

**Comments on TransForum's work on the
Fitness for purpose of definitions and indicators
- as summarised in the discussion paper (v 19 Oct 2006)**

**My apologies, I'm on a parallel project meeting.
But I'll be happy to respond or expand when I've arrived.**

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These comments shall challenge WP3

- I would like to challenge the outcome of WP3 by a few claims.
- These claims are of principle nature and also discussed among the participants of e.g. the on-going COST 356 action „Towards the definition of a measurable environmentally sustainable transport“
- Notably I've benefitted from discussions with Henrik Gudmundsson, DTF.
- I also draw on own work about indicators e.g.
 - for the environmental impact of transport,
 - for sustainable transport (both for the German Federal Environment Agency),
 - for the Mid-term review of the EU Transport White Paper (ASSESS).and from attending TransForum 1 and 2 meetings.

- There are a few technical remarks on the indicators in the second part.



Claim 1: Indicators are subjective elements

Indicators represent the **agreement** of a group on **important issues!**

➤ e.g. on a sustainable transport policy in Europe.

as...

- a) ...indicators shall capture a few aspects only (not map everything),
- b) ...judgements on importance are always subjective
(you cannot avoid subjectivity, but make it transparent),
- c) ... judgements depend on the actors (the group),

**If this is true =>
indicators will always need convincing!**



TransForum WP3

- a) OK, WP3 tried to be selective in the number of indicators.

- b) The selection in favour or against some indicator is not well documented.

- c) There is not sufficient evidence and argumentation given to convince non-participants (=outside the group of TransForum participants).

Proposal:

- Argue the pros and cons of each indicator.



Claim 2: There is not one, but many purposes for indicators

- Indicators shall be **useful** for policy making
(not just interesting information)
- Hence they have to respond to the needs of the user(s).
- The purposes in policy making depend e.g. on
 - policy stage: preparation, assessment, implementation, evaluation afterwards;
 - policy level: from single measure to comprehensive strategy?
 - intention: Monitoring? Analysis? Performance measurement? ...
- There are diverse – and diffuse – users!

If this is true =>

one set of indicators can never cater all purposes – and maybe not all users!



TransForum WP3

➤ The purpose (i.e. the intended or imagined application) of the indicators is not well defined. How can then „the fitness for purpose“ be assessed?

Alternatively: It is not argued how one set can cater for all purposes.

➤ Who is the user?

➤ How shall the indicators be used?

Proposal:

➤ Define / describe the purpose of the indicators here.

➤ E.g. describe different classes of indicators for different purposes / user groups / policy phases ?



Claim 3: Process as important as product

- If indicators represent the agreement of a group on important issues, then **use indicators as tools for discussion – don't consider them as their end.**
- If the discussion, i.e. the clarification, common understanding and mutual agreement is so important, **then concentrate on the process as much as on the product!**

Recommendations:

- **Analyse the process of (transport) policy making better – and the potential place of scientific information, and the place of indicators.**
- **Maintain fora for discussing – analysing – understanding European transport policy and transport research.**



More technical remarks on the WP3 indicators

Good:

- Linked to objectives
- Limited in number ⇔ reduction of complexity / overview.

Problematic:

- Has TransForum **proven** that these indicators are
 - complete, comprehensive, fully operational, without mutual overlap and unambiguously linked to an objective?
 - Is accessibility really equal to travel time? From where to where? Does accessibility not relate to options in space?
- Why have you **selected** PM emissions, why not NO_x?
 - By the way: PM₁, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀??? Soot???
 - Exhaust emissions only or including the fuel/electricity provision?
 - Including or without secondary aerosols???
 - If yes, then you cannot mean emissions, but concentrations?
If you mean concentrations, how do you determine the transport share only?



Technical remarks on the WP3 indicators (cont.)

Problematic:

- What is the **objective** for passenger / freight / vehicle kilometers?
More, equal or less?
 - Without an unambiguous link, the indicator cannot be interpreted.
- Why is there no indicator for the **fragmentation of land**?
 - Unfragmented land is a scarce resource and transport is the biggest pressure.
- Why no indicator on **total energy consumption** or energy efficiency of transport?
 - Energy conservation (not only fuel substitution) is an explicit policy target.
- Why only indicators for motorised transport?
 - This gives a hidden - and therefore particularly dangerous – bias.

Technically, there are many open questions.

That these indicators are the key transport indicators is not convincing.



Commented further reading

Discussing the role and place of (environmental) indicators for transport:

COST 356 – „Towards the definition of a measurable environmentally sustainable transport“

<http://cost356.inrets.fr/>

For a comprehensive indicator set for the assessment of European transport policy:

De Ceuster G., et al. 2005: “ASSESS - Assessment of the contribution of the TEN and other transport policy measures to the mid-term implementation of the White Paper on the European Transport Policy for 2010’.” Final Report to the European Commission, DG TREN. Brussels Oct 2005.

ec.europa.eu/transport/white_paper/mid_term_revision/assess_en.htm

For a proposal of environmental indicators for transport:

Borken, J. 2006: “Can TERM determine the environmental impact of transport? – Reflections on a core set of transport indicators” Invited talk at the TERM Annual Workshop, European Environment Agency, Copenhagen, 21 June 2006.

http://elib.dlr.de/44171/01/Borken_TERM_CoreSet.pdf