As cities continue to grow beyond their administrative boundaries to form highly connected city-regions with their suburban and rural neighboring municipalities, the management of urban-rural relations emerges as a key policy objective in the policy sector of spatial planning. To what extent do city authorities, when planning for their city’s future spatial development, address the broad set of physical and functional linkages that typically exist within the city-region? How do core cities position themselves in relation to their neighbors? A computer-based content analysis of 256 spatial development policies adopted by 125 medium-sized cities across 20 European countries seeks to explore if and how urban-rural relations feature in planning policy at the local (city) level.

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