

Regional and State Planning in Germany

Who Plans What?

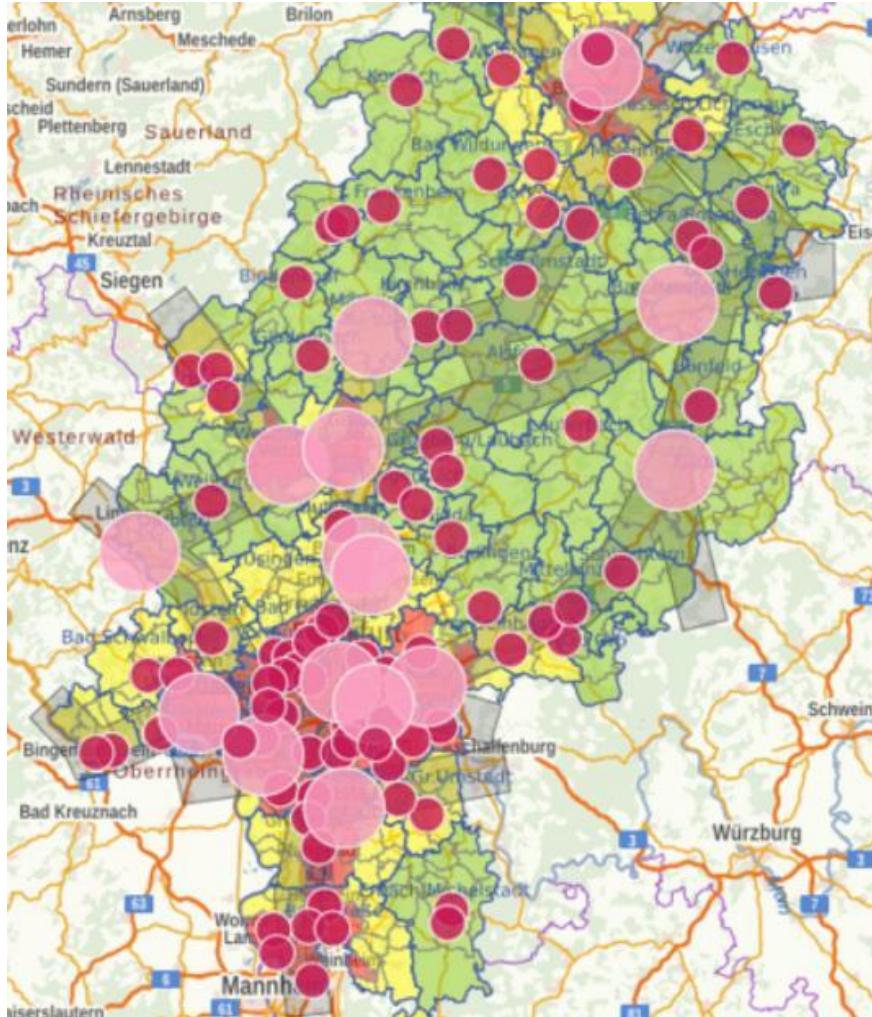
Land Management and Land Use Planning

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GOVERNANCE LEVELS IN PLANNING PROCEDURES

Governance Level	Planning Instruments	Planning Actors	Actors in Participation
Bundesebene <i>Federal Level</i>	Rechtsrahmen / Raumordnungsgesetz <i>Legal framework / Spatial Planning Act</i>	Bundesministerien, Bundesinstitute, Bundestag/Bundesrat <i>Federal Ministries, Federal Institutes, Bundestag / Bundesrat</i>	Länder, Fachministerien, Verbände <i>States, sectoral ministries, professional associations</i>
Landesebene <i>State Level</i>	Landesentwicklungsplan / Landesplanungsgesetz <i>State Spatial Planning Act, State Development Plan</i>	Landesministerien, Landesregierung <i>State Governments</i>	Kommunen, Fachbehörden, Öffentlichkeit <i>Municipalities, sectoral agencies, public</i>
Regionale Ebene <i>Regional Level</i>	Regionalpläne / <i>Regional Plans</i>	Regionale Planungsverbände, Regierungspräsidium <i>Regional Planning Associations, Regional Government</i>	Kommunen, Verbände, Bürger:innen <i>Municipalities, associations, citizens</i>
Kommunale Ebene <i>Municipality Level</i>	Flächennutzungs- und Bebauungsplan <i>Land-Use Plan and Local Development Plan</i>	Stadtplanungsamt, Gemeinderat <i>City Planning Departments, Municipal Councils</i>	Bürger:innen, Fachbehörden, Initiativen <i>Citizens, authorities, civic initiatives</i>

Spatial Disparities in Germany

Why State Planning?

Germany is a patchwork

Types of regions

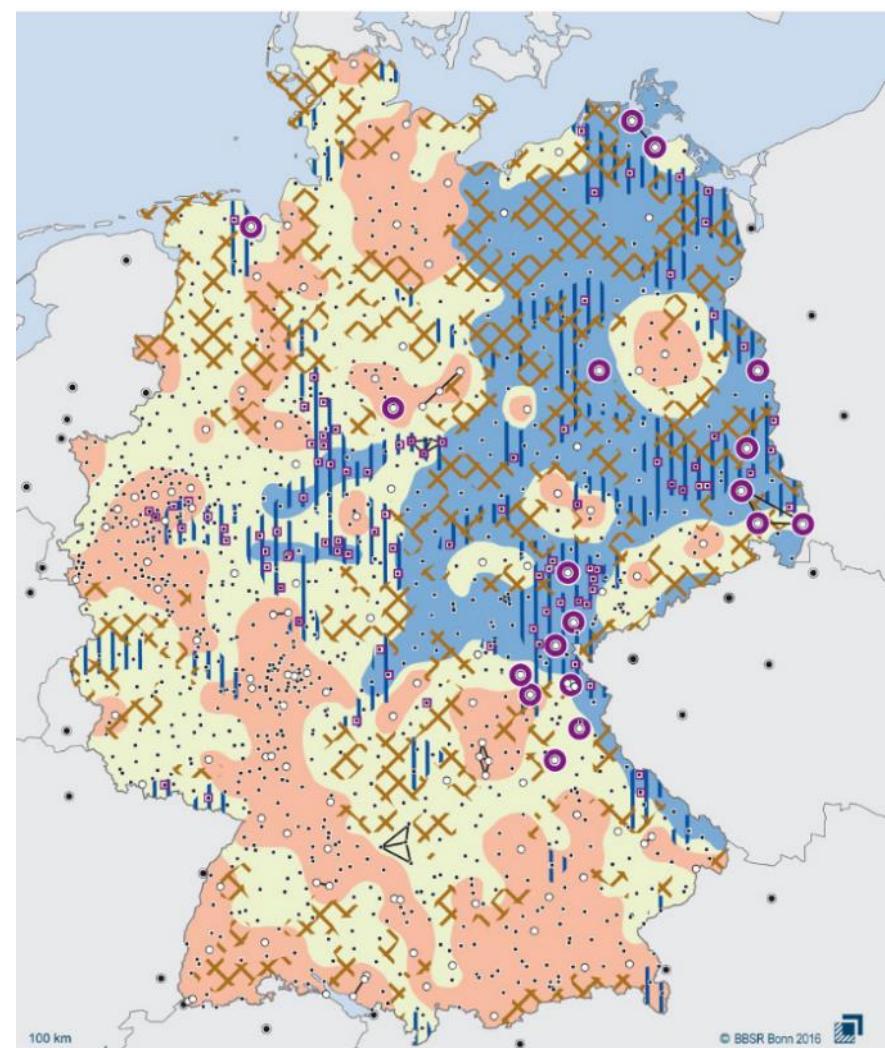
Blue: structurally weak regions

Yellow: stable / average regions

Orange/Pink: economically strong and growing areas

Development doesn't balance itself. Different regions need different planning strategies.

You can't make a meaningful LEP without understanding spatial disparities first

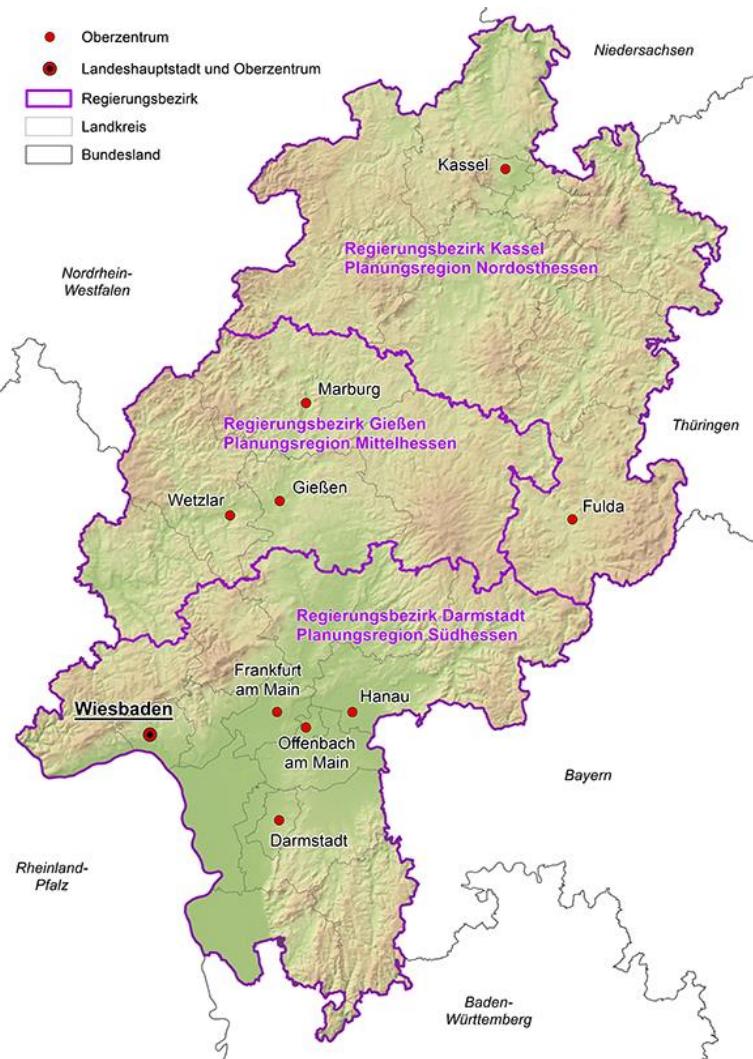


What is State Planning / Landesplanung

The State Development Plan (LEP) is Hessen's strategic response to these disparities: coordinates growth, protects resources, supports weaker regions, and guides infrastructure and settlement development.

What *Landesplanung* IS:

- Looks at the whole territory: cities, countryside, infrastructure
- Decides long-term development goals
- Coordinates between municipalities, because municipalities do not agree most of the time
- Ensures bigger projects make sense across municipal borders
- Makes rules that municipalities MUST follow



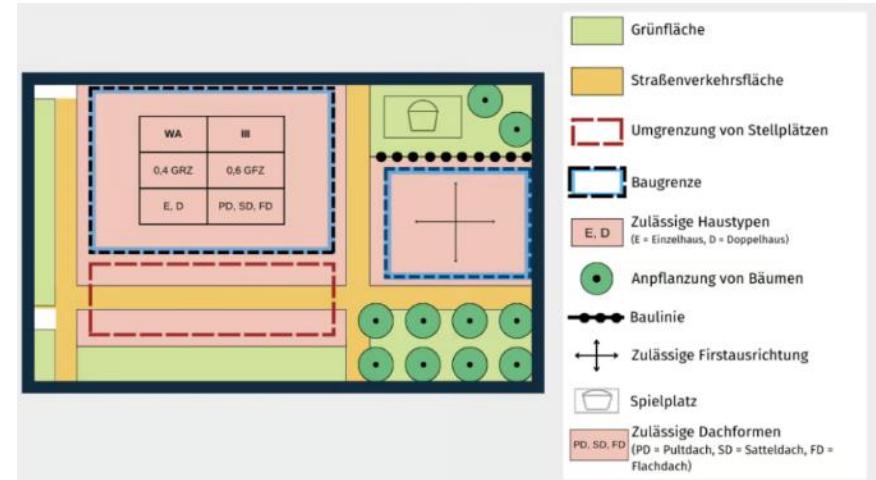
What is State Planning / Landesplanung

State Planning

Defines the spatial development strategies for the state

What *Landesplanung* NOT:

- It does not decide on individual building permits
- It does not make detailed land-use plans
- It does not override federal law
- This keeps expectations clear

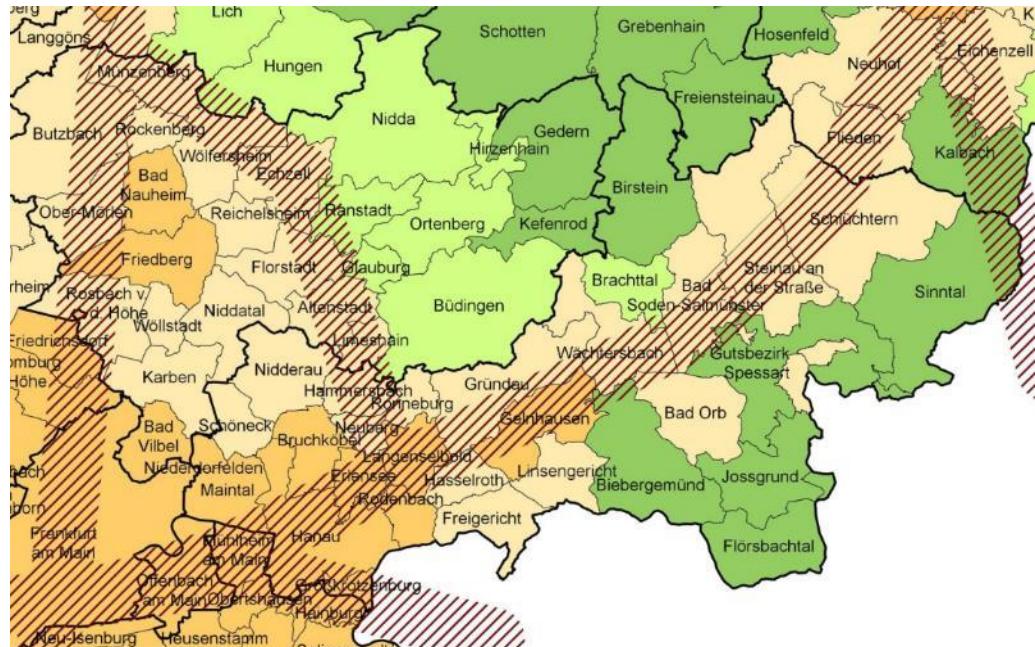


What is State Planning / Landesplanung

LEP-Hessen (Landesentwicklungsplan/State Development Plan)

- The top-level spatial plan for the state
- Covers 10–15 years
- Updated in cycles
- Sets strategic goals that all municipalities + regions must follow

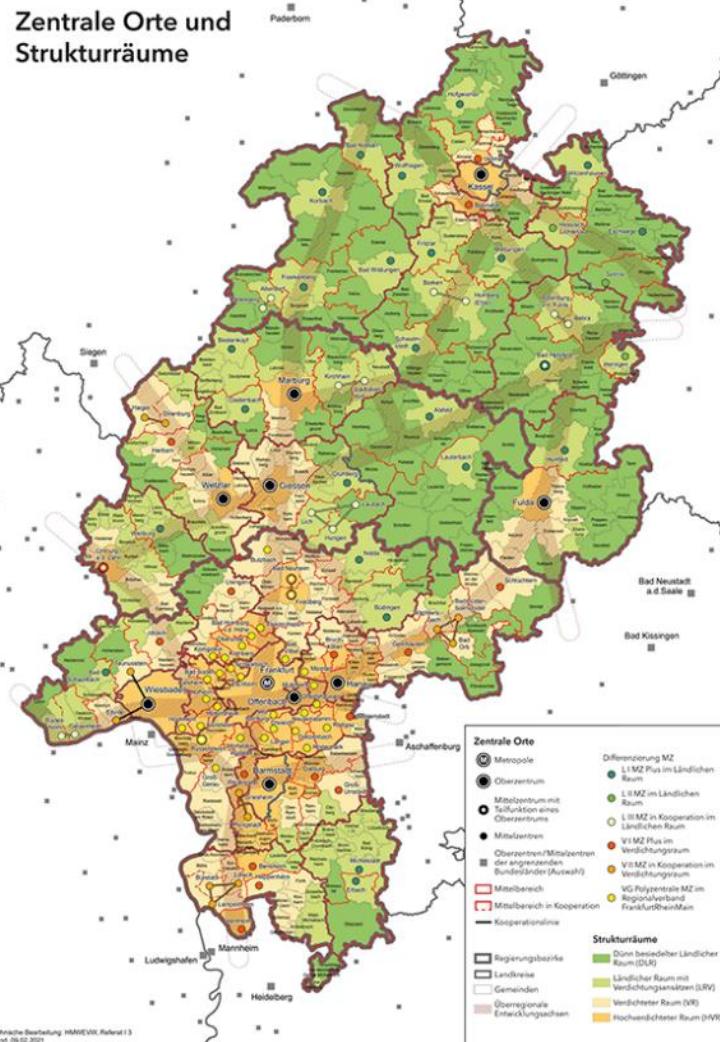
“The masterplan of the State that everyone else has to respect.”



LEP – Hessen (State Development Plan)

Settlement Structure

- Which cities/towns should grow, defining the urban perimeter
- Central places hierarchy - Polycentric development (Oberzentrum, Mittelzentrum, Grundzentrum)
- How development should be distributed
- Avoiding urban sprawl

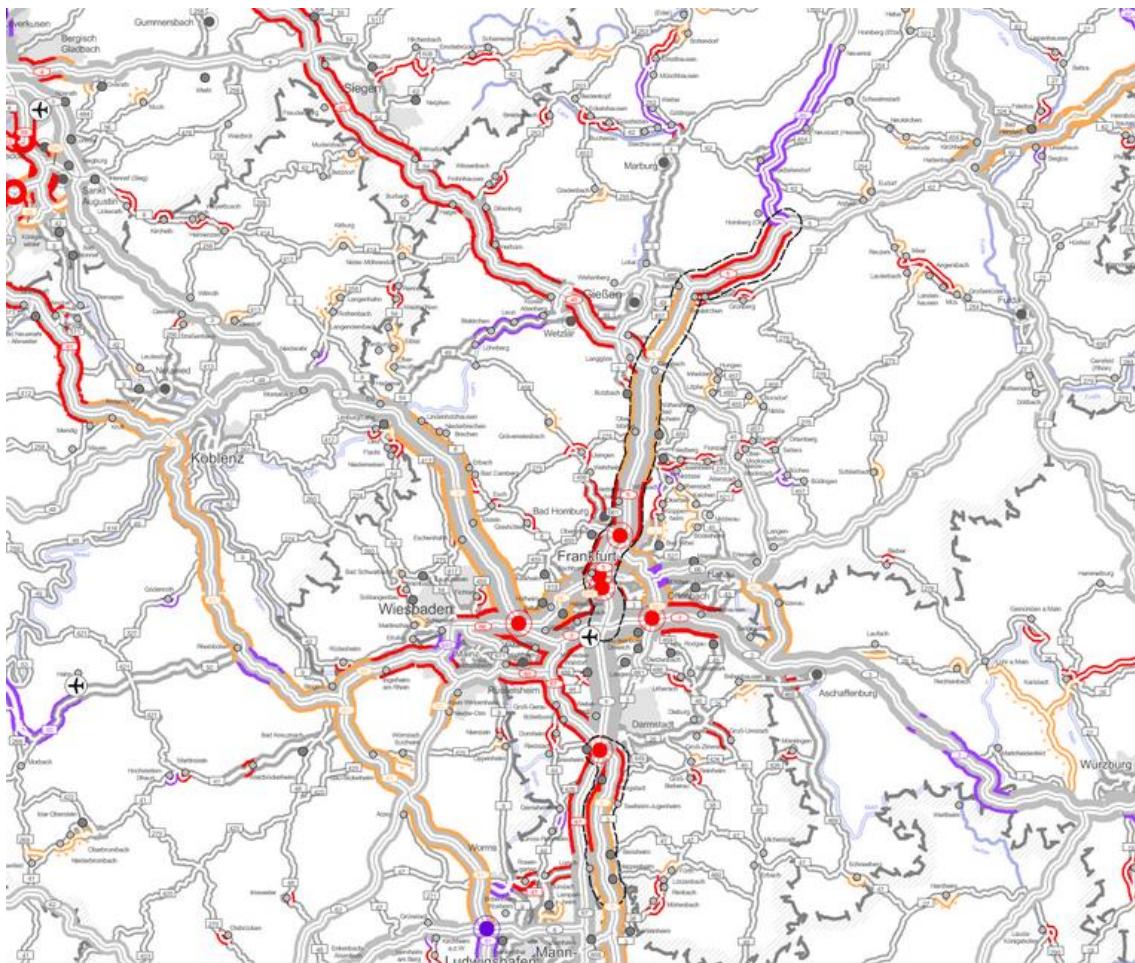


LEP – Hessen (State Development Plan)

Transport Infrastructure

- Motorway (Autobahn) corridors
- Rail corridors
- Logistics + mobility hubs
- State-level goals for road upgrades

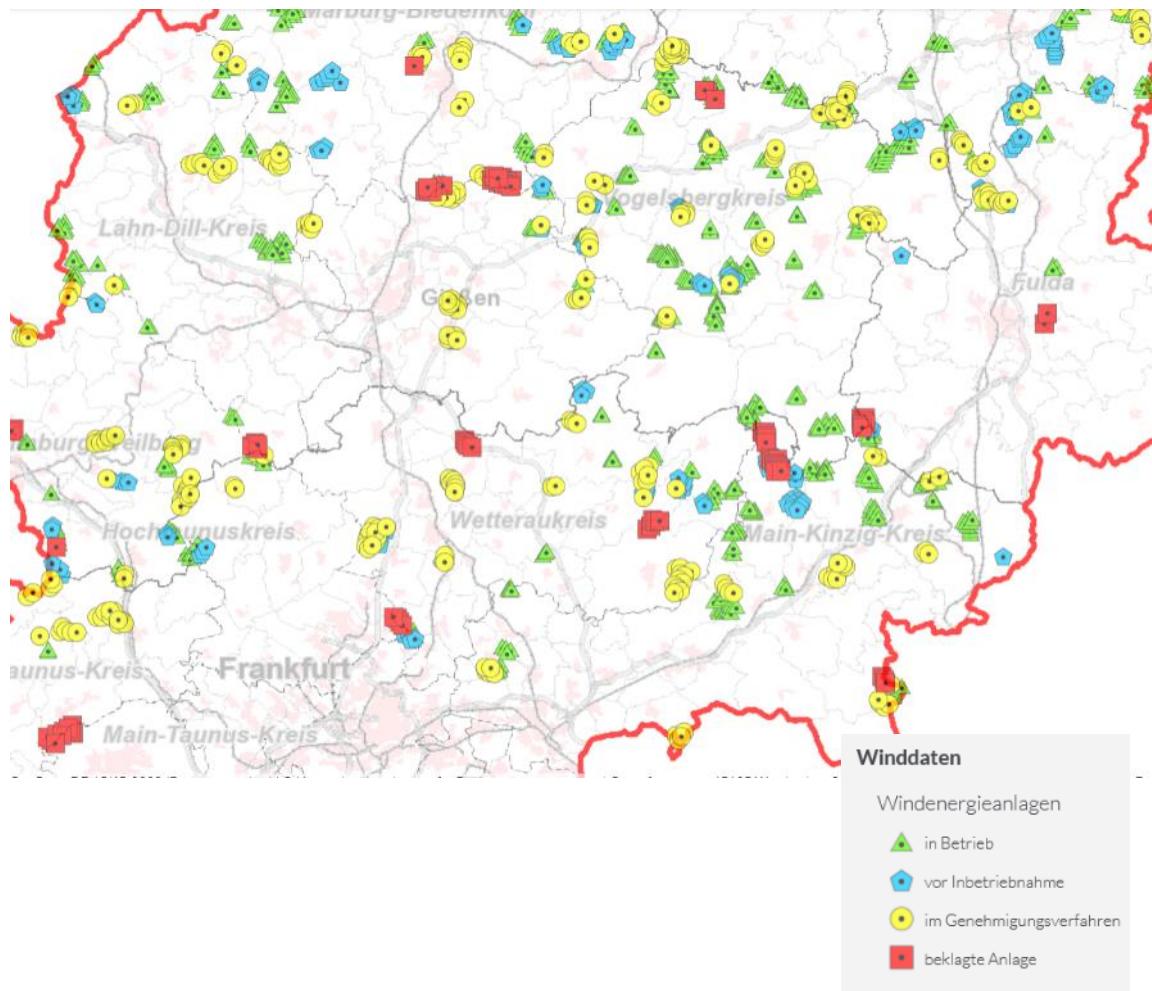
The LEP doesn't build roads; it prepares the framework so regions and cities can plan them.



LEP – Hessen (State Development Plan)

Energy Planning

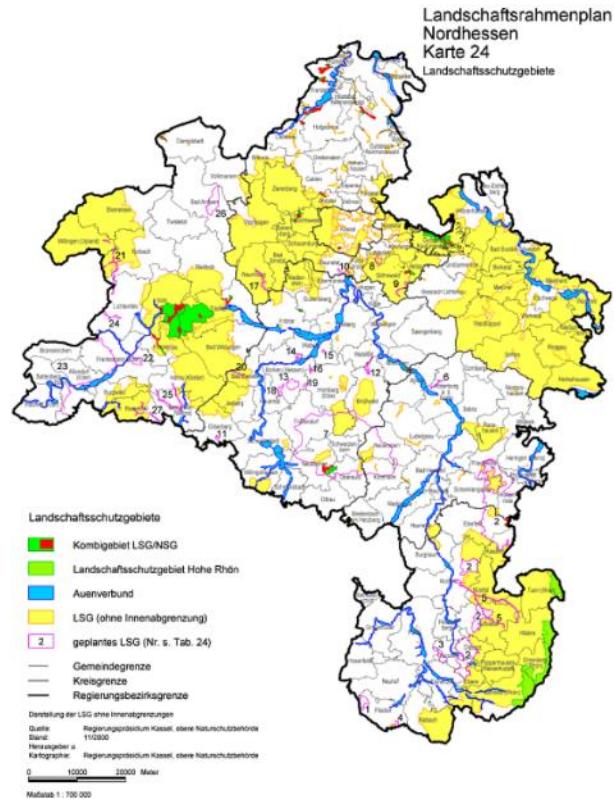
- Priority areas for wind
- Restrictions / exclusion zones
- Rules on distances to settlements
- State strategy for renewables
- Interaction with federal energy goals



LEP – Hessen (State Development Plan)

Nature & Landscape Protection

- Protected areas
- Regional green corridors
- Water protection
- Landscape preservation



State-Level Development Guidelines (Grundsätze der Raumordnung)

Grundsätze are guiding principles that describe the general aims of spatial planning at the state and regional levels. They guide development but do not prescribe a single mandatory outcome.

- Planning authorities must take Grundsätze into account, but they are allowed to weigh and balance them against other planning interests, local conditions and conflicting objectives. Different solutions may be acceptable as long as the reasoning is transparent and justifiable
- Provide orientation and strategic direction. They show planners the preferred direction of development, but they do not force a specific land-use decision.
- Structure the room for manoeuvre within the legally binding boundaries. They guide how municipalities interpret planning aims, negotiate conflicts and justify their decisions.

State-Level Binding Rules (Ziele der Raumordnung)

Ziele der Raumordnung are binding spatial planning objectives set at the state or regional level. leave no room for interpretation; they set mandatory requirements that local plans must incorporate exactly.

- Rule the municipal land-use and development plans
- Have legal force and cannot be overridden by local political preferences
- Ensure consistency and coordination across the territory of Hessen
- Prevent conflicting land uses across municipal boundaries
- Secure land for infrastructure and public interest functions
- Manage growth in line with state-wide spatial strategies
- Protect landscapes, ecological networks and agricultural resources
- Ensure long-term planning certainty for public and private actors.

State-Level Binding Rules (Ziele der Raumordnung)

Examples of the Binding Objectives (Ziele)

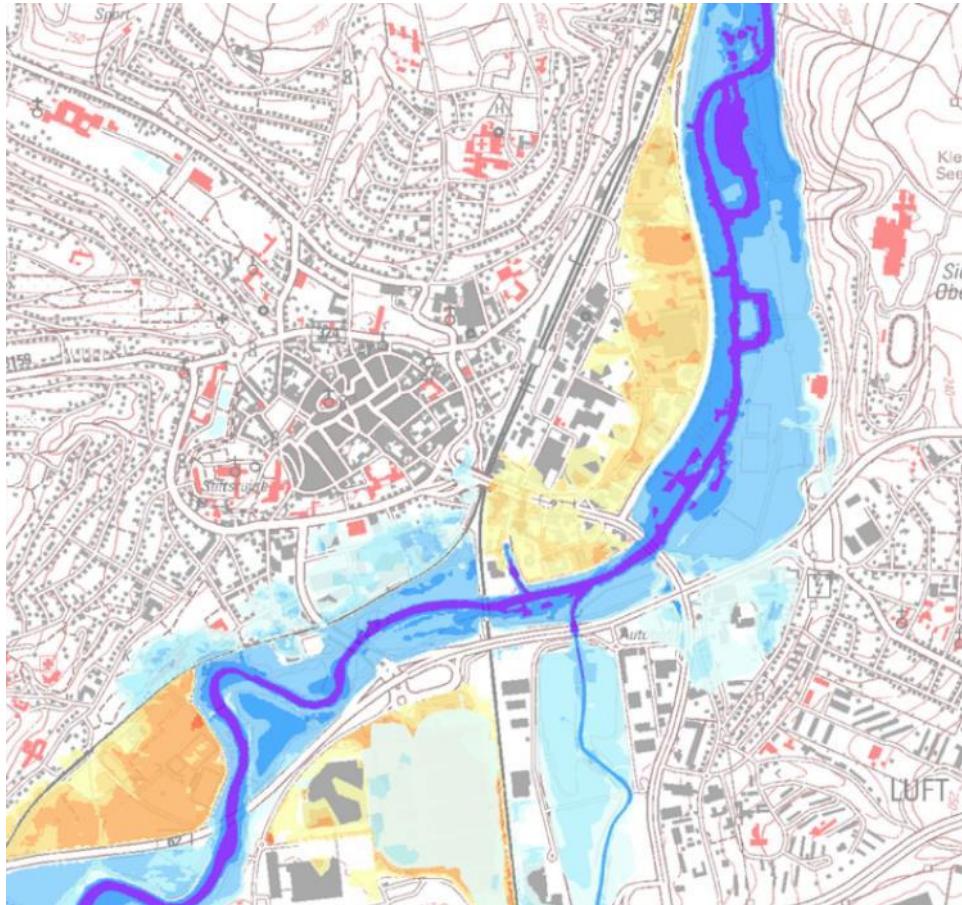
- Designation of specific priority areas for wind energy
- Exclusion of settlement expansion in protection areas
- Reservation of corridors for state and federal transport
- Protection of ecological networks and strategic green corridors
- Safeguarding of water protection zones
- Fixing the central place hierarchy so that service functions and public facilities are concentrated in designated higher-order centers
- Maintaining agricultural priority areas
- Restricting large-scale retail development to specific central places
- Protecting floodplains to ensure flood risk management and ecological stability.



State-Level Binding Rules (Ziele der Raumordnung)

Implementation of the Binding Objectives (Ziele)

- Precise spatial designations on regional maps
- *Regionalpläne* (Regional Plans) provide the detailed spatial interpretation of state-level objectives and define their geographic scope
- Regional Plans coordinate conflicting uses between municipalities to ensure the objective is implemented consistently across the region
- State-level objectives become legally binding for local planning only after they are integrated into Regional Plans with mapped precision
- Regional authorities review local planning proposals and check whether they comply with the mapped objectives
- Any incongruence triggers a formal conflict resolution process



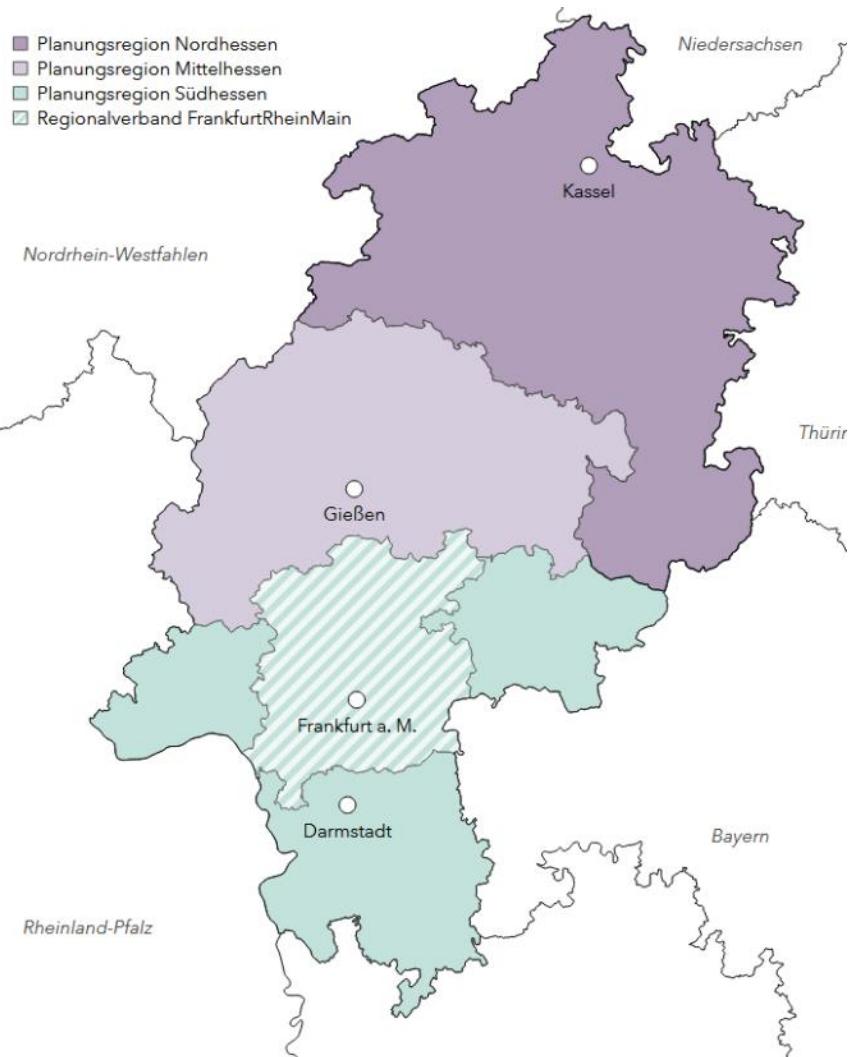
Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

- Regional planning is the intermediate planning level between the state-wide strategy of the LEP and the local land-use planning carried out by municipalities
- While the LEP defines the strategic direction for the whole of Hessen, regional plans translate these state-wide objectives into detailed spatial designations for each specific region
- Regional planning authorities identify the exact areas where state-level Ziele apply
- Regional plans ensure that the LEP's objectives are implemented consistently across municipalities, preventing local decisions from undermining state-wide goals
- They coordinate land-use interests between neighbouring municipalities, manage cross-border conflicts, and provide a coherent spatial structure for regional development
- Regional plans contain both planning rules and detailed maps showing the precise location, extent and boundaries of spatial categories, making the LEP operational and enforceable at the local level
- Municipalities must adapt their land-use and development plans to the Regionalplan, as it specifies the binding spatial framework in far greater detail than the LEP
- Moving from the LEP to the Regionalplan therefore means shifting from strategy to concrete spatial implementation, from broad objectives to exact locations, and from state-wide coordination to regional-level decision-making.

Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

Regional Planning Authorities in Hessen

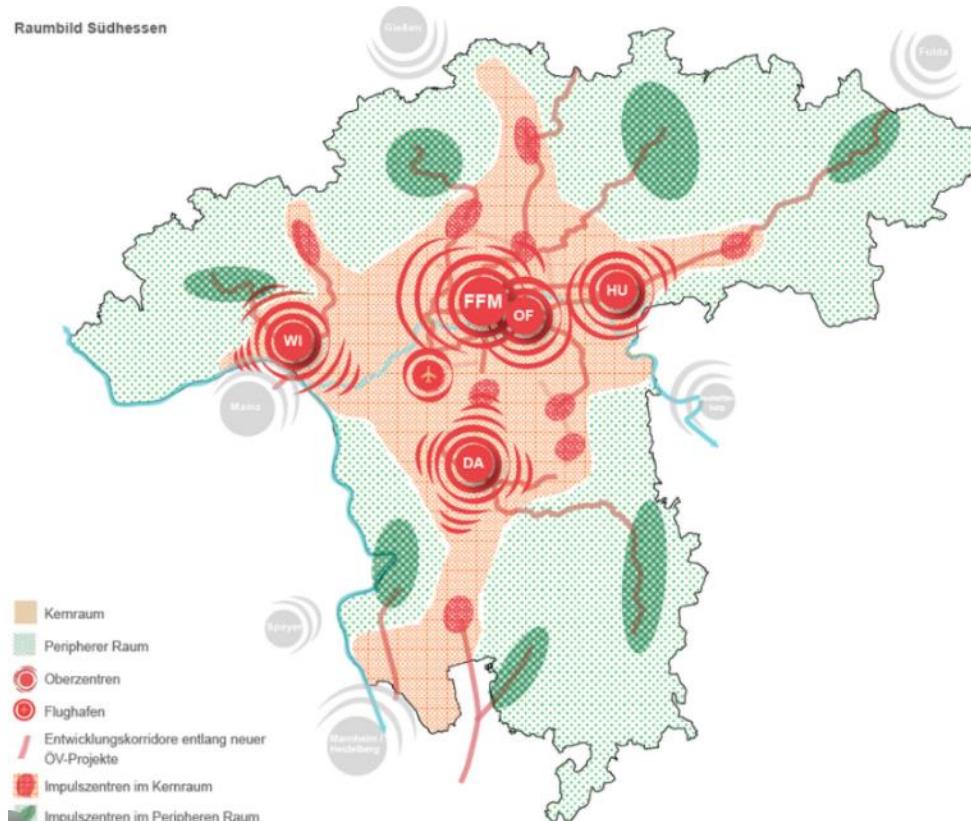
- Regional planning in Hessen is carried out by the three Regierungspräsidien (Darmstadt, Gießen and Kassel),
- These authorities prepare, update and implement the Regionalplan, translating the objectives of the LEP into spatially precise designations for their region
- They coordinate cross-municipal interests and mediate conflicts between neighbouring municipalities whose planning proposals overlap or contradict one another
- They organise formal participation procedures, allowing municipalities, associations, interest groups and the public to comment on draft Regionalpläne



Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

How municipalities must adapt their plans

- Flächennutzungspläne and Bebauungspläne reflect all relevant Ziele in the LEP and Regionalplan
- Land uses cannot contradict a the LEP
- Municipalities may balance interests only within areas not governed by the LEP
- Municipalities must document how each the LEP has been incorporated into their planning decisions to ensure legal compliance
- Planning applications and development proposals are reviewed against the LEP before approval can be granted
- Changes in the LEP or Regional Plan require municipalities to initiate plan amendments to maintain consistency.



Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

Example: Regionalverband FrankfurtRheinMain

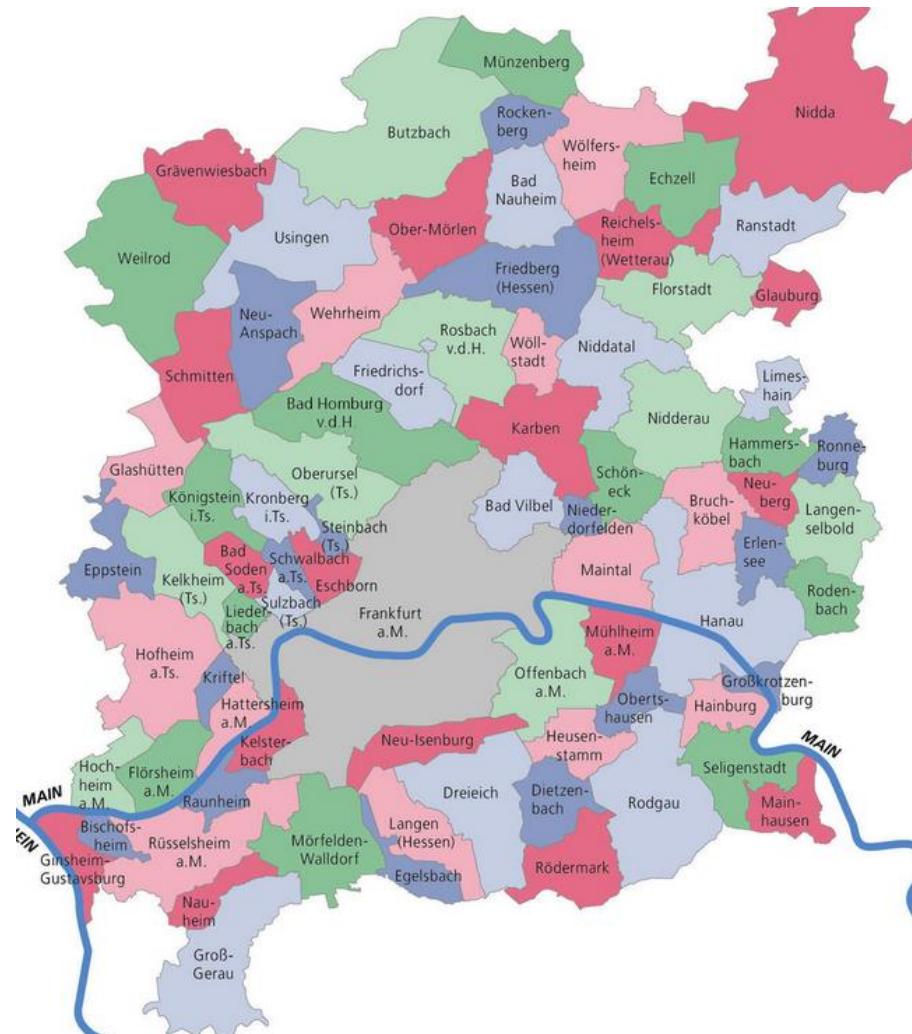
- It is an institution with extended planning powers and a directly elected regional assembly
- Prepares the Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan (RegFNP), which replaces the individual municipal land-use plans and provides one integrated plan for the whole region
- Prepares the Regionalplan,
- This integrated structure ensures consistent planning across municipal borders, avoiding conflicting local decisions and coordinating major themes such as mobility, climate adaptation and landscape protection



Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

Example: Regionalverband FrankfurtRheinMain

- The only region in Germany where regional planning and municipal land-use planning are combined in one institution
- Instead of each municipality preparing its own land-use plan, the Verband produces a single Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan for all 75 municipalities
- Strengthens long-term strategic planning across the entire FrankfurtRheinMain area
- Considered one of the most advanced metropolitan governance models in Germany.



Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

Regional Land Use Plan (RegFNP - RVFRM)

- Long-term land-use categories for the entire metropolitan area, including settlement areas, mixed-use zones, commercial and industrial areas, open spaces, agricultural land and forest areas
- Defines areas for future settlement expansion, specifying where residential development is permitted and where it is restricted to protect open landscapes and ecological networks
- Includes regional designations for large-scale facilities, logistics, and economic development areas that individual municipalities could not plan for independently
- Incorporates data and forecasts on population, housing demand, mobility, environment and economic trends to justify spatial allocations
- Provides binding spatial guidance for municipal *Bebauungspläne*



Regional Planning in Hessen (Regionalpläne)

Regional Land Use Plan (RegFNP - RVFRM)

Advantages

Provides a single, coherent land-use

Consistent spatial development across boundaries
Strengthens metropolitan governance by coordinating
housing development, mobility planning, landscape
protection and economic growth at a regional scale

Improves the ability to plan and reserve space for large-
scale infrastructure and facilities

Supports evidence-based planning through shared
regional datasets

Reduces inter-municipal competition and enables joint
solutions to shared challenges such as housing
shortages, traffic congestion and climate adaptation

Challenges

Municipalities may feel a loss of autonomy because they
no longer control their own land-use plans

Conflicts can arise when local political priorities differ
from regional objectives

Coordinating 75 municipalities with diverse interests
and needs requires substantial negotiation and
consensus-building

The approval process for Bebauungspläne can become
more complex

Updating the RegFNP is a time-intensive process

Questions?