



ESPON 2020
Draft Cooperation Programme:
Summary Report of the Outcome of the
Consultation Process

FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction

The European Code of Conduct on the Partnership Principle requires all Member States and Managing Authorities responsible for spending EU structural and investment funds to facilitate the sharing of information, experience, results and good practices in the 2014-2020 programming period, and so help to ensure that this money is spent effectively. Partnership, a key principle of the management of European Union funds, implies close cooperation between public authorities at national, regional and local levels in the Member States and with the private sector and other interested parties.

In the preparation of programmes, the Code of Conduct (Article 8) requires that Managing Authorities provide partners with adequate information and sufficient time for a proper consultation process, and in particular concerning:

- The analysis and identification of needs.
- The definition or selection of priorities and related specific objectives.
- The allocation of funding.
- The definition of programme specific indicators.
- The implementation of the horizontal principles as defined in Articles 7 and 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.
- The composition of the monitoring committee.

The Code of Conduct establishes the common basic principles that Programming and Programme and Bodies must apply but also leaves flexibility to Member States to organise the precise practical details for involving relevant partners in the different stages of the programming.

In this context, the Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, which has been developed in consultation with the ESPON Member and Partner States together with the European Commission over the past two years, was published for public consultation between the **4th of March 2013 and the 2nd of April 2014**. The Draft Cooperation Programme identifies the needs

of the ESPON 2020 programme; the selected priorities and related specific objectives; the allocation of funding; the programme specific indicators; and, all of the other requirements to be included in Cooperation Programme under the European Territorial Cooperation goal.

2. Process and General Approach to Stakeholder Consultation

The general approach adopted by the Joint Working Group and designated ESPON Managing Authority (MA) was to ensure maximum transparency and participation in the shaping of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme and to ensure that partners had adequate information and sufficient time to be effectively involved in the process.

As discussed above, a detailed process has been ongoing through a Joint Working Group with the ESPON Member and Partner states and the European Commission, assisted by an independent ex-ante evaluation, to prepare and produce the ESPON 2020 Draft Cooperation Programme.

This wider public consultation process involved three distinct elements:

1. **Online questionnaire survey:** The Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme was published online together with an online questionnaire. A total of 185 responses were received from stakeholders across Europe. A further 5 responses were received directly via email.
2. **National events/consultations held in the Member and Partner States:** Where obliged by national legislation, individual Member and Partner States undertook country specific consultations in accordance with their own national legislative procedures. 6 countries held country specific consultations.
3. **EU-level consultation:** The ESPON MA held a briefing on the Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme in Brussels on the 27th of March 2014 with other EU programmes (e.g. Committee of the Regions, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions etc). A total of 7 organisations were represented at the briefing and provided feedback on the Draft Cooperation Programme.

A summary of these three elements of the ESPON 2020 consultation process is provided in the following sections.

3. Online Questionnaire Survey

3.1 Overview

The online survey was launched on the ESPON website on the 4th of March 2013 and remained open until the 2nd of April 2014. The launch of the survey was accompanied by a direct email to over 4,000 stakeholders on the ESPON contacts database informing them of the consultation process and inviting them to participate. Member and Partner States were also encouraged to widely publicise the launch of the consultation in their respective countries, including by making use of ESPON Contact Points. Many Member and Partner States made voluntary efforts to helpfully direct national stakeholders to the ESPON online questionnaire.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the questionnaire was designed to elicit specific feedback from respondents on the three core elements of the Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme as follows:

- Strategy for the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, including needs, challenges and target groups.
- The specific objectives of the Cooperation Programme under Priority Axis 1 together with the actions and activities to be supported for each of the specific objectives.
- The allocation of funding between each of the specific objectives.

In addition, respondents were asked a range of other questions regarding their stakeholder status, location, previous and proposed future involvement in ESPON etc in order to facilitate a more detailed analysis of the comments received (See Annex 1 for copy of the questionnaire). The questionnaire provided a combination of ‘tick-box’ questions, to enable a full quantitative evaluation of responses, and ‘open’ questions where respondents were invited to provide a qualitative response.

Overall, 185 responses were received from 29 countries and which provide a rich source of information to help shape the content of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme and guide the subsequent implementation of the programme¹. The country of origin of each of the submissions is illustrated in Figure 1. A complete record of all of the responses received from the online questionnaire is provided in Annex 2. A further 5 responses were received directly via email (see Annex 3). These responses have been examined and their content captured in this report



Figure 1: Country of Origin of each of the Online Responses Received

The largest number of responses was received from the ‘University, Knowledge/Research Institutes’ category (39%) followed by ‘Regional Public Authority’ (12%) and ‘National Public Authority’ (10%). However, overall approximately 60% of responses were received from policymakers as opposed to 40% from researchers (see Figure 2). A summary overview of the

¹ A further 5 responses were received directly via email. These responses have been examined and their content captured in this report.

responses and commentary received in respect of each of the key elements of the online survey are provided below.

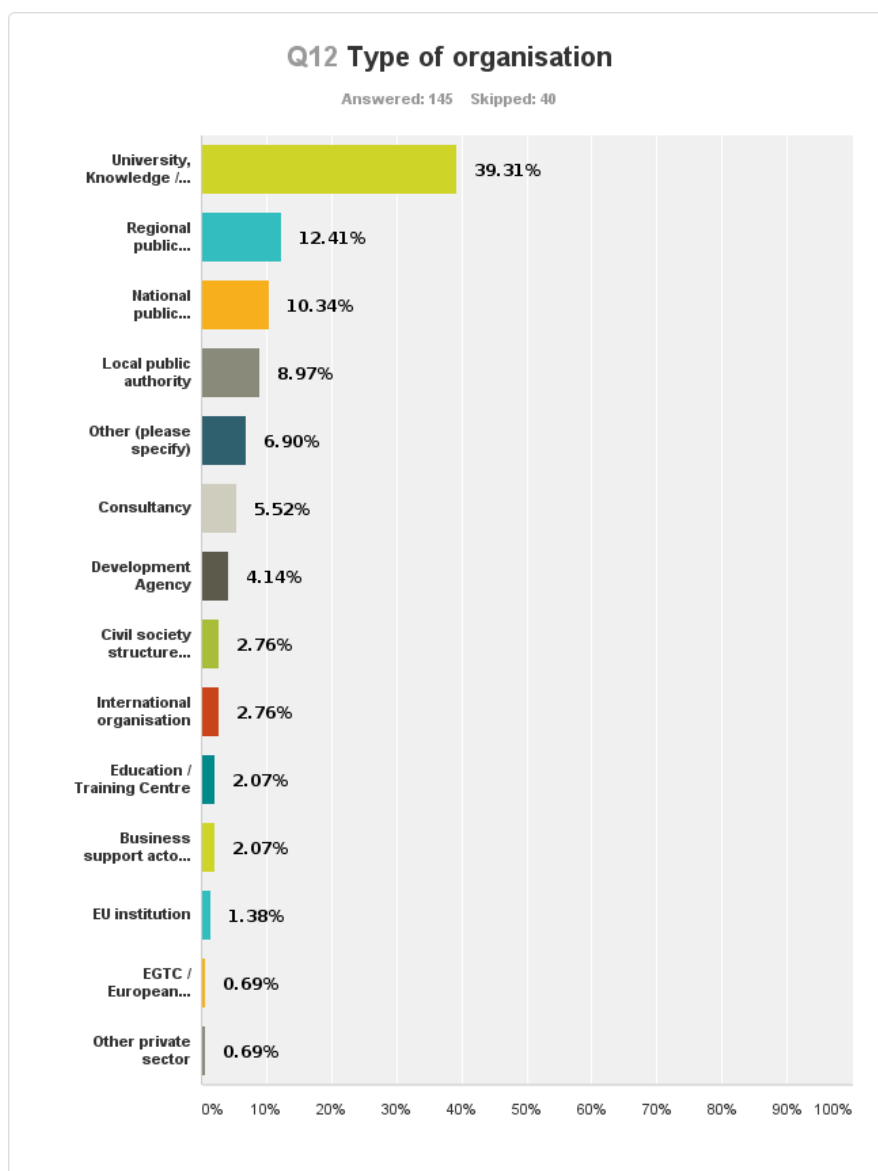


Figure 2: Type of Organisation of each of the Online Respondents

3.2 Strategy for the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

Respondents were asked to provide their views on the needs and challenges to be addressed in the ESPON 2020 programme. Of the 176 respondents to this question, 71% agreed the needs and challenges to be clear and 75% agreed that they were relevant. However, just 44% agreed that they were complete while 52% partly agreed (see Figure 3). A diverse range of additional

research topics and suggestions were received and will be considered in the implementation of the programme through the Operation Specification.

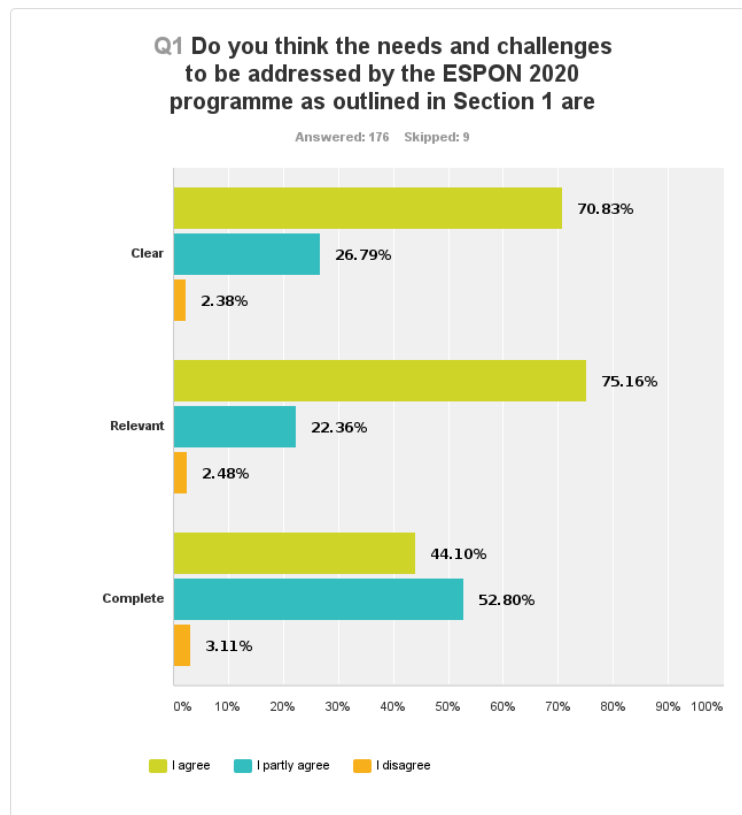


Figure 3: Responses to the Needs and Challenges of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

Some of the key comments provided by the respondents included:

- A need for a more specific identification of target groups.
- A focus on future-orientated approaches and forecasting territorial impacts.
- Greater emphasis on cross-border, mountain and peripheral rural regions.
- Outreach, communication and capitalisation of output are the greatest challenges.
- The need for stronger scientific quality of results.
- A greater focus on governance and policy implementation.
- A more systematic application of Territorial Impact Assessments across all EU programmes.
- Stronger cooperation with local and regional authorities.

3.3 The specific objectives of the Cooperation Programme under Priority Axis 1 together with the actions and activities to be supported for each of the specific objectives

Respondents were asked to submit their views on the specific objectives of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme and what they considered ESPON 2020 should focus on for the forthcoming programming period. It is clear from the 179 responses received in response to this question, the large majority considered that Specific Objective 1 (Applied Research) and Specific Objective 2 (Targeted Analysis) should be the primary focus. There was also generally strong support for Specific Objective 3 and Specific Objective 4 (see Figure 4).

Some of the key comments provided by the respondents from the diverse range submitted included:

- ESPON has generated a rich source of information which is not used to its full potential.
- There should be a stronger focus on themes of significant relevance.
- There is too much disconnect between ESPON and policymakers and there should be a far greater emphasis on targeted analysis projects.
- Closer engagement with stakeholders at local and regional level.
- Greater role for private consultants.
- Fewer monitoring tools are required and more interaction with local level data.
- Greater partnership with academic organisations such as AESOP, RSA etc.

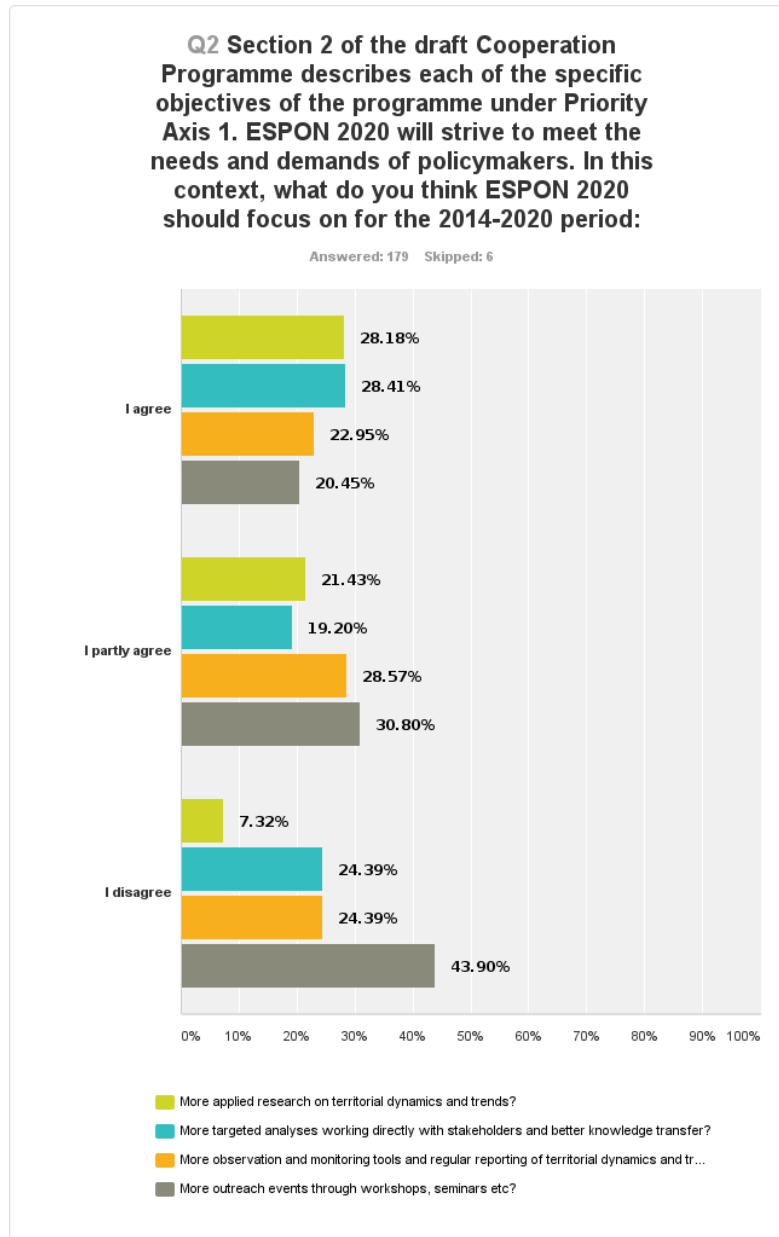


Figure 3: Responses to the Specific Objectives of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

In addition, respondents were requested to give their general appreciation of the actions and activities to be supported by the Cooperation Programme (See Figure 5). 68% of respondents agreed that they were relevant and 29% agreed that they were partly relevant. However, the respondents reaction to the expected contributions of the ESPON 2020 programme and the identified target groups was more mixed. 52% agreed that the expected contributions of the Draft

Cooperation Programme were clear with 41% partly agreeing. Likewise for the main target groups, 50% agreed that they were correct while 45% partly agreed they were correct.

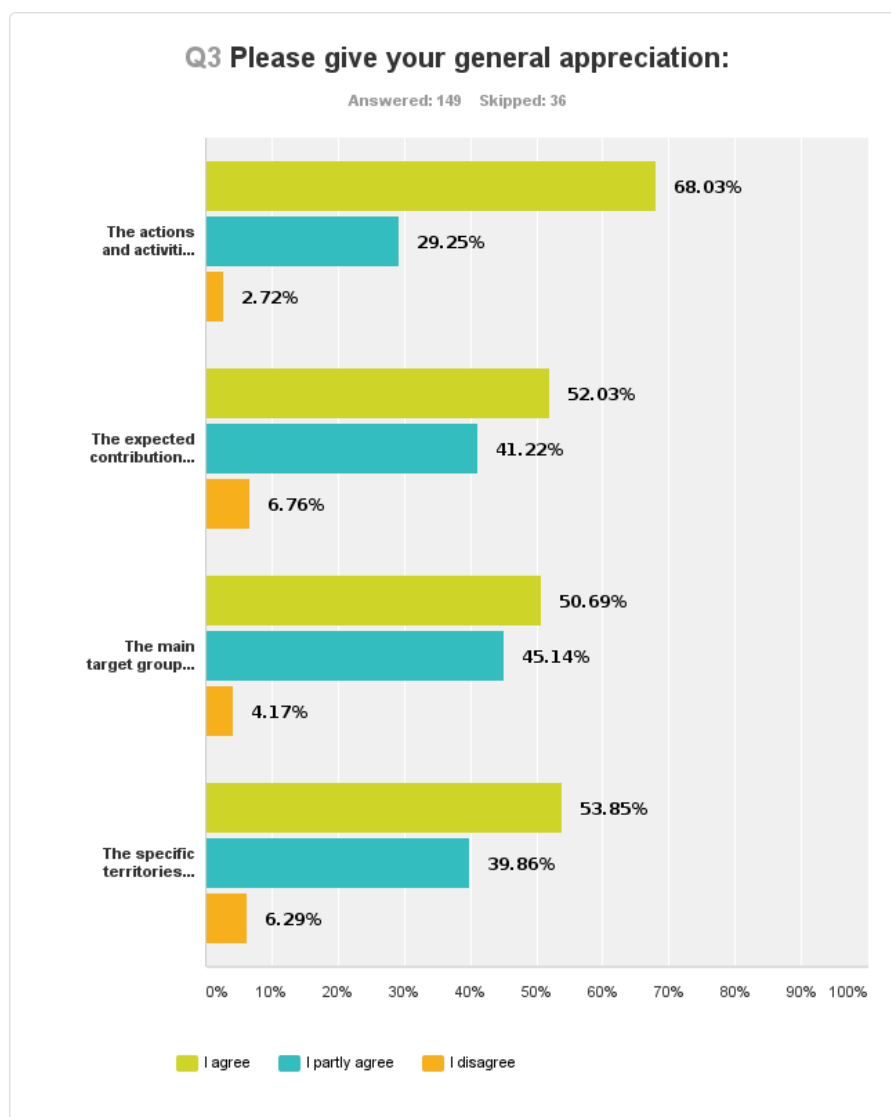


Figure 5: Responses to the Activities, Expected Contribution, Main Target Groups and Specific Territories Targeted of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

From the responses received, it can be identified that many of the comments were very specific to the particular point of view of the individual respondent. For example, for the specific territories targeted, 53% of respondents agreed that they were relevant while 39% agreed they were partly relevant indicating that there was greater need for geographic specificity. The Draft Cooperation Programme, by its very nature, is a general over-arching document setting out the

overall structure and scope of ESPON 2020 covering the entire breadth of the ESPON 2020 programme over the EU (+3) space and which sits atop of a tiered hierarchy of documents, including the Operation Specification, the Operational Proposal etc. Many of these specific recommendations and comments are fully relevant and welcome and will feed directly into these lower tier documents and are not excluded by the Cooperation Programme.

Some of the key comments provided with regard to the actions and activities by the respondents from the diverse range submitted included:

- The continued development of the ESPON Database is crucial.
- ESPON 2020 should focus on a small number of target groups rather than the general public.
- Greater focus on rural target groups is required.
- More emphasis on green infrastructure, landscape, blue growth and maritime issues.
- ESPON should seek to integrate itself into other EU-level networks and exploit synergies.
- More reference to specific territories, such as cross-border regions, peripheral, island and mountain regions specified under Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty.
- The ECP network should have greater involvement in programme activities.

3.4 The allocation of funding between each of the specific objectives

The Code of Conduct requires that the consultation process provides an opportunity for the public to comment on the budget allocation in the Draft Cooperation Programme. It should be stressed that the overall gross budget for the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme has not yet been finalised by the Member and Partner States. However, in order to receive some useful feedback from the consultation process, an indicative budget was included in the Draft Cooperation Programme issued for public consultation including an indicative allocation of funding between specific objectives.

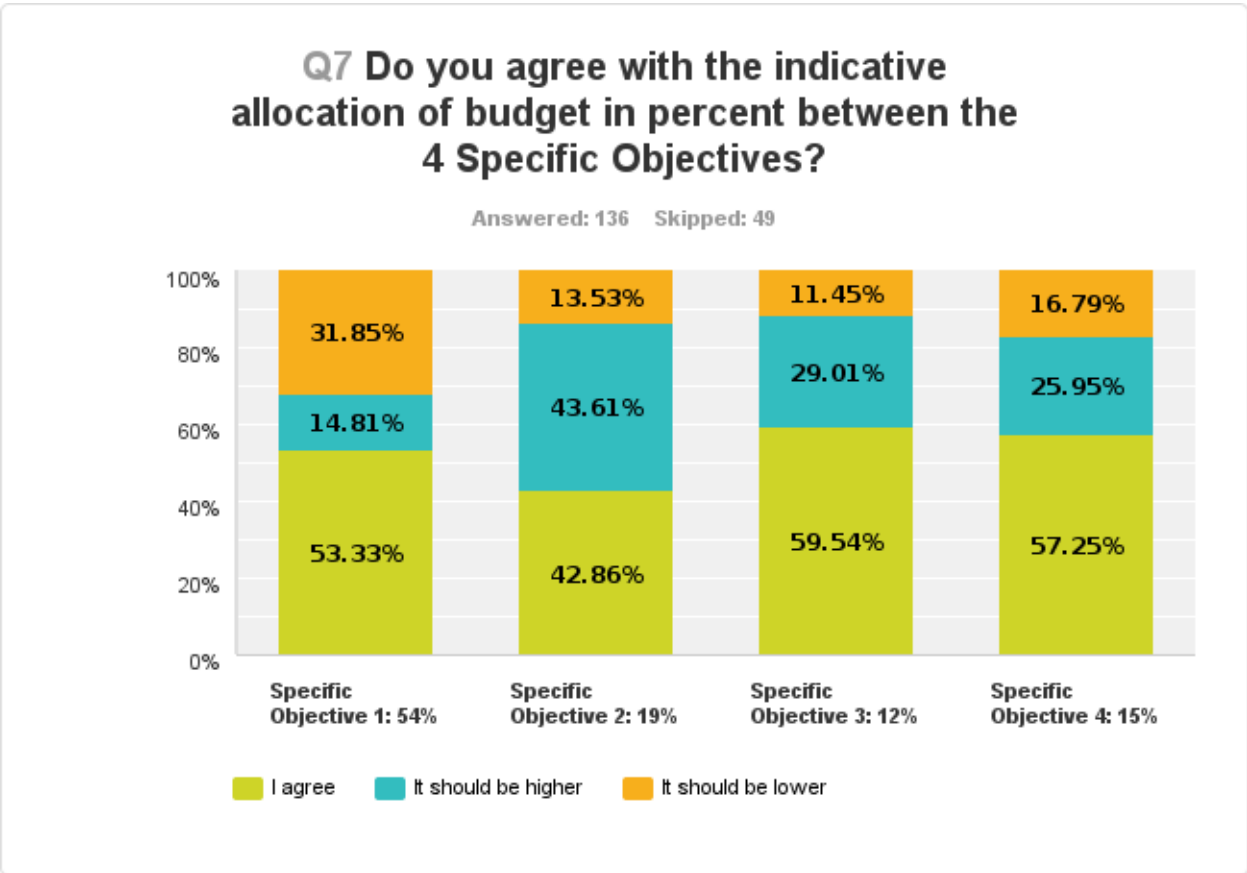


Figure 6: Responses to the Budget Allocation of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

As illustrated in Figure 6, from the 136 respondents to this question there is generally strong agreement for the allocation of the budget between the specific objectives. However, it is noteworthy that a significant minority (31%) did not agree to the allocation of funding to Specific Objective 1 (Applied Research) and responding that it should be lower. At the same time, the allocation of funding to Specific Objective 2, 3 and 4 was generally strongly supported with much lower proportions of respondents stating that funding should be lower. This reflects the general sentiment throughout the comments received that ESPON 2020 should focus more on outreach and capitalisation.

3.5 Challenges facing Europe

In order to harvest a wide range of views as to what thematic areas ESPON 2020 should focus on for the forthcoming programming period, respondents were asked to identify the biggest challenges facing Europe. Given the wide range of respondents, the issues identified were quite varied and included:

- Natural hazards, climate change, energy and resource management.
- Regional disparities and growing inequality.
- Globalization, the economic crisis, unemployment and loss of competitiveness.
- Social challenges including migration, demographic changes and shrinking populations.
- Urbanisation and urban policy.

3.6 Improving the Role of Territorial Evidence

Outreach and capitalisation are a core focus of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. Respondents were therefore also requested to put forward recommendations on how ESPON 2020 could improve the role of territorial evidence in informing policy. Again, the responses elicited were quite diverse and included:

- ESPON evidence needs to be in sync with political processes and not merely academic exercises.
- A more user friendly and interactive website, and simplified communication strategies such as videos, social media, short messages, newsletters.
- More use of seminars, workshops and conferences, including operating at a local scale.
- Enhancing the role and use of the ECP network, including the use of local translation.
- Closer synergies between ESPON 2020 and other ESIF programmes.
- Fostering a closer partnership between researchers and policymakers.

3.7 Involvement by Partners in ESPON 2020

Respondents were also asked to identify how they could assist in contributing to the ESPON programme and receive a greater benefit from the programme. The key results were as follows:

- Direct participation directly in activities.
- Propose themes for ESPON research activities, including national and regional case studies.
- Make use ESPON outputs in scientific research and policymaking.
- Use ESPON as a platform for networking and collaboration.
- Attend seminars and conferences.
- Assist in disseminating ESPON output to national, regional and local stakeholders.

4. National events/consultations held in the Member States

In addition to the online questionnaire survey, 6 countries (Croatia, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, and Hungary) launched country specific consultations as they were obliged to do so in accordance with their national legislative requirements.

For Croatia, France and Luxembourg, national legislative requirements were minimal and simply required that a notification be published which directed respondents to the ESPON online survey and no further and separate submissions were received. In both Hungary and Italy national consultation events were held and reports produced (see Annex 4). In Poland, the questionnaire was translated into Polish and distributed to stakeholders (see Annex 5). Respondents were also provided the option of using the ESPON online questionnaire.

It should be noted, that many countries also undertook voluntary efforts and also helpfully directed national level respondents to the ESPON online questionnaire and these are recorded in Section 3. Only those countries which were mandatorily obliged to undertake separate procedures in accordance with national law are recorded in this section.

Poland

In Poland, the public consultation process was carried through the websites of the Ministry and Polish Contact Point. Respondents were also provided the option of using the ESPON online questionnaire. From Poland, a further six responses were provided and translated from Polish into English (see Annex 5). All six submissions were from 'Regional Public Authorities'. Again there was generally strong agreement that the needs and challenges to be addressed by the ESPON 2020 Programme were clear, relevant and complete. A comment was included that a basic glossary of terms (EGTC, ETC etc) should be included. This is a point which was made elsewhere by other respondents and should be taken up in the Draft Cooperation Programme.

There was also general agreement that there should be a strong focus in the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme on Specific Objective 2 and Specific Objective 3. The importance of Specific Objective 1 was also generally agreed. While outreach and capitalisation tailored to needs of practitioners was considered a key requirement, one respondent commented that there should be less emphasis in outreach activities on seminars on workshops and more emphasis on electronic communication.

There was also general agreement amongst the respondents that the actions and activities proposed for each specific objective were coherent and relevant; the expected contributions were clear; the main target groups were correct; and the specific territories targeted were relevant. A specific comment was received regarding the results indicators, noting that these should be more detailed.

Respondents were asked to identify the biggest challenges facing Europe and, again, the issues identified were quite varied and included:

- Globalization.
- Energy security and the low-carbon economy.
- Natural hazards and climate change.
- Migration and socio-demographic trends.

- Poverty, growing disparities and unemployment.
- A focus of research on Integrated Territorial Investments.
- Innovation, smart growth and the development of the knowledge economy and innovation.
- A focus on regions with geographic specificities.

There was also general agreement from the Polish respondents towards the budget allocations. The view was also expressed that regional authorities have extensive knowledge that should be tapped into, including by way of partnerships between ESPON and local/regional authorities and increased use of workshops, seminars and events with practitioners.

Hungary

Hungary organised a national consultation event on the 3rd of April 2014 where of stakeholders contributed to a discussion and the provided feedback on the Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. A full report of the feedback session is provided in Annex 4. Stakeholders agreed that ESPON projects are real benefits and that belonging to the ESPON family represents a real community with common values, which promotes further cooperation between the partners later on. Stakeholders noted that the most relevant and up-to-date data is important and this should be taken into account for dissemination activities. Furthermore, getting a correct geographical balance during the tendering process needs to be also addressed as local stakeholders are not always aware of tenders. The ESPON EGTC should make dedicated efforts to raise awareness, particularly in respect of partner searching.

A clear outcome from the consultation was that the ESPON2020 Cooperation Programme should make a more definite step forward to bring challenges closer to reality and have a tangible message for territorial policies. This recommendation has been taken up in the recommendation and conclusions of the public consultation process. Some of the key thematic areas raised by the stakeholders included:

- Focusing on unemployment issues and the territorial context of financial flows

- Geographic specificity of Central Europe has specific features and spatial phenomena with a different context, which are not always comparable with other macro-regions
- Neighbourhood relationships to EU-candidate countries, such as Serbia or Ukraine

Italy

In Italy the Questionnaire was distributed through the ESPON Contact Point mailing list, mainly consisting of Universities, Academies and Research institutes, and also through the National Committee (NC) contacts, that consists of national and regional governments and stakeholders. At the same time the members of NC worked to involve policymakers in a targeted way. The results of this work were discussed during the NC meeting that took place in Rome on April 8, with the participation of representatives of various Ministries, Regions and Italian Autonomous Provinces. A further 10 questionnaires were submitted directly to the Italian Ministry and these were summarised and included in Annex 6.

Overall, ESPON is considered an important tool in order to look at the development policies and the choices of spatial planning in the framework of the wider European and global context. Some of the key thematic areas raised by the stakeholders included:

- The growing importance of globalization and territorial competitiveness in the worldwide context.
- The importance of mountain areas and “macro-regional realities” e.g. the Mediterranean area
- The role of networks of small towns, or the values of the ecological services offered by rural areas to urban cities.
- The effects of natural risks and hazards on economy, and map the risk distribution on European territory, identifying useful indicators to evaluate hazard, risk and resilience of the different territories, in order to develop strategies to adapt to climate change, including flood risk.

- The relationship between cultural heritage, landscape and processes of territorial development with specific reference to the sustainable tourism and cultural and creative industries.

Again, the importance of the need to involve stakeholders in the developing project activities was stressed and this recommendation has been taken up in the conclusions and recommendations below.

5. EU-stakeholder Consultation

A briefing on the ESPON 2020 Draft Cooperation Programme was organised in Brussels on the 27th of March. Selected European institutions were invited to attend in order to brief them of the content of the Draft Cooperation Programme and to receive direct feedback. A total of 7 EU institutions/networks attended. A summary of the responses received is provided below including research themes suggested:

- **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)**
 - Territorial impacts of fiscal consolidation policies.
 - Additional costs associated with Island territories e.g. impacts of market size, seasonality.
 - Delivering evidence to macro-regional processes.
 - Performance Indicators to measure the impacts of territorial cohesion.
 - Regional competitiveness index methodology.
 - Theoretical tools for smart specialisation strategies.
 - Further development of tools, including hyperatlas, and greater integration with Eurostat
- **Committee of the Regions**
 - New cohesion models e.g. growth pole model, catching up, balancing models.
 - Governance of national reform programmes.
 - More development of ‘quick scan’ tools.

- Territorial impact of fiscal consolidation, impacts and solutions for long term investments.
- Systematic approaches to what administrative capacity is required for regional development.
- **Euromontana**
 - Widen ESPON evidence to cover all ESI funds and not just Cohesion Policy
 - Territorial dimension of 2020 and regional targets.
 - Scale, issues in mountain regions do not appear at Nuts 2/3 and evidence at adequate territorial level is required.
 - Emphasis on geographic specificities and mountains regions which covers 14 % of the EU space.
 - Digital agenda and roll out of broadband.
 - Further development of TIA.
 - Access to services, particularly education.
 - Demographic change and migration, including amenity migration.
 - Territorial aspect of innovation, knowledge creation and how this is transferred into employment and growth.
 - Emphasis on Communication in simpler formats e.g. map of the month.
- **European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN)**
 - Short policy briefs should be prioritised, including the use of infographics.
 - More networking with other EU research networks.
 - Urban impact of migration, urban poverty and social exclusion.
- **Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)**
 - Greater emphasis on communication and networking with other EU research networks.
 - Simpler communication - use of infographics and presenting data in one image.
 - Scale – Data at LAU 2 required.
 - Emphasis on functional urban areas and city networks.
 - Tools, indicators and urban benchmarking tools.

- Cross border territorial methodologies and awareness raising of cross border observatories and impact of cross border integration.
- Improve the role of the ESPON contact points for capitalisation.
- **Irish Regions Office**
 - A focus on blue growth and integrated maritime strategies.
 - More communication of ESPON results.
- **Lombardy Region**
 - Focus on environmental risks and hazards.
 - The role of small and medium cities.
 - Specific territories such as mountain regions.
 - Relationship between southern Mediterranean countries and northern European countries.

In addition to the above, a direct email response was provided by the **European Environment Agency** who suggested the following research themes:

- The maritime sector and maritime spatial planning (MSP).
- Further development of tools like the QuickScan and the HyperAtlas, and European integrated data platform for spatial and thematic assessments
- Resource efficiency in relation to land take, land recycling, and virtual land use in Europe
- Integrated land assessments based on land multi-functionality concepts to support planned land use and soil policy targets; maintain and develop related map-based indicators.
- Evaluation of the direct and indirect impact of EU policies on land and soil use
- Assessments of green infrastructure (GI) and other alternatives to 'grey' infrastructure
- Indicators and assessments of urban areas and sustainable cities, integrating environmental and socio-economic information, and addressing the resource efficiency targets

- Datasets and indicators to track sustainability trends, and the environmental and territorial impacts of land use-dependent economic sectors (agriculture, forest management, tourism)
- Workshops to widen outreach and uptake of territorial analyses in policy development and other ESIF programmes)

6. Recommendations

The general approach adopted by the ESPON Managing Authority (MA) was to ensure maximum transparency and participation in the shaping of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme and to ensure that all existing and potential future partners had adequate information and sufficient time to be effectively involved in the process.

A comprehensive partnership process has been ongoing since 2012 through a Joint Working Group with the ESPON Member and Partner states and the European Commission, assisted by an independent ex-ante evaluation, to prepare and produce the ESPON 2020 Draft Cooperation Programme. This process has assisted greatly in shaping the content of the Draft Cooperation Programme towards the needs of Member and Partner States.

This wider public consultation process commenced on the 4th of March 2014 and concluded on the 2nd of April 2014 and involved three distinct elements:

1. **Online Questionnaire Survey:** The Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme was published online together with an online questionnaire. A total of 185 responses were received from stakeholders across Europe. The launch of the survey was accompanied by a direct email to over 4,000 stakeholders on the ESPON contacts database informing them of the consultation process and inviting them to participate. Member and Partner States were also encouraged to widely publicise the launch of the consultation in their respective countries, including by making use of ESPON Contact Points.

2. **National events/consultations held in the Member States:** Where their national legislation explicitly required it, certain Member and Partner States undertook mandatory country specific consultations in accordance with their own national procedures. 6 countries advised that they undertook country specific consultations. 5 of these countries referred national stakeholders to the ESPON online questionnaire. Poland undertook a process translating the questionnaire into the Polish language and circulated it to stakeholders. Respondents were also provided the option of using the ESPON online questionnaire. From Poland, a further six responses were provided and translated from Polish into English by the Polish Ministry (see Annex 5). Italy held consultation events and also received a further 10 questionnaire responses directly to their Ministry (see Annex 6).
3. **EU-level consultation:** The ESPON MA held a briefing on the Draft ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme in Brussels 27 March 2014 with other EU programmes (e.g. Committee of the Regions, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions etc). A total of 7 EU level organisations were represented at the briefing and provided feedback on the Draft Cooperation Programme. This feedback primarily related to future themes that ESPON 2020 should focus on.

The main conclusions of the consultation are considered to be as follows:

- The overall appreciation of the Draft Cooperation Programme was generally positive. Overall, the large majority of respondents intend to either be involved in ESPON 2020 research or to make use of the findings (see Figures 7 & 8). A huge number of the submissions included thematic areas recommended for further research. These represent an important resource for the ESPON 2020 programme in ensuring that the output is tailored towards the needs to targeted stakeholders. However, it is considered that these themes would be more appropriately included in the Operation Specification, to be addressed by the Multi-Annual Work Programme and the Annual Work Plans, rather than in the Cooperation Programme. A full list of the recommended themes to be included in the Operation Specification is provided below.

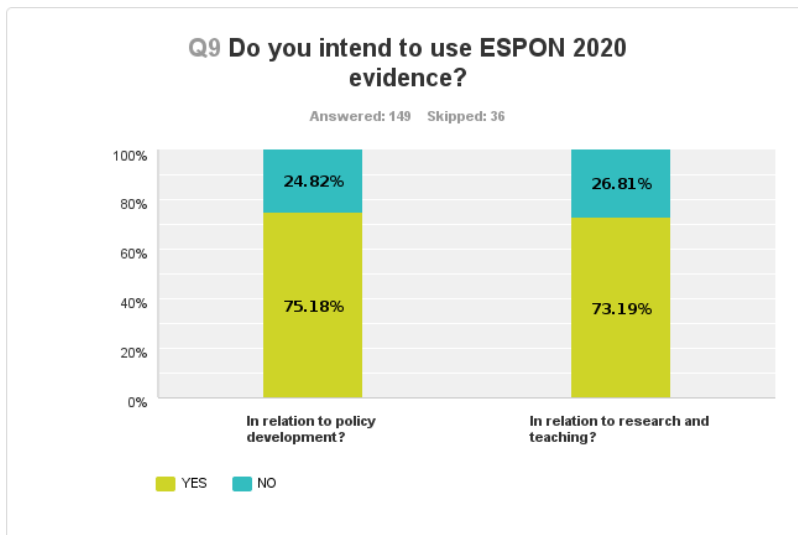


Figure 7 – Future Use of ESPON 2020 Evidence

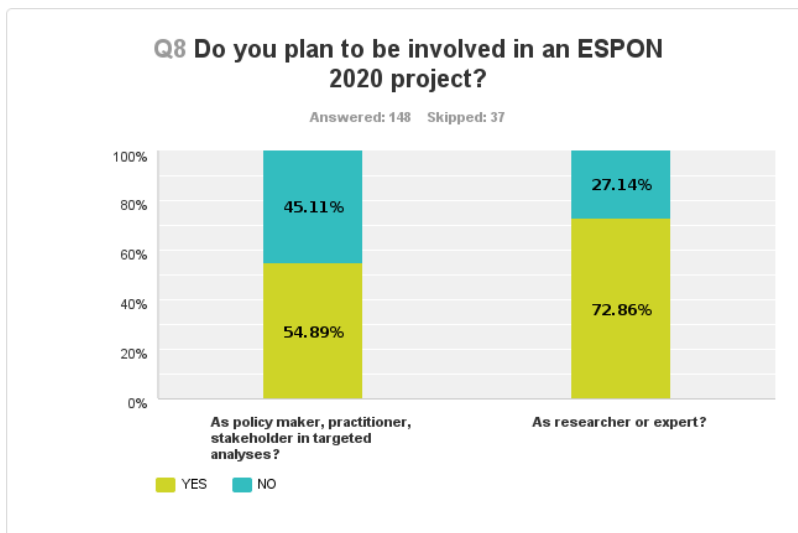


Figure 8 – Future Involvement in ESPON 2020 Projects

- Again there was generally strong agreement that the needs and challenges to be addressed by the ESPON 2020 Programme were clear, relevant and complete. A comment was included that a basic glossary of terms (EGTC, ETC etc) should be included. This is a point, which was made elsewhere by other respondents and it is recommended that it

should be taken up in the Draft Cooperation Programme. Furthermore, the scope of ESPON 2020 should be broadened to explicitly address not just Cohesion Policy but all ESI funds.

- The most important outcome from the consultation process is that a clear picture emerges from the comments received of the need for ESPON 2020 to focus more on outreach and communication, including through Specific Objective 2 (Targeted Analysis) and Specific Objective 4 (Outreach and Capitalistaion), in order to concretely transfer results into practice. It is recommended that the JWG should discuss whether a budget allocation and the Draft Cooperation Programme text should be amended to focus further resources on Specific Objective 2 and Specific Objective 4.
- A clear example of how Specific Objective 2 could be operated in practice is through making use of European organisations as intermediaries between the ESPON EGTC and national/regional/local authorities. This would help in shaping the Specific Objective 2 tailored to the needs of policymakers, to ensure there is less duplication in research effort and to create better synergies between EU level partners. From the consultation process, there is also a clear need for ESPON to have greater interaction with other EU research networks, and other academic and applied research networks, so as to maximize synergies, joint-effort and complementarities.

The following research themes have been identified from the consultation process, which are proposed to be included as an Annex to the Operation Specification. These themes will then be considered by the ESPON Monitoring Committee for research activities as part of the Multi-Annual Work Programme and the Annual Work Plans:

- A continued focus on future-orientated approaches and forecasting territorial impacts (similar to the ET2050 Project).
- Specific emphasis on cross-border, mountain and peripheral rural regions as defined in Article 174 of the ‘Lisbon Treaty’ including additional costs associated with Island territories e.g. impacts of market size, seasonality.
- Systematic application of Territorial Impact Assessments across all EU programmes.

- The continued development of tools, including ESPON Database, Hyperatlas, 'Quick Scan' and urban benchmarking, and greater integration with Eurostat.
- Green infrastructure and landscape.
- 'Blue Growth', marine spatial planning and maritime issues.
- Climate change mitigation and adaption, and natural risks and hazards.
- Energy and resource management, and the low-carbon economy.
- Regional disparities, poverty and inequality.
- Globalization, the economic crisis, unemployment and loss of competitiveness.
- Social challenges including migration, demographic changes and shrinking populations.
- Urbanisation, the Urban Agenda and urban policy.
- Integrated Territorial Investments, Community Led Local Development and Macro-Regional Strategies
- Innovation, smart growth and the development of the knowledge economy and innovation, including the digital agenda and roll out of broadband.
- Territorial aspects of innovation, knowledge creation and how this is transferred into employment and growth.
- Territorial impacts of fiscal consolidation policies.
- Territorial dimension of 2020 and developing regional targets.
- Performance Indicators to measure the impacts of territorial cohesion.
- Regional competitiveness index methodology.
- Theoretical tools for smart specialisation strategies.
- New cohesion models e.g. growth pole model, catching up, balancing models etc.
- Governance of national reform programmes and systematic approaches to what administrative capacity is required for regional development.
- Greater harvesting and use of data at LAU 2 scale.
- Functional urban areas and city networks.
- The role of small and medium cities.
- Relationship between southern Mediterranean countries and northern European countries.
- Real estate value at local level and the implications;
- territorial governance reforms post-crises