

Coherent Territorial Planning Schemes (SCoT)

The Coherent Territorial Planning Schemes (SCoT) are one of the key regulatory territorial planning tools available in France to encourage local elected officials to define a project, a "political" view of their region, and thus pro-actively organise urban growth and sustainable planning.

This long-term view now seems to be essential, especially in the context of climate change which forces a reconsideration of land use choices, mobility choices and protection and management choices for natural and agricultural resources.

Since the French law of 13 December 2000 on solidarity and urban renewal, SCoTs have become the reference strategic planning documents for urban planning and development in large residential zones or urban areas. They constitute project territories that go beyond the municipal, intermunicipal or departmental administrative boundaries.

They conform to the logic of an integrated development approach, ensuring the coherence of sector-specific policies: urban planning, housing, transport, digital communication, commercial facilities, development of the economy, tourism and culture, protection of spaces, landscapes and the environment, including the preservation and restoration of ecological continuities, the fight against climate change and risk prevention.

The context of sustainable development

As for all urban planning documents, the SCoT must comply with the principles of sustainable development:

- principle of balance between urban development, urban renewal, the development of rural areas and the preservation of natural spaces and landscapes;

- principle of the diversity of urban functions and social diversity;
- principle of respect for all aspects of the environment.

Contents of the SCoT

The SCoT contains 3 documents: a Presentation Report, a Sustainable Planning and Development Project (Projet d'aménagement et de développement durables - PADD) and a Guidance and Targeting Document (Document d'orientation et d'objectifs - DOO). The PADD is the policy document which establishes the main thrusts of territorial development for the next 15 to 20 years; the DOO is the technical document which is enforceable against local documents such as the Local Housing Programmes (Programmes locaux de l'habitat), Urban Mobility Plans (Plans de déplacements urbains), Local Urban Planning Plans (Plans locaux d'urbanisme) and Municipal Maps (Cartes communales).

Recent developments concerning SCoTs

The SCoT must, for example, set statistical objectives regarding the consumption of agricultural, natural and woodland spaces. It must also create a link between development and other policies: for example, the SCoT specifies conditions that will favour the development of urbanisation as a priority in sectors served by public transport and also conditions that will improve access by creating public transport services in urbanised sectors that require them.

It is also reflected in new possibilities, such as the opportunity to set quality targets for constructions and development.

Scaling up the SCoTs

The legislator wished to encourage local authorities to acquire a SCoT by limiting the possibilities of urban extension for all municipalities not covered by a SCoT from 1 January 2017. For this purpose, the State set up annual calls for proposals in 2010 to encourage rural territories with limited human and financial resources to draw up SCoTs.

The State also produced a practical guide in June 2013 intended for elected officials to provide methodological support.

