

**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 overall objective during 2017 was to achieve high-quality output of the first ESPON research activities and to promote the uptake of research results in EU and intergovernmental debates on future policies with a specific focus on Cohesion policy, as well as national level policies addressing the challenges of shrinking rural areas, territories with geographic specificities and governance and planning frameworks. It was considered important to ensure continuous visibility of ESPON territorial evidence towards key target groups and give high priority to outreach activities based on the first results of ESPON research.

During 2017 6 of the first 7 applied research activities have delivered final results and the final report will be published in early 2018. These activities have yielded significant knowledge, insights and recommendations related to patterns and trends for employment, SMEs, FDI flows, renewable energy potentials, inner peripheries and territorial future scenarios and supported the debate on Cohesion policy post-2020 by providing evidence for ESPON's European Territorial Review and with some results having been picked up in the Cohesion Report. Stakeholders have reported the use of applied research results in national and regional level policy processes related to the design of regional development strategies, spatial strategies, EU funded programmes etc. The seventh activity on spatial planning systems is at interim stage and will deliver its final results in 2018. A second batch of seven applied research projects has also been launched.

In relation to targeted analyses the first 3 focusing on governance issues have delivered their final reports. The stakeholders involved have been very positive about the outcomes and have noted that important learning points have emerged for the delivery of territorial development, for strategic planning and for developing soft cooperation areas and reported the use of the results in the debate and development of their governance reform programmes. The successful implementation of these activities presents a first important step towards the achievement of the programme results. A second batch of three targeted analysis is now also ongoing and has delivered interim results.

Three policy briefs related to specific types of territories, the digital transition of public services and shrinking rural areas were published in 2017 in response to policy demand from targeted stakeholders (mainly Presidencies of the Council and the intergovernmental networks on territorial cohesion and urban matters) and were closely related to the needs of national governments developing their policies on regional development.

The development of a modern database portal is also under way to support all ESPON analytical activities and is of significant importance for the quality of ESPON's outputs as it will ensure the availability of comprehensive and comparable data. A core database will provide data to all ESPON activities and at the same time data provided by all activities will be gathered to facilitate standardisation and dissemination of the datasets. The target groups for this activity are the research community policy experts interested in comprehensive, comparable datasets and the service providers implementing contracted activities. The database contributes to achieving the results by ultimately increasing the uptake through improving the quality of outputs, which depends on the availability of comprehensive and comparable data and consistent and effective visualisation.

During 2017 the Territorial Impact Assessment tool was updated to include additional functionalities making possible to carry out TIA focused on urban areas and cross-border areas and to capture impact assessments in more detail. The tool will continue to support EU level policy development through an ex-ante evaluation of policy initiatives to make sure that they are territorially sensitive and contribute to improving the quality

of EU level policy initiatives and legislative proposals. The main target group for the TIA tool are the European Commission, the different Directorates-General and the Committee of the Regions.

A new tool also started being developed in 2017, a practical and operational ESPON European and Macro-Regional Territorial Monitoring Tool to continuously observe the development trends and patterns taking place in Europe, its macro-regions, regions and cities. The tool should support European, macro-regional, national and regional policy makers and other stakeholders with territorial information, data, maps, graphs, analytical features and short reports. In the field of tools ESPON started also investigate to what degree new Big Data collection approaches can be used to enrich existing territorial policies and provide more up-to-date evidence in particular for territorial analysis and housing dynamics.

In relation to outreach during 2017 ESPON tried to engaged with a wider audience to reach new target groups such as public authorities, associations, research institutions and private stakeholders responsible for digital and rural development policies thus increasing the range of stakeholders participating at the events to ensure outputs are demand driven and policy relevant. Inputs were received notably on the role of territorial cooperation in support of Cohesion Policy for the Territorial Review and possible paths for the territorial future of Europe for the forthcoming Territorial Reference Framework. A specific event has to be highlighted, the high-level conference on the European Territorial Review, which contributed widely to the debate on the territorial dimension of future Cohesion Policy. The event was part of the European Week of Regions and Cities in 2017. Additional transnational outreach events were organised to serve national and regional policy processes on the issues of governance, northern peripherality and connectivity with the most relevant ESPON evidence. Policy processes and challenges were analysed by directly interviewing policy makers in the run-up to the events and on these basis evidence was been selected in the effort to have the highest possible impact during the meetings of policy makers and ESPON researchers. Finally during 2017 the ESPON website has undergone a redesign process which will allow for more precise targeting of ESPON evidence in order to increase the awareness, use and satisfaction of different target audiences, publications were also redesigned on order to make then more appealing and recognisable making easier the uptake of ESPON outputs.

The delays with the implementation of some of the activities during the inception phase had an impact on the level of spending that is still below the expected level. However, the spending has significantly increased in 2017 and the de-commitment target for 2018 is already achieved. The efforts to ensure the financial absorption of the the funds will nevertheless continue.

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 2017 further steps have been taken towards the achievement of all of the Strategic Objectives of Priority 1. To ensure that the content will be picked up by policy makers the deliveries are organized in a way that the outputs can contribute to and support policy processes in a timely way. Stakeholders have been engaged from the early stages of the activities to encourage the ultimate uptake of the results. Overall the implementation of activities have progressed smoothly and the performance framework milestones foreseen will all be achieved. 14 out of the 15 applied research projects foreseen have been launched and are under implementation and an equal number of targeted analysis have also been contracted (out of the 15 foreseen). 10 out of the 15 thematic focus papers have been produced and the number of outreach publications under SO4 has already be outperformed by 3 (23 out of 20 foreseen in total. In relation to the financial implementation, the absorption rate is now at 8,36% of the total budget of the priority. However, it has to be considered that due to the implementation model with subsidy contract and the reporting schedule, the spending curve will reach its peak only after 3,5 years from the launching of the activities of the Single Operation and there will be a consistent increase of the expenditure in 2018. It is also has to be considered that funds were requested to the MA by the Single Beneficiary but the declaration of the expenditure to the EC was done in the following financial year in order to give the Audit Authority and additional year to prepare for their audit work. The MA estimate that there is no risk of de-commitment, not event in the coming years, for the ESPON 2020 Programme.</p>
P2	Technical Assistance	<p>During 2017 the efforts were concentrating mainly on the steering and monitoring of the implementation of the Single Operation whose second Annual Work Plan was approved in January 2017. From a management point of view, a key objective for the first months of 2017 was the closure of the ESPON 2013 Programme. The meeting of the GoA that approved the final audit report and opinion needed for the closure of the programme took place on 27-28 February 2017. Steering and monitoring of the Single Operation</p> <p>In relation to the Steering of the Single Operation, the focus has been on and in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kick off and coordinate the dialogue between the MC and the Single Beneficiary on the Annual Work Plan for 2018. - Assess and approve (together with the Monitoring Committee) the two Activity and Financial reports submitted by the Single Beneficiary within the year - Follow up of the dialogue/cooperation between PST and Single Beneficiary. - The assessment of the Annual Work Plan for 2018 by the Assessment Committee and its approval by the Monitoring Committee in January 2018 - Implement the Communication Action Plan for 2017 and in particular organised a major communication event in cooperation with the Single Beneficiary

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
		The Managing Authority has, in addition, continued its cooperation and coordination with the Certifying Authority for the submission of the certification of expenditures to the EC which will be submitted by the CA and for the report on irregularities due by the 31 March 2017.

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 - P1.11f

(I)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2017	Observations
F	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	0.00	
S	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	14.00	
F	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	0.00	
S	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	14.00	
F	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	0.00	
S	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	10.00	
F	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	Number	8.00	0.00	
S	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	Number	8.00	1.00	
F	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	0.00	
S	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	12.00	
F	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	Number	20.00	0.00	
S	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	Number	20.00	23.00	Under this indicator we have accounted the European outreach publications, The number of TNO publications was defined only at the stage of drafting the ToR for the TNO service contract and therefore was not possible to consider them at the moment of setting the target for this indicator.
F	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	Number	1.00	0.00	
S	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	Number	1.00	1.00	

(I)	ID	Indicator	2016	2015	2014
F	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	7.00	0.00	0.00
F	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	3.00	0.00	0.00
F	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	5.00	2.00	0.00
F	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	5.00	1.00	0.00
F	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	18.00	5.00	0.00
F	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	1.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

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 - P1.11f.SO1

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2017 Total	2017 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%.)		80%	The 2017 annual value represents a 36% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	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.		n.a		59%		n.a

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 - P1.11f.SO2

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2017 Total	2017 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)		83%	The 2017 annual value represents a 10% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	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.		n.a		83%		n.a

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 - P1.11f.SO3

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2017 Total	2017 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%)		79%	The 2017 annual value represents a 98% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	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.		n.a		40%		n.a

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 - P1.11f.SO4

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2017 Total	2017 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%.)		70%	The 2017 annual value represents a 40% increase from the baseline value.
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%.)		90%	The 2017 annual value represents a 45% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI04	Total number of potential users within selected target groups participating at ESPON events.		n.a		50%		n.a
RI05	Total number of potential users within selected target groups making use of ESPON publications.		n.a		62%		n.a

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 - P1.11f.SO5

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2017 Total	2017 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%.)		n.a	The evaluation of the programme and of its provisions (which is the basis for providing information on the result indicator RI06) is currently ongoing and the preliminary results will be available in September 2018 for discussion at the Monitoring Committee. Taking into account that RI06 refers specifically to the overall implementation provision of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, the MA has not yet available data on this indicator.

ID	Indicator	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	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		n.a		32%		n.a

Priority axes for technical assistance

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

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2017	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	2016	2015	2014
F	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	1.00	1.00	0.00
F	OI09	Computerised system set	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI09	Computerised system set	1.00	0.00	0.00
F	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	1.00	1.00	0.00
F	OI11	Evaluations carried out	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI11	Evaluations carried out	1.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

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	Final target (2023) total	2017	Observations
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros	5,600,000	45,758,109.00	2,030,054.98	
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	0	22.00	0.00	No applied research activities have been completed. An additional 7 applied research activities were launched in 2017, bringing the total of applied research activities launched to 14. The key implementation step to launch at least 14 applied research activities by 2018 has already been met.
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	0	25.00	0.00	An additional 11 targeted analyses were launched in 2017, bringing the total of targeted analyses launched to 14. Progress is on track to meet the key implementation step of launching at least 15 applied research activities by 2018.
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	10.00	

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	2016	2015	2014
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros	0.00	0.00	0.00
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	0.00	0.00	0.00
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	0.00	0.00	0.00
P1	O	OI03	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	5.00	2.00	0.00

3.4. Financial data

Table 4: Financial information at priority axis and programme level

As set out in Table 1 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (Model for transmission of financial data) and table 16 of model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

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	3,864,157.44	8.36%	1
P2	ERDF	Total	2,471,617.00	85.00	2,471,617.00	100.00%	2,471,617.00	362,389.39	14.66%	1
Total	ERDF		48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	4,226,546.83	8.68%	2
Grand total			48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	4,226,546.83	8.68%	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)

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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 eneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
P1	ERDF	096	01	07	07	11		18	LU000	46,207,234.00	46,207,234.00	3,864,157.44	1
P2	ERDF	121	01	07	07			18	LU000	2,246,617.00	2,246,617.00	334,472.53	1
P2	ERDF	122	01	07	07			18	LU000	120,000.00	120,000.00	14,888.99	1
P2	ERDF	123	01	07	07			18	LU000	105,000.00	105,000.00	13,027.87	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

An evaluation has been implemented by the Single Operation in 2017 to verify the progress with the implementation of the Priority Axis 1 and in particular in relation to results indicators.

The evaluation is the first evaluation of Priority Axis 1 and the implementation of the Single Operation and had a particular focus on the activities implemented in 2017. The primary method implemented for the collection and analysis of data related to the five specific objectives results indicators (RI) was an annual online survey. The survey was launched on 21 November 2017 and remained open until 23 January 2018.

The goal of the online survey was to elicit feedback and opinions on ESPON outputs and activities from a wide range of potential and actual users, with reference to:

- the degree to which target groups make use of ESPON outputs in their practical activities;
- the perceived usefulness of the knowledge acquired;
- the level of confidence in the information acquired.

The survey applied several layers of questions: the first is linked to the result indicators and the other layers are designed to drill down, seek insights on and identify the reasons behind the ascertained performance of ESPON.

The ESPON EGTC's email distribution list was used to identify potential respondents and a mailshot email issued to 346 recipients inviting them to complete the survey. Follow-up reminders were issued to prompt a higher response rate. In total, 162 stakeholders responded to the survey, representing a broad geographical coverage of the ESPON space.

Five out of six result indicators defined in the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme reveal that the numerical representation of ESPON's current performance exceeds the defined target values. A particularly strong result has been measured by RI3. The share of surveyed stakeholders using ESPON territorial observation and tools almost doubled as compared with the baseline value. Currently, nearly 80% of respondents affirm using ESPON tools, databases and maps. With a 45% increase from the baseline value, RI5 reveals significant increase in the use of ESPON publications as well. Participation in ESPON events measured by RI4 increased by 40% and reached 70%. The use of ESPON Applied Research measured by RI1 also increased by 36% as compared with the baseline value. The percentage of people being dissatisfied with the implementation provisions decreased by 50%, and is in line with the aimed target value: reportedly, 16% of the respondents have reasons for being somewhat or very dissatisfied with the implementation provisions. The satisfaction with ESPON Targeted Analysis has not attained the target value of 95% as yet. This also reflects the already very high baseline value for this indicator. However, with 91%, the performance of SO2 has clearly improved as compared with the baseline value of 82%.

The evaluation indicates that the annual online survey proved to be a meaningful tool for assessing the annual performance against the baseline and target values and at the same time providing further qualitative insights that can help to explain this performance and introduce corrective and/or preventive measures. The survey applied several layers of questions: the first is linked to the result indicators and the other layers are designed to drill down, seek insights on and identify the reasons behind the ascertained performance of ESPON.

More general questions, which can help to draw additional conclusions were related to quality of outputs, added value and suggestions for improvements. More than 90% of the surveyed policy makers agree with the

statement ‘ESPON produces high-quality outputs’. Breaking this down to levels, the survey reveals that none of the local and European policy makers disagree. More than 80% at regional level and 90% at national level also subscribe to this statement, yet, the results here signal a certain level of dissatisfaction. Better performance but similar proportions at regional and national levels can be observed in the results of the statement ‘ESPON provides added value for policy making, enhancing the knowledge about territorial dynamics.’ While all respondents working on local or European policies subscribe to the statement, there are small disagreement shares at regional (less than 10%) and at national (less than 5%) levels.

Even though the overall performance is good, the dissatisfaction of some users requires further attention and it is clear that additional efforts should be done in relation to the outreach at regional and local level.

In relation to the dissatisfaction of users and the reasons provided for it, the analysis allowed for the identification of a number of improvements, such as:

- Strengthen the outreach of ESPON’s evidence and policy-advice by:
 - employing the “storytelling approach”;
 - continuously developing short reports and communications;
 - using policy language – getting quickly to the point, presenting short-term features on current developments, providing practical advice;
 - increasing the audience outside the ESPON community.

- Develop cross-sectoral and multi-level interactions by:
 - reaching out to sectoral DGs of the European Commission (CONNECT, RTD, EMPL, ENER, SANTE etc.);
 - enhancing links with other EU institutions/ programmes;
 - ensuring follow-up of closed targeted analyses;
 - ensuring participation at local and regional meetings.

- Strengthen the scientific base by:
 - ensuring more scientific rigour – in-depth, critical research, less “quick and dirty”, less politically correct;
 - ensuring more diversity of ESPON players beyond usual suspects.

Overall, based on the results of the evaluation report a series of corrective and preventive measures to further improve the performance of ESPON have been identified:

For SO1 Enhanced European territorial evidence production through applied research and analyses:

- Capitalize on the strong potential to influence policy processes at early stages of maturity (e.g. problem framing).
- Tap the potential to increase satisfaction at regional and national level.
- Engage in efforts to intensify the use of ESPON at local level.
- Advance with quality management for scientific deliveries.

For SO2 Upgraded knowledge transfer and use of analytical support:

- Introduce measures to moderate between the scientific assertions and policy expectations.
- Engage in efforts to increase ownership of Targeted Analyses and provide knowledge exchange networks for policy makers, particularly at local and regional level.

For SO3 Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses:

- Capitalize on the multi-stage applicability of tools to support policy processes.
- Tap the potential to increase satisfaction at regional and national level.
- Engage in efforts to intensify the use of ESPON at local level.
- Capitalize on the strong potential to influence policy processes at early stages of maturity (e.g. problem framing).

For SO4 Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence:

- Tap the potential to increase satisfaction at regional and national level.
- Engage in efforts to intensify the use of ESPON at local level.
- Develop a demand-oriented editorial plan that can create leads and serve new target groups.
- Engage in efforts to translate complex scientific findings into comprehensible policy messages, involving plain English experts and narrative / journalistic techniques.
- Use the website for shorter demand-oriented reports.
- Develop appealing communication products, able to instigate engagement and multiplication.
- Retain the scientific credibility of communication products.
- Engage in efforts to serve sectoral policies including European institutions.
- Strengthen measures to serve target groups who are not likely to attend ESPON events.
- Introduce measures to expand the current scientific pool.

For SO5 Leaner, more effective and efficient implementation provisions:

- Introduce measures to further decrease the dissatisfaction rates with administrative procedures.
- ‘Fairly dissatisfied’ or even ‘Very dissatisfied’ show that there is still space to improve.

This summary is done on the basis of the evaluation done by the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 programme and specifically refers to the implementation of the Single Operation. The evaluation of the programme and of its provisions (which is the basis for providing information on the result indicator RI06) is currently ongoing and the preliminary results will be available in September 2018 for discussion at the Monitoring Committee. Taking into account that RI06 refers specifically to the overall implementation provision of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, the MA has not yet available data on this indicator.

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

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

One of the main issues affecting the performance of the programme and in particular the Single Operation financed under Priority 1 is the cash flow of the Single Beneficiary which was not sufficient to ensure the smooth financial implementation of the Single Operation (e.g. the timely paying of the service providers implementing the activities). During 2017 a combination of measures has been implemented with the approval of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee on 29 September 2017 to reduce the liquidity problems of the Single Beneficiary of the programme and in particular:

- a) an additional advance payment under the Grant Agreement,
- b) 50% advance payment upon the submission of a progress report (payment claim of the Single Beneficiary to the Managing Authority)
- c) submission of progress report (payment claim of the Single Beneficiary to the Managing Authority) every 3 months instead that every 6 months as from 1s January 2018.

During the reporting period the the Single Beneficiary was confronted with two situations of potential conflict of interest in relation to public procurement procedures.

The first case was related to the Targeted Analysis “The Material Cultural Heritage as a Strategic Territorial Development Resource: Mapping Impacts Through a Set of Common European Socio-economic Indicators (CH)”. The Single Beneficiary decided to excluded two tenders (the same economic operation was involved in the two excluded proposals) and relaunched the procedure. The impact has been a delay with the implementation of this specific activity by six months.

The second case was related to the Targeted Analysis “Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region (BT 2050)” which contract has been suspended on 16 October 2017 due to a potential conflict of interest. A final decision on the continuation of withdraw from the contract is still pending waiting for a formal reply from the Luxembourg National Commission on Public Procurements. Depending on the final decision a delay between 6-12 months in the implementation of this targeted analysis might occur.

(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 (including 2018 key implementation and milestone targets).

By the end of 2017 the total cumulative spending declared to the European Commission amount to €2.324.940,74 by the end of 2017, however the declared expenditure to the Managing Authority amount to 7.900.870,51 for the period covering until the end of 2017 and only for Priority 1.

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	Main outputs	Date of signature of first works contract (1)	Observations
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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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Priority axis	P2 - Technical Assistance
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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

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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

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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%

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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

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**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**

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

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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 the implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including integrated territorial investments, sustainable urban development, and community led local development under the cooperation programme

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

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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:

ESPO is developing a practical and operational European and Macro-regional Territorial Monitoring Tool to continuously observe the development trends and patterns taking place in Europe, its macro-regions, regions and cities. The tool should support European, macro-regional, national and regional policy makers and other stakeholders with territorial information, data, maps, graphs, analytical features and short reports. The tool targets all the 4 macro-regions.

The builds up and capitalize on evidence, data, maps and tools already developed or currently being developed by ESPON, in particular, ETMS and BSR TeMo and include the experience of monitoring tools and methodologies developed by other European institutions. The tool is meant to be flexible enough to allow periodical updates and adjustments both in terms of content but also in terms of structure.

Several national representatives and relevant organisations such as HELCOM and VASAB involved in territorial development issues in macro-regions were involved in the preparation. This approach was aimed to ensure the usefulness and ownership of the tool to be developed. The contract was signed by the end of 2017 and more information on its implementation will be provided with the next Annual Implementation Report.

- 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

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13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

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

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**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).

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Documents

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent By
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Latest validation results

Severity	Code	Message
Info		Implementation report version has been validated
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 115.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI06, year: 2017. Please check.