



ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

Annual Implementation Report 2017

Citizen's Summary

Europe, its member states and their regions and cities, continue to face numerous and far reaching territorial challenges ranging from issues linked to demographic change, such as migration, uneven economic development, barriers to cross-border cooperation and environmental challenges. Increasing interdependencies, trade and competition between countries, regions and cities in the world also opens for new opportunities for economic growth and creation of more jobs, which is a condition for ensuring Europe as an important future world player.

Since 2003, ESPON has provided evidence support to policy development. The aim has been to promote and foster a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing facts, knowledge and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors from European, national, regional and local levels.

ESPON is part-financed by European Structural Investment Funds to support a balanced territorial development in Europe that will ensure development in all parts of Europe, including larger urban agglomerations, smaller cities, rural regions and in areas with specific geographic features (islands, mountains, sparsely populated areas etc.) By providing evidence for policy development, ESPON contributes to reinforcing the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and other EU sectoral policies and ESIF programmes through the production, dissemination and promotion of comparable territorial evidence covering the entire territory of the twenty-eight EU Members States, as well as four Partner States of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, and thereby offering insights in the wider context and a possibility to compare and benchmark.

The main target groups include European policymakers, in particular in the field of Cohesion Policy, as well as national, regional and local policymakers and practitioners responsible for territorial development. ESPON activities also target university academics, both researchers and students, and the private sector.

The total eligible budget of the ESPON Cooperation Programme is €48,678,851 for the programming period 2014-2020.

The key achievements during 2017 are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Applied Research Activities: These activities cover a range of thematic aspects important for the European territories identified by policymakers. The Applied Research so far decided are:

- Geography of new employment dynamics in Europe;
- The World in Europe, global FDI flows towards Europe;
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in European Regions and Cities;
- Territories and low-carbon economy;
- National territories facing challenges of access to basic services of general interest;
- Possible European Territorial Futures;
- Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe;
- Financial Instruments and Territorial Cohesion;
- Enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services for territorial development;
- Circular Economy and Territorial Consequences;
- Territorial trends and regional resilience;
- Territories with geographical specificities;
- European Territorial Reference Framework.

The total budget allocated to these applied research is €9,650,000. The first six activities have delivered their final results and they have produced significant knowledge, insights and policy recommendations.

Targeted Analyses: Policy makers from public authorities across Europe can request targeted analyses to the ESPON Programme, directly implemented by ESPON, to receive evidence relevant to their territories and the policy process in which they are involved. During 2017, the first three targeted analyses delivered their final results which were all well received by policy makers. The Targeted Analyses were:

- Regional strategies for sustainable and inclusive territorial development – Regional interplay and EU dialogue (ReSSI),
- Spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas (SPIMA); and
- Thinking and Planning in Areas of Territorial Cooperation (ACTAREA).

Additional 11 targeted analyses were launched in 2017 to serve a wide range of stakeholders from city councils, municipalities, metropolitan cities, regions, planning institutes and departments and federal ministries and agencies for spatial development across Europe. Selected themes and geographies include protected areas and biodiversity; migration and refugees; the Baltic Sea Region; the Alpine Space; digital health; cultural heritage; cross-border public services; cross-border cooperation; interactions between land and sea; big data and transport; and linkages between urban and rural areas.

Policy Briefs: Policy Briefs/Thematic Papers represent another key means through which the ESPON support policy processes. During 2017 ESPON produced and published three Policy Briefs. The first addresses *Specific types of territories in Europe -coastal areas, islands, mountains and sparsely populated regions-* and offers insights on key development patterns of these territories and key messages for policy-

makers designing and implementing development strategies specifically tailored to the needs of these places.

The second focusses on *Rural regions in Europe* by identifying shrinking rural regions and their location in Europe, exploring key development challenges and opportunities, examining some policy responses using case study examples and present some emerging policy recommendations at European, national and sub-national levels.

The third one investigates the *Territorial and urban dimensions of the digital transition* of public services and provides European, national, regional and urban authorities and offers an understanding about the level of digitalisation of public services in Europe that can be used as a learning and benchmarking tool to design future actions.

Tools for Territorial Analyses: A key feature of the ESPON is to make the evidence accessible to policymakers and citizens. Therefore, the ESPON is continuously striving to produce interactive online maps, which can be updated and interrogated by policy practitioners and citizens. During 2017, the ESPON made significant progress and new maps have been published in the ESPON's MapFinder on themes such as population, renewable energy, unemployment, investments in R&D and broadband connectivity. ESPON is also developing tools to support access to data as well as policy development and monitoring.

In terms of **Outreach** during 2017 four main events were organised: two conferences and two seminars. The conferences related to the presentation of the publication "European Territorial Review" and was part of the European Week of Regions and Cities and a second conference addressed the achievements of the first 15 years of implementation of the ESPON Programme and how ESPON should evolve in the future. The two seminars, organised in cooperation with the Maltese and Estonian Presidency of the Council, and focused on "Revealing territorial potentials and shaping new policies" and "Transforming Territorial Thinking through Digitalisation".

Finally, to reach all its target groups and to enhance its visibility towards the citizens, ESPON has *redesigned its website at www.espon.eu*. The website is being kept updated continuously with news, activities, events, publications and so on. A number of newsletters were sent as well and the activities implemented during 2017 were disseminated via social media.

In relation to the management of the programme no major issues are to be mentioned at programme level. Taking into account the peculiarity of the ESPON Programme with one single priority and one single beneficiary, its implementation is rather smooth. The specific anti-fraud measures implemented at programme level include, in particular, a very closed follow up of the single operation and a multi-level quality assurance for each procurement financed by the ESPON 2020 programme, which is the main risk area identified.

Additional information on the ESPON 2020 can be found in the programme informative leaflet downloadable [here](#) and on the Managing Authority website at www.dat.public.lu/espon2020_cooperation_programme/index.html

Detailed information on the activities implemented in the framework of the ESPON 2020 programme, including the intermediate and final results of Applied Research and Targeted Analysis, the Tools and all publications are available under www.espon.eu.