Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, Luxembourg
ESPON Managing Authority

Version 22 October 2026

ESPON 2030 Monitoring Committee
Decision Notes

18 September 2026, 09h00-18h00
Zagreb, Croatia

Welcome by the Chair (Ireland)

The Chair welcomed the participants. The new member from MT was introduced, and the Managing Authority confirmed the quorum.

1. Agreement on the Agenda

The Monitoring Committee approved the agenda without additional points. The Managing Authority informed the Committee that FI delegated its voting rights to EE and SK to CZ.

Session without the ESPON EGTC

2. General Management Provisions for the ESPON 2030 Programme

2.1. ESPON MA Info note on management

The MC took note of the information provided by the Managing Authority on signed partnership agreements, the transfer of national contributions and payments to the Single Beneficiary.

2.2. Follow-up on the quality check and progress report

The MC took note that the follow-up to the latest quality check remains outstanding, as the EGTC has not yet submitted the checklist explaining how the revised procurement control procedures will be implemented, including how independence and sufficient expertise will be ensured. The MA will address this point with the EGTC at the next coordination meeting. The MC also took note that Progress Report 19 was approved through written procedure, and payment was made on 14 September 2026, while Progress Report 20 is expected in October 2026.

The discussion highlighted concerns about occurred findings and the operation of the liability mechanism. The MA explained that potential claims would be assessed in light

of whether costs could be recovered from other sources. Further explanations will be provided at the next MC meeting in Cork.

2.3. Information on the audit of the Single Operation

The MC took note of the Audit Authority's annual control report. The recommendations highlighted the need to publish contract award notices on time and to maintain an adequate internal backup system for monitoring deadlines.

Session with the ESPON EGTC

2.4. Feedback regarding point 2.2. and the 2.3. to the ESPON EGTC

The MC noted that the EGTC paper on the participation of economic operators, circulated on 16 September, would be postponed to the next meeting to allow sufficient time for review. The next MC meeting will also follow up on the liability mechanism and on actions taken by the EGTC.

3. Single Operation: implementation status

3.1 Overall progress: global performance figures, the stock of activities

3.2 Management risks

The MC took note of the overview of the Single Operation, including overall performance, the current portfolio of activities, new evidence production in scoping, ongoing research and procurement progress, and management risks. The discussion paper on participation of economic operators was postponed for consideration at the next meeting.

Following feedback from Belgium on FORTYS, the EGTC will strengthen the territorial perspective, better connect analyses with the territorial vision and communication, and ensure that results are accessible to a broader audience.

The EGTC encouraged ECPs to submit plans for the next one to two years, and MC members were asked to check that monitoring-system information is uploaded.

4. Single Operation: planned implementation actions

The MC discussed the use for the remaining evidence-production budget, as well as the potential to synthesise existing ESPON evidence to support the preparation of the next programme.

The MA and EGTC will prepare a strategic paper for the November MC, setting out possible purposes and approaches for synthesis, their implications, advantages, disadvantages and risks. to be reflected in the 2027 global plan for evidence and knowledge-development activities.

4.1 New evidence production activities

ERP INFRAEDGE: Mapping Spatial Footprint of Europe's Data Infrastructure

The MC supported the scoping note, subject to the relevant issues being reflected in the Terms of Reference. MC members were invited to provide voluntary assistance in drafting the service specification.

CPS-LINK: Cross-border Public Services and Functional Integration

The MC approved the scoping note with some reflection for the further elaboration of the project description The European Commission referred to its strategy for EU coastal communities as relevant context.

COMPASS 2.0: Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe

The MC approved the scoping note with some reflections for the further elaboration of the project description. The extent of metropolitan and local-level analysis will be considered in light of the available budget and timeframe.

4.2 Upcoming knowledge development events by the EGTC and the ECPs

4.3 ESPON Seminar in Cork

4.4 Timetable on interaction with the MC

4.5 Involvement of MC members and ECPs in ESPON activities

The MC took note of the information presented on upcoming knowledge-development events, the draft programme for the ESPON Seminar in Cork, the timetable for interaction with the MC, and the involvement of MC members and ECPs in ESPON activities. No additional questions or comments were raised.

5. Update on ESPON Contact Points

5.1 Information on nomination and contracting. Status of ECP work plans and grant spending

5.2 Debriefing on the follow-up measures implemented to accelerate the spending of ECP grants

The MC took note of the update on ECP nominations and contracting, work plans and grant spending, and measures introduced to accelerate the use of ECP grants. No additional questions or comments were raised.

6. Developments in Territorial Cohesion, Urban Policy and Cohesion Policy including Presidency programmes relevant for ESPON 2030 Programme

The MC took note of the Irish Presidency's priorities on competitiveness, values and security, with a territorial focus on cohesion and competitiveness, the green energy transition, industrial growth and territorial competitiveness. The ESPON Seminar in Cork will address territorial cohesion and competitiveness, including the territorial implications of renewable energy. Upcoming Presidency events and ESPON Week in Cork, scheduled for 9–13 November, were also presented.

The MC took note that the Lithuanian Presidency will focus on spatial resilience and that a dedicated ESPON study is being procured, with interim results expected to be

discussed at relevant meetings and presented at the ESPON Seminar in June 2027. The Greek Presidency intends to focus on the Blue Economy, insularity and rural development; the timing and location of its ESPON seminar remain to be confirmed.

The European Commission provided an update on priorities following the State of the Union address, including competitiveness, social inclusion and housing, security and defence, climate and resilience, and democracy and the rule of law. The MC took note of recent and forthcoming territorial initiatives, including the EU Strategy for Islands, the strategy for the EU outermost regions, the strategy for regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, the forthcoming Right to Stay Strategy and the 10th Cohesion Report.

7. Timetable MC/MA

The MC discussed and approved the updated timetable for meetings and programme activities. The ESPON Seminar under the Lithuanian Presidency is planned for Kaunas. The timing and location of the Greek Presidency activities and ESPON Week in the second half of 2027 remain under discussion.

8. AOB

The MC took note of the online ECP seminar on artificial intelligence scheduled for 28 October.MA will consider a workshop on management and evidence-production needs during the current programming period. The MA will circulate MC documents earlier than two weeks before the next meeting to allow more time for preparation.