

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION GOAL

PART A

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL/FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(A) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

The year 2016 was the first full year of implementation of the ESPON Cooperation Programme and it has been a rather challenging year. From a management point of view, the consolidation of the Management and Control System (with the finalisation of the e-MS system), the audit for the designation of the programme authorities (started in July and ended at the end of year), the first Annual Implementation Report together with the implementation of the other programme duties towards the EC (with first declaration of expenditure from the Single Beneficiary in April and October).

At the same time it was the first year of implementation of the Single Operation. While the setting up of the EGTC supporting infrastructure and internal administrative procedures was progressively achieved the implementation of the activities defined in the first Annual Work Plan could be smoothly kicked off. In terms of implementing the content of the programme under P1 by the Single Beneficiary, first steps were taken to support relevant policy processes. To ensure that the content is taken up by potential users for evidence the deliveries have been organised in a way that the outputs can contribute to and support policy processes in a timely way. Also, the engagement of stakeholders from the early stages of the implementation of activities was ensured to encourage the ultimate uptake at the level of the potential users of the results.

The first 7 applied research projects were launched and inception deliveries received and positively accessed ensuring the production of high-quality pan-European territorial evidence by the involvement of the project Support teams. For example, the inner peripheries and European Territorial Futures activities are expected to contribute to the debate on the EU Territorial Agenda post-2020. The activities on employment dynamics, SMEs, inner peripheries and FDI flows are expected to feed the debate on Cohesion Policy post-2020.

The first Targeted Analyses have also been launched and the analytical results shall be used by the stakeholders who submitted the proposals in their policy-making processes. Approved activities reflects a wider European perspective and the results could be taken also by other stakeholders to inspire regional policies and strategies in their territories. In general, the 6 targeted analysis activities selected in the course of 2016 have already reached a sufficiently wide thematic and considerable geographical coverage. Thematically, they cover topics such as regional and functional urban governance, integrated territorial planning, migration and refugees, territorial scenarios for 2050. Geographically the selected stakeholder cover 21 countries across the ESPON space.

Seven Policy Briefs on key policy relevant issues were published in response to policy demand from targeted stakeholders and key high-level policy processes, synthesising key territorial trends and closely coordinated with outreach activities. For example, the policy brief on Urban Partnership Themes in a Wider Territorial Context showed examples of European-wide territorial evidence that can be used and further developed to support the work of 4 pilot partnerships. The brief on polycentric territorial structures and territorial cooperation supported the discussion between Member States and EU

institutions during the Slovak Presidency on the potential for more polycentric development in Europe by developing territorial cooperation culture and structures and promoting accessibility. The key messages of this policy brief will be further used as inputs for discussion and development of EU Territorial Agenda and European Territorial Reference Framework until 2050.

Additional activities were launched under SO3 in particular the Database Portal, the Mapkits, the Data and Map Updates (notably to update dates related to Accessibility by Sea, Road, Rail, Air and Multimodal) and the upgrade of the ESPON TIA Tool.

In relation to the implementation of the outreach and capitalisation five European outreach events were organised including three seminars in association with EU presidencies and two workshops related to key policy processes. At these events ESPON has been engaging with over 650 targeted stakeholders, raising awareness of ESPON evidence being produced and support tools available and gathering feedback on activities for the coming year. Seminars play a key role in the implementation of Priority 1 as they represent the strategic tool to reach out these target groups.

In addition one workshop and one seminar were organised at European level and the first step for engagement at transnational level was taken with the award of the three-year contract on the transnational outreach support. In particular a workshop on Polycentric Territorial Structures and Territorial Cooperation was organised at the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU. A range of high-level policy and academic stakeholders were invited to attend the workshop. A draft working paper Polycentric Territorial Structures and Territorial Cooperation – a key policy priority of the Slovak Presidency - was tabled for discussion at the workshop and the feedback received was taken into account in the development of the Policy Brief. The outcome of the intergovernmental debate on the subject will be used in the following years in the upcoming debate on a potential European Territorial Reference Framework and the next EU Territorial Agenda. The ESPON Seminar “Where are European cities heading? Evidence for better policy-making” was organised, in association with the Slovakian Government, in Bratislava on the 7-8 December. The thematic focus of the seminar was the current policy process around the EU Urban Agenda as an important framework for developing and implementing better policies and providing better knowledge to tackle urban challenges. Targeted and timely territorial evidence to support the work of urban partnerships is one of the key preconditions for their success. The seminar promoted the use of existing and new upcoming ESPON territorial evidence in policy-making by bringing together and facilitating the dialogue among key stakeholders. The debate also raised awareness of ESPON support and helped to increase the potential usefulness of ESPON outputs by engaging stakeholders in designing the content of upcoming activities.

Close attention has been put during this year of implementation to ensure correspondence of activities with policy demand with outputs correctly timed to policy processes in order to promote the use of territorial evidence in policy practice. This approach will be further improved with a more strategically orientated approach to be applied for the preparation of future activities.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS

3.1 Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
P1	Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach	<p>During 2016 the main objective was to promptly kick off the concrete implementation of the single operation by starting the launching of the actions and activities foreseen for this first year. A key focus of the Single Beneficiary was, therefore, to set up the supporting infrastructure and internal administrative procedures that would allow it. As soon as this has been substantially achieved the first activities were kicked-off. Given the new institutional setup of the ESPON EGTC and new public procurement procedures for activities, together with the arrival of a significant number of new staff members, time for learning was needed and some delays occurred throughout the year. However, this process is now completed and the Single Beneficiary can fully focus its efforts towards the implementation of activities.</p> <p>In order to ensure continuity with the considerable progress made during the ESPON 2013 programme and to build momentum in achieving the Single Operation's overall objective is to deliver high-quality territorial evidence to policy development processes. It was also considered important to ensure continuous visibility of ESPON territorial evidence towards key target groups and give high priority to outreach activities from the outset.</p> <p>All of the key activities foreseen for the first year of implementation have been started. Given that implementation of the Single Operation is in the early phase and activities are not yet completed, no result indicator data is currently available.</p>

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
P2	Technical Assistance	<p>The Technical Assistance during 2016 was focusing on the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •the consolidation of the Management and Control System (with the finalisation of the e-MS system); •the monitoring of the Single Operation and the organisation of the dialogue between the Single Beneficiary and the Monitoring Committee and the implementation of the first quality check of the Single Beneficiary; setting up the PST and ECP network •the audit for the designation of the programme authorities that started in July and ended at the end of year; •the implementation of the Communication action plan; •the implementation of the programme reporting duties towards the EC. <p>In addition, the MA also brought to the attention of the MC, in relation to the ongoing evaluation exercise, some elements related to the implementation of the Project Support Teams and the dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary around the preparation of the AWP for the subsequent year. Both discussions led to a modification of the initially foreseen procedures.</p>

3.2 Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axes other than technical assistance

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators

(I)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2016	Observations
F	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	0.00	
S	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	7.00	
F	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	0.00	
S	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	3.00	
F	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	0.00	
S	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	5.00	
F	OI04	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under S03	Number	8.00	0.00	
S	OI04	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under S03	Number	8.00	0.00	
F	OI05	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	0.00	
S	OI05	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	4.00	
F	OI06	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	Number	20.00	0.00	
S	OI06	Number of ESPON outreach publications	Number	20.00	5.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2016	Observations
		produced under SO4				
F	OI07	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	Number	1.00	0.00	
S	OI07	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	Number	1.00	1.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	2015	2014
F	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1		
S	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1		
F	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2		
S	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2		
F	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	2.00	
S	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc		
F	OI04	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under S03		
S	OI04	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under S03		
F	OI05	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	1.00	
S	OI05	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4		
F	OI06	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4		
S	OI06	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4		
F	OI07	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	1.00	
S	OI07	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	1.00	

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	SO1 - Enhanced European territorial evidence production through applied research and analyses.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
RI01	Number of potential users within selected target groups affirming use of ESPON applied research outputs and results in policy and programming processes.	% Change	59% of potential users within selected target groups affirming use of ESPON outputs and results	2015	Increase by 15-25 % (to increase up to between 70% and 75%.)			No information available yet.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI01	Number of potential users within selected target groups affirming use of ESPON applied research outputs and results in policy and programming processes.		59%		

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	SO2 - Upgraded knowledge transfer and analytical user support.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
RI02	Number of potential users in selected target groups affirming they are satisfied with ESPON knowledge transfer and analytical user support.	% Change	83% of potential users in selected target groups affirming being satisfied	2015	Increase by 15-25 % (to increase to at least to 95% of potential users affirming being satisfied)			No information available yet.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI02	Number of potential users in selected target groups affirming they are satisfied with ESPON knowledge transfer and analytical user support.		83%		

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	SO3 - Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
RI03	Number of potential users in selected target groups affirming use of ESPON territorial observations and tools for territorial analyses in policy and programming processes.	% Change	40% of potential users affirming using of ESPON territorial observations and tools	2015	Increase by 15-25 % (To increase up to between 45% and 50%)			No information available yet.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI03	Number of potential users in selected target groups affirming use of ESPON territorial observations and tools for territorial analyses in policy and programming processes.		40%		

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	SO4 - Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
RI04	Total number of potential users within selected target groups participating at ESPON events.	% Change	50%* of stakeholder respondents currently attend and/or participate at ESPON events.	2015	Increase by 15-25 % (To increase to between 58% and 63%.)			No information available yet.
RI05	Total number of potential users within selected target groups making use of ESPON publications.	% Change	62%* of stakeholder respondents currently making use of ESPON publications.	2015	Increase by 15-25 % (To increase to between 71% and 78%.)			No information available yet.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI04	Total number of potential users within selected target groups participating at ESPON events.		50%		
RI05	Total number of potential users within selected target groups making use of		62%		

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
	ESPO publications.				

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
Investment priority	11f - Strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point(3)(d) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	SO5 - Leaner, and more effective and efficient implementation provisions and more proficient programme assistance.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
RI06	Total number of potential users within selected target groups affirming dissatisfaction with the implementation provisions of ESPON 2020 Programme	% Change	32%* of respondents currently affirm they are 'very dissatisfied' (14%) or 'somewhat dissatisfied'	2015	Reduce by 35-50% (To reduce to between 16% and 20%.)			No information available yet.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI06	Total number of potential users within selected target groups affirming dissatisfaction with the implementation provisions of ESPON 2020 Programme		32%		

Priority axes for technical assistance

Priority axis	P2 - Technical Assistance
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Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2016	Observations
F	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	Number	1.00	0.00	
S	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	Number	1.00	1.00	
F	OI09	Computerised system set	Number	1.00	0.00	
S	OI09	Computerised system set	Number	1.00	1.00	
F	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	Number	1.00	0.00	
S	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	Number	1.00	1.00	
F	OI11	Evaluations carried out	Number	2.00	0.00	
S	OI11	Evaluations carried out	Number	2.00	1.00	Ongoing evaluation exercises only

(1)	ID	Indicator	2015	2014
F	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	0.00	
S	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	1.00	
F	OI09	Computerised system set	0.00	
S	OI09	Computerised system set	0.00	
F	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	0.00	
S	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	1.00	
F	OI11	Evaluations carried out	0.00	
S	OI11	Evaluations carried out	0.00	

3.3 Table 3: Information on the milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018 total	2016 Final target (2023) total	2016	Observations
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros	5,600,000	45,758,109.00		No expenditure declared so far to the EC.
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	0	22.00		Applied researches are still ongoing and no one is yet completed.
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	0	25.00		Targeted analysis are still ongoing and no one is yet completed.
P1	O	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	15 thematic focus papers produced	45.00	6.00	

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	2015	2014
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros		
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number		
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number		
P1	O	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number		

3.4. Financial data

Table 4: Financial information at priority axis and programme level

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Priority axis	Fund	Calculation basis	Total funding	Co-financing rate	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries	Number of operations selected
P1	ERDF	Total	46,207,234.00	85.00	46,207,234.00	100.00%	46,207,234.00	1,229,099.62	2.66%	1
P2	ERDF	Total	2,471,617.00	85.00	2,471,617.00	100.00%	2,471,617.00	147,104.30	5.95%	1
Total	ERDF		48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	1,376,203.92	2.83%	2
Grand total			48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	1,376,203.92	2.83%	2

Where applicable, the use of any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme should be provided (for example IPA and ENI, Norway, Switzerland)

Table 5: Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention

As set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (Model for transmission of financial data) and tables 6-9 of Model for cooperation programmes

Priority axis	Fund	Intervention field	Form of finance	Territorial dimension	Territorial delivery mechanism	Thematic objective dimension	ESF secondary theme	Economic dimension	Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	The total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
P1	ERDF	096	01	07	07	11				46,207,234.00	46,207,234.00	1,229,099.62	1
P2	ERDF	121	01	07	07	11				2,246,617.00	2,246,617.00	144,499.90	1
P2	ERDF	122	01	07	07	11				120,000.00	120,000.00	0.00	1
P2	ERDF	123	01	07	07	11				105,000.00	105,000.00	2,604.40	1

Table 6: Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1. Operation (2)	2. The amount of ERDF support(1) envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations	3. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)	4. Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority	5. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)
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(1) ERDF support is the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

(2) In accordance with and subject to ceilings set out Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS

As the CP is based on one thematic priority implemented by the Single Beneficiary, it is obvious that the MA relies on the information delivered by the Single Beneficiary for the implementation of the evaluation plan and its reporting to the EC. The programme evaluation plan foresees that the Single Beneficiary shall provide yearly a report including the following elements:

- An introduction outlining the rationale, background, coverage and main approach to the Evaluation Report.
- A detailed review of evaluation activities undertaken during the preceding year and methods used to capture data (e.g. surveys, questionnaires, number of respondents etc.) taken together with those of earlier years.
- The results of the evaluation activities vis-à-vis the baseline set in the ESPON 2020 CP and the cumulative progress towards achieving the targets set.
- A commentary on the results of the evaluation process and progress towards achieving targets together with recommendations for future evaluation activities (including any recommended changes to programme management).

Taking into account that the Single Operation has been in full operation for less than one year and that no new results from applied research project have yet been produced, it was considered too early to formally evaluate the results of the Single Operation. As a consequence no evaluation reports have been produced and provided by the Single Beneficiary to the MA yet. However, in anticipation of first research outputs becoming available during 2017, the ESPON EGTC launched a restricted procurement procedure to purchase technical advice on an Evaluation and Monitoring Methodology. The purpose of this service is to ensure that the ESPON EGTC has a proper strategy in place to fulfil all ESPON 2020 Programme and EU evaluation and monitoring requirements. It is expected that with this support a full Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy for all results and output indicators will be in place by the second Quarter of 2017.

Notwithstanding the above, the ESPON EGTC continues to undertake continuous internal evaluation, including assessment of feedback from stakeholders, of the performance of the Single Operation and as to whether progress made towards targets is sufficient.

Beyond the considerations regarding the Priority 1 of the implemented by Single Operation and in the context of the ongoing evaluation implemented by the Managing Authority with the Monitoring Committee as already reported in section 3.1 two processes were discussed and revised in order to improve the implementation of the programme.

The first process is related to the nomination and involvement of Project Support Teams and the revisions led to ensure that at least an MC members is part of each PST in order to provide a follow-up on the implementation of the activities to the MC. The second process revised is related to the dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary for the elaboration of the Annual Work Plan for the following year. An earlier and more strategic set up has been decided in order to allow for the agreement on a strategic framework that should better guide the Single Beneficiary towards the selection of the

concrete activities to be implemented according to the policy strategic objectives set for the year to come.

5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN

(a) Issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken

In the context of Priority 1, given the new institutional setup of the ESPON EGTC and new public procurement procedures for activities, together with the arrival of a significant number of new staff members, a time for learning and training had to be taken into account and some delays occurred throughout the year in relation to the timing of the activities foreseen. These early stage operational problems have now largely been recognised, addressed and mostly overcome and additional major issues have adversely affected the performance of the Single Operation.

In relation to the activities foreseen under P1 the Single Beneficiary encountered delays in succeeding to close a contract based on procurement for external services related to the Scientific Quality Management of the applied research deliveries. The procurements was run twice unsuccessfully. The same happened in relation to the Database portal which procurement had to be run twice having some impacts and on the foreseen coordination of the applied research and the database project. (In 2017 the Single Beneficiary took the necessary actions to overcome the situation).

(b) OPTIONAL FOR LIGHT REPORTS, otherwise it will be included in point 9.1. An assessment of whether progress made towards targets is sufficient to ensure their fulfilment, indicating any remedial actions taken or planned, where appropriate.

Progress is considered to be on track to achieve targets in relation to the output targets and this on both priorities. In particular, under SO1 the first 7 Applied Research activities have been launched and inception deliveries received. In relation to Targeted Analysis Projects during more than 20 proposals were received of which 6 were selected. In relation to policy briefs 3 Policy Briefs/Thematic Papers were produced, bringing the total to 7 published. Each of the Policy Briefs/Thematic Papers was timed to influence key policy processes in order to maximise impact and widely disseminated at events. Under S04 the few events organised registered the participation of over 650 participants. It is not yet known as to what extent publications are used by targeted stakeholders in policy processes. However, it was already considered important to further broaden the range of attendees at future ESPON events beyond those already familiar with ESPON activities. This shall be achieved with the roll-out of the Outreach Strategy and the Transnational Outreach Project in tandem with the increasing availability of research outputs. An Evaluation and Monitoring Methodology will be put in place in parallel with the roll-out of these activities to provide more fine-grain analyses of attendees at events, their perceptions and the use of publications in policy processes.

Since no evaluation have been implemented due to the early stage of implementation of the programme, no measurement of the progress towards the achievement of the results indicators are available yet.

6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (ARTICLE 50(9) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

You can upload/find the Citizen's summary under General > Documents

**7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS
(ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)**

8. PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS (ARTICLE 101(H) AND ARTICLE 111(3) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(B) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

8.1. Major projects

Table 7: Major projects

Project	CCI	Status of MP	Total investments	Total eligible costs	Planned notification/submission date	Date of tacit agreement/approval by Commission	Planned start of implementation	Planned completion date	Priority Axis/Investment priorities	Current state of realisation — financial progress (% of expenditure certified to Commission compared to total eligible cost)	Current state of realisation — physical progress Main implementation stage of the project	Ma
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(1) In the case of operations implemented under PPP structures the signing of the PPP contract between the public body and the private sector body (Article 102(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them

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Any change planned in the list of major projects in the cooperation programme

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8.2. Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans

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Table 8: Joint action plans (JAP)

Title of the JAP	CCI	Stage of implementation of JAP	Total eligible costs	Total public support	OP contribution to JAP	Priority axis	Type of JAP	[Planned] submission to the Commission	[Planned] start of implementation	[Planned] completion	Main outputs and results	Total eligible expenditure certified to the Commission	Observations
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Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

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9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axis	P1 - Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach
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The implementation of the Single Operation during the first year can be considered satisfactory and progressive improvements were noticed. The delay with the implementation of the activities, due to the time that was needed to set up internal procedure and complete the recruitment of the staff, has been partially catch-up. Additional efforts will be made by the Single Beneficiary in relation to the implementation of the outreach strategy towards the concrete use and uptake of the results as soon as they will become available. The revised process towards the elaboration of the Annual Work Plan, in particular in relation to the agreement of a strategic framework with the MC prior the identification of concrete activities, will considerably improve the consistency and synergies among the different activities implemented. The year 2017 will be crucial to test whether the efforts made in this context will pay off and be visible in the results indicators.

In financial terms, the programme has already committed 100% of the funds. The Single Operation is slightly delayed with its forecast payments and the MA is closely following up the situation in order to take the necessary measures to prevent any de-commitment of funds. The designation procedure that will be notified to the EC in the first months of 2017 will allow to start with the certification of expenditure during the second half of the year.

Priority axis	P2 - Technical Assistance
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In relation to the Technical Assistance the revised implementation framework has allowed the reduction of the administrative burden at least in relation to the implementation of the activities financed under P1 under the Single Operation, which are now contracted as service contract. The e-monitoring system has been completed and close coordination has been established between the MA and the Single Beneficiary allowing for a smooth implementation of the Single Operation.

In the context of the ongoing evaluation implemented by the Managing Authority with the Monitoring Committee a revision of the process foreseen for the dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary finalised to find an agreement on main activities to be included in the Annual Work Plan has been implemented. The dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary will start earlier than in the previous experience and will first focus on the main strategic framework for the implementation of the activities for the year to come, instead of focusing on the themes for the applied research projects

only. By this, the MA and the MC intends to link the choice of the specific activities and themes to more strategic policy considerations that should lead to an easier uptake and use of the results by policy maker. This revise process will be used for the dialogue on the Annual Work Plan for 2018.

In general the implementation of the Technical Assistance is processing without problems. The steering of the Single Operation that is done in cooperation with the MC is at the core of the 4 meeting that are held every year and that results in deep strategic debate around the activities to be implemented and their potential concrete use in the policy process with concrete constructive and strategic inputs from all actors involved. In relation to the financial and administrative follow-up of the implementation of the Single Operation, due to the proximity a close cooperation and support has been established between the MA staff and the staff of the Single Beneficiary. This close cooperation is believed to be the key for the anticipation of any problems that could jeopardise the implementation of the ESPON programme.

9.2. Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of specific actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

The horizontal principle of gender equality is not a primary focus of the ESPON 2020 programme. ESPON 2020 has not and does not intend to develop specific activities uniquely aimed at the promotion of gender equality. The reason that this horizontal principle is not pro-actively supported primarily lies in the nature and scope of the programme of providing European territorial evidence and the corresponding strategy adopted. For this reasons no specific actions are foreseen.

9.3.Sustainable development (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development in accordance with that Article

Not applicable

9.4. Reporting on support used for climate change objectives (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Calculated amount of support to be used for climate change objectives based on the cumulative financial data by category of intervention in Table 7

Priority axis	Amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (EUR)	Proportion of total allocation to the operational programme (%)
Total	0.00	0.00%

Not applicable

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the role of partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including involvement of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme

The particular implementing framework of the ESPON Cooperation and its vocation to support and serve the policy process results in a continuous involvement in its implementation of its main stakeholders.

In particular, as already underlined in the previous sections, the representative of all Member and Partner states involved in the programme are closely associated and involved in the strategic preparation of the Annual Work Plan of the Single Operation that is implementing Priority 1. Their contribution support the Single Beneficiary with the identification of the key policy process for which useful territorial evidence can be provided by the ESPON programme to its key policy actors. At the same time, the Single Beneficiary, both in the preparation of the Annual Work Plan and in its implementation, undertakes regular informal and more structured consultation of key stakeholders at EU level such several EU DGs, Committee of the Regions, European Environmental Agency, CEMR (local and regional authorities), CPMR (maritime and peripheral regions), Euromontana (Mountain areas), AEBC and MOT (cross-border cooperation), Eurocities (urban), Metrex (metropolitan regions), RED (rural areas), EUKN (urban knowledge), Purple (peri-urban areas), and MA and secretariats Interreg Programmes.

In addition, consultations have been implemented at national level by the different participating countries. For example, in Austria the members of the national committee on territorial development and spatial planning in the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) – composed by representatives of the federal ministries, the federal regions/*Länder*, the associations of towns and municipalities and social partner organisations - have regularly been informed and consulted about the ESPON activities. In the Czech Republic the National committee for transnational and interregional programmes 2014- 2020 that meets twice a week and in which relevant national partners are represented and can voice their positions on strategic matters concerning the implementation of the programme. A similar structure with the same objective is also existing in other countries, such as Italy and Luxembourg among others.

No additional specific actions have been implemented in 2016, however it is foreseen to have a new Public Consultation in 2017 in the context of the external evaluation of the programme.

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (A) AND (B), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

As the CP is based on one thematic priority implemented by the Single Beneficiary, it is obvious that the MA relies on the information delivered by the Single Beneficiary for the implementation of the evaluation plan and its reporting to the EC. The programme evaluation plan foresees that the Single Beneficiary shall provide yearly a report including the following elements:

- An introduction outlining the rationale, background, coverage and main approach to the Evaluation Report.
- A detailed review of evaluation activities undertaken during the preceding year and methods used to capture data (e.g. surveys, questionnaires, number of respondents etc.) taken together with those of earlier years.
- The results of the evaluation activities vis-à-vis the baseline set in the ESPON 2020 CP and the cumulative progress towards achieving the targets set.
- A commentary on the results of the evaluation process and progress towards achieving targets together with recommendations for future evaluation activities (including any recommended changes to programme management).

Taking into account that the Single Operation has been in full operation for less than one year and that no results are available from applied research projects, it was considered too early to formally evaluate the results of the Single Operation. As a consequence no evaluation reports have been produced and provided by the Single Beneficiary to the MA yet. However, in anticipation of research outputs becoming available during 2017, the ESPON EGTC launched a restricted procurement procedure to purchase technical advice on an Evaluation and Monitoring Methodology. The purpose of this service is to ensure that the ESPON EGTC has a proper strategy in place to fulfil all MA and EU evaluation and monitoring requirements. It is expected that with this support a full Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy for all results and output indicators will be in place by the second Quarter of 2017.

Notwithstanding the above, the ESPON EGTC continues to undertake continuous internal evaluation, including assessment of feedback from stakeholders, of the performance of the Single Operation and as to whether progress made towards targets is sufficient.

In the context of the ongoing evaluation implemented by the Managing Authority with the Monitoring Committee and as already reported in section 3.1 two processes were discussed and revised in order to improve the implementation of the programme. The first process is related to the nomination and involvement of Project Support Teams and the revisions led to ensure that at least an MC members is part of each PST in order to provide a follow-up on the implementation of the activities to the MC. The second process revised is related to the dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary for the elaboration of the Annual Work Plan for the following year. An earlier and more strategic set up has been decided in order to allow for the agreement on a strategic

framework that should better guide the Single Beneficiary towards the selection of the concrete activities to be implemented according to the policy strategic objectives set for the year to come.

10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

In the framework of the communication strategy, limited activities are foreseen under the technical assistance, as the main dissemination of results is done by the Single Beneficiary in the framework of the Single Operation financed under Priority 1. The communication activities that have been directly implemented by the MA are the following:

- an web-based information activity presenting the main achievement of the ESPON 2020 Programme. The information took the form of a direct electronic mailing towards the main target groups of the ESPON 2020 cooperation programme. The mailing included information on progresses related to the policy support of the programme in relation to EU Cohesion Policy.
- the MA web portal has been further developed and the information has been updated in order to include the latest information related to the programme implementation and the implementation of the Single Operation. The pages are provided in English and French.
- the EU flag was display at the premises of the MA.

It was foreseen to develop in 2016 a short leaflet with information on the ESPON 2020 Programme and the available opportunities targeting the general public. The leaflet has been elaborated in 2016 but its production has been postponed to the first months of 2017.

In addition to the information activities towards the general public and the stakeholders of the programmes a series of information measures towards the Single Beneficiary were also implemented in relation to:

- the reporting requirements, reporting forms and use of the e-MS reporting tool (for the staff of the Single Beneficiary);
- the first level financial control: scope, implementation and use of the e-MS tools (for the designated first level controller of the Single Beneficiary);
- risk assessment and anti-fraud measures (for selected staff of the Single Beneficiary).

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 2 (A), (B), (C) AND (F), OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

11.1 Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme

Not Applicable

11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF

Not Applicable

11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

As stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, recital 19, article 8(3)(d) on the "Content, adoption and amendment of cooperation programmes" and article 14(4) 2nd subparagraph (c) "Implementation reports", this programme contributes to MRS(s) and/or SBS:

Not Applicable

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
- Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS)

11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

Not Applicable

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Information and assessment of the programme contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Not Applicable

14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)

Where the assessment of progress made with regard to the milestones and targets set out in the performance framework demonstrates that certain milestones and targets have not been achieved, Member States should outline the underlying reasons for failure to achieve these milestones in the report of 2019 (for milestones) and in the final implementation report (for targets).

Not Applicable

Documents

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent By
ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme Citizens' summary 2016	Citizens' summary	22-May-2017		Ares(2017)32826 28	ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme Citizens' summary 2016	30-Jun-2017	nesereth

Latest validation results

Severity	Code	Message
Info		Implementation report version has been validated