, will answer questions and will explain us why they are doing what they are doing. The working language will be English. With Teamviewer the people in the laboratory have exactly the same screen in front of them as you have. What you do and why you do this is very instructive to see eventually usability problems of the prototype of the RFSC.

We are looking for volunteers that have some experience with internet but are not yet very trained in using the RFSC. If you or a colleague are interested to participate in the remote usability test of the RFSC you can sent us an email: testingRFSC@nicis.nl.

Final questionnaire (end of June)

By the end of June we will make the final questionnaire available. This will be an Internet questionnaire that staff members, managers and politicians can fill in when they have finished their testing. In this final questionnaire we will question you about the goals of the RFSC and if these goals are important for you, how you want to use the RFSC, what you want to share with other cities, what is the value added of the RFSC for you, how you evaluate the results obtained with the RFSC for your daily work et cetera. The final questionnaire will be easy to fill in and will not ask a lot of time. You can answer the questions of the final questionnaire when it is convenient for you before September 2nd.

Deadline of testing: September 2nd

September 2nd is the deadline to provide testing feedback to Nicis Institute. In September we start our analysis with 2,000 feedbacks on pages and key indicators, with many observations, remarks, suggestions and examples that we received during the on-site visits, the feedback of 16 testers that participated in the remote usability test and hundreds of participants that answered questions in the final questionnaire. We also hope to have received at that moment many results the cities obtained by using the RFSC and their comments on these results.

Contact with Nicis support team during your testing

You can contact the Nicis team by telephone +31 70 344 09 66 or email "testingRFSC@nicis.nl". The members of the testing team are: Koos van Dijken, Ries Kamphof, Ruud Dorenbos, Fleur Boulogne, Karel Willems, Hester Menninga and Mart Grisel.

Annex with FAQ's

Regularly we will answer Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that our helpdesk is receiving.

*Q. Which of the tools should I use to **develop a strategy** with the RFSC?*

A. In principle the tool 'develop your strategy/project' is developed for this. With this tool you evaluate - using 25 key objectives and 86 sub objectives - your actions and your level of commitment. It is useful to add comments in picking actions and choosing your levels of commitment. In this tool you are provided with practices of other cities and you are stimulated to think explicitly about synergies and conflicts in your strategy.

In some cases you could find it more convenient to describe, discuss and reach a consensus about characteristics, actions, concerns and reasons for your concerns in the city characteristics part of the RFSC (networks). When this is a more natural dialogue for you to develop your strategy you are free to do so. You use the same 25 key objectives as in the tool develop your strategy to describe your city characteristics, actions and concerns. It is wise to use the comment fields intensively for a fruitful dialogue in your city and with your stakeholders.

Maybe there are also cities that prefer to use tool 2 'check the integrated approach' to develop also a strategy. In this tool the terminology is different, but central is again your evaluation of the 25 key objectives of sustainable urban development. With the steps 'list your priorities' and 'check the impact of your strategy' (with synergies and conflicts) you create also results, dashboards and graphs. In this way you can easily compare in a synthesized way strategies when you are evaluating and discussing several options in developing your strategy.

Each of the test cities will find out what is most useful for them to use when they use the RFSC to develop or to check/improve a strategy. The Nicis testing team is very curious to know from the test cities how they evaluate these three possibilities to develop and check strategies.

*Q. How the priorities (step 1) and impacts (step 3) in the tool '**check the integrated approach**' lead to the results of step 4?*

A. The priorities are weighted in step 1 (low=2, medium=3 and high=4). If an objective is not a priority the weight is 1. Your weighting is shown in the spider diagram in step 2. With step 3 you are evaluating the impact of your strategy/project on your priorities (from -2 to +2). Only the objectives that are a priority (low, medium or high) are weighted with the impact of your strategy/project. When you indicate impacts of your priority/strategy on your priorities (step 3) that are not a priority (step 1) they will not be used in the calculation of the dashboards or the graph in step 4. So when you come to step 3 and think of and discuss about synergies and conflicts in your strategy or project (an important step in check the integrated approach) than you should verify in step 1 whether these objective are also a priority otherwise they will not show up in final results.

The Nicis testing team is very keen to learn from the test cities what is the usefulness and added value of the steps in check the integrated approach and what is your opinion of the presentation of the results.

Q. *Experts in **different departments** in our city know only a part of the 25 key objectives of our strategies or city characteristics. How could we combine these different insights?*

A. Until now the test cities follow two approaches.

There are cities that decide to use only one login and password. One after each other the experts from different departments are using their knowledge to fill in a part of the RFSC they know most about. A project leader takes care that every expert does his or her part in filling in the RFSC in time and that at a certain moment all parts are filled in. When this has been done there will be a meeting in which all priorities, actions, concerns (city characteristics), actions and levels of commitment (develop your strategy) or priorities and impacts (check your integrated approach) are discussed between all staff members from different departments. This could lead to discussions about synergies and conflicts between objectives over the four pillars and at the end to a certain consensus and an improved or more integrated approach of urban development in your city.

The second approach test cities are following is using different logins for testers from different departments. Each tester can fill in his or her part of city characteristics or strategy in its own time. Often the team members meet regularly to exchange experiences and to discuss results. At the end when everybody has finished the testing prints can be made about what is filled in by each of the testers. The project leader distributes the prints among all testers and in a meeting there is a discussion about all elements. Also this will lead to a dialogue about synergies, conflicts and probably a certain consensus will be reached.

Which approach is used depends very much about the preferences of the test cities and the testers. But in all cases it is important to provide as much feedback as possible to Nicis about pages, the functionality for your city and the usefulness of the results you obtained.

Q. *How can I built a **monitoring system**? Should we strive for as many indicators as possible or just a limited set of indicators?*

A. The type of monitoring system and the indicators selected are depending of what you want to monitor, your type of strategy, the projects you want to monitor, and your existing experience of monitoring. Some cities are at the early stage of monitoring sustainable urban development. They can evaluate all indicators provided by the RFSC. Other cities have already well developed monitoring systems but they recognize that there are some weak spots (e.g. the environmental aspects or the social aspects). These cities can see if the indicators provided by the RFSC can fill in the weak spots. Other cities want to evaluate their existing monitoring systems with the help of the RFSC. Already, several cities recognise that selecting all or a part of the 33 key indicators can have as an advantage that in the future tens or even hundreds of cities can learn from each other using these same key indicators. In the opinion of these cities not the indicator as such is of importance nor its definition nor its methodological particularities but the fact that European cities use the same indicator and that this gives exactly the possibility to learn from each other. Other cities will make an extended monitoring system with may be hundreds of indicators. They combine the key indicators or the RFSC with their own indicators and may be even with a part of the secondary indicators that the RFSC will provide from June onwards.

From all approaches Nicis testing team would like to know what are your experiences, what do you like about the monitoring part of the RFSC, what do you dislike, what is useful in your city experience and what are your recommendations for improvement.

cerns in city characteristics the reevaluation and exchange of point of views is stimulated because the arguments are shown again in 'check the relevance of your choices'.

Q. *Do I have to **do my work again** when parts of the prototype are improved?*

A. No. During the testing phase the prototype will not be changed. There is only one exception. In June a second tab will be introduced with hundreds of 'secondary' indicators linked to the 86 sub objectives in the tool 'monitoring progress'. The first tab 'choose (key) indicators' - linked to the 25 key objectives of sustainable urban development - will remain the same. In June you can enlarge your already developed monitoring system or you can leave it as it is. So all the information you are putting in the RFSC will be available for you during the whole testing phase. No information will be deleted or will become useless.

Q. *Can I **print the feedback** we submitted by the Feedback and Survey button?*

A. No. The feedback you submitted is directly fed into the database that Nicis will use to draw conclusions and to come up with recommendations to improve the prototype of the RFSC. That you can not print this feedback is not very important. Each remark, observation and recommendation is useful. There are no wrong, good or better judgements made by you or your colleagues. The more spontaneous your reactions are the more useful they are from a usability point of view. So it is of no particular use to have thorough discussions about the feedback you submitted or want to submit using the feedback or survey button. Please submit your spontaneous first reactions on each of the pages or for each of the key indicators. You are able to provide a more deliberated feedback when we ask you to fill in the final questionnaire as the last step of your testing activities.

Q. *What do I have to do when **parts of the tool are not functioning***

A. When pop-ups and tick the cells in the RFSC do not work properly you are probably using the web browser Internet Explorer versions 7 or 8. When you change your web browser to Firefox, Chrome, Safari or Opera this problem will not occur any more. You can download for example Firefox at the following weblink: <http://www.mozilla-europe.org/en/>

Q. *What happened when you **cannot use any more the RFSC?***

A. Probably your log-in is blocked because you did not sent back to the webmaster the signed 'licence and use requirements'. This is the document you received with your personal login and password. You have to sent this back to the webmaster signed with your signature (webmasterrfsc@developpement-durable.gouv.fr). If you forget to do this your login and password will be blocked.