

**IMPLEMENTATION REPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN
TERRITORIAL COOPERATION GOAL
PART A**

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT.....	1
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.	4
3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS.....	7
3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION	7
3.2 COMMON AND PROGRAMME SPECIFIC INDICATORS (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013). 9	
PRIORITY AXES OTHER THAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	9
TABLE 2: COMMON AND PROGRAMME SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS - P1.11F	9
TABLE 1: RESULT INDICATORS - P1.11F.SO1	10
TABLE 1: RESULT INDICATORS - P1.11F.SO2	11
TABLE 1: RESULT INDICATORS - P1.11F.SO3	12
TABLE 1: RESULT INDICATORS - P1.11F.SO4	13
TABLE 1: RESULT INDICATORS - P1.11F.SO5	14
PRIORITY AXES FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	15
TABLE 2: COMMON AND PROGRAMME SPECIFIC OUTPUT INDICATORS - P2.TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.....	15
3.3 TABLE 3: INFORMATION ON THE MILESTONES AND TARGETS DEFINED IN THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK	16
3.4. FINANCIAL DATA	17
TABLE 4: FINANCIAL INFORMATION AT PRIORITY AXIS AND PROGRAMME LEVEL.....	17
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). 18	
TABLE 6: CUMULATIVE COST OF ALL OR PART OF AN OPERATION IMPLEMENTED OUTSIDE THE UNION PART OF THE PROGRAMME AREA	19
(1) ERDF SUPPORT IS THE COMMISSION DECISION ON THE RESPECTIVE COOPERATION PROGRAMME.....	19
4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS.....	20
5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN	25
(A) ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE MEASURES TAKEN	25
(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.....	26
6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (ARTICLE 50(9) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013).....	27
7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)	28
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)	29
8.1. MAJOR PROJECTS	29
TABLE 7: MAJOR PROJECTS	29
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN IMPLEMENTING MAJOR PROJECTS AND MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THEM.....	29
ANY CHANGE PLANNED IN THE LIST OF MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME.....	29
8.2. JOINT ACTION PLANS.....	30
TABLE 8: JOINT ACTION PLANS (JAP).....	31
SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND MEASURES TAKEN TO OVERCOME THEM.....	32
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).....	33
9.1 INFORMATION IN PART A AND ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)	33
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)	37
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)	38
9.4. REPORTING ON SUPPORT USED FOR CLIMATE CHANGE OBJECTIVES (ARTICLE 50(4) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)	39
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)	40
10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (A) AND (B), OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013	41
10.1 PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN AND THE FOLLOW-UP GIVEN TO THE FINDINGS OF EVALUATIONS	41
10.2 THE RESULTS OF THE INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES OF THE FUNDS CARRIED OUT UNDER THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	44
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)	45
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	45
11.2 PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS TO REINFORCE THE CAPACITY OF AUTHORITIES AND BENEFICIARIES TO ADMINISTER AND TO USE THE ERDF	46
11.3 CONTRIBUTION TO MACRO-REGIONAL AND SEA BASIN STRATEGIES (WHERE APPROPRIATE).....	47
<i>EUSBSR</i>	48
<i>EUSDR</i>	50
<i>EUSAIR</i>	52
<i>EUSALP</i>	54
11.4 PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL INNOVATION	56
13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH	57
14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)	58
DOCUMENTS	59
LATEST VALIDATION RESULTS	60

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 for the year 2018 was to continue the development of territorial evidence towards key ongoing and new policy processes at all levels and to capitalise on the available research outputs to ensure their contribution to key policy processes and specific target audiences at European and transnational scale. The specific policy focus selected related to promoting the territorial dimension of future EU Cohesion policy, supporting the debate on the EU Territorial Agenda post-2020 and supporting national, regional and local stakeholders in the process of redesigning their regional development strategies and territorial governance models.

Throughout 2018 ESPON research and outreach activities advocated for the need to develop place-based policies and strategies at different functional geographical scales and promote more cooperation among places. This approach was presented and explained to different target audiences as a way to address territorial fragmentation, mismatch of functional geographies and administrative delineations, spatial interdependencies, as well as challenges of inner peripheries, rural areas, territories with geographic specificities etc.

Under **SO1**, during 2018 the final reports of the 7 first applied research activities have been published (6 related to applied research that have been finalised in 2018). These activities provided significant knowledge, insights and recommendations on patterns and trends for employment, FDI flows, SMEs, renewable energy potentials, inner peripheries, territorial future scenarios and spatial planning systems. A second batch of 7 applied research projects was also launched during 2018 and delivered interim results on financial instruments, green infrastructure and the circular economy, migration and refugee flows, youth unemployment, territories with geographical specificities and a territorial reference framework for Europe.

Under **SO2**, four targeted analyses focused on territorial governance and planning, new forms of cooperation areas, metropolitan areas and natural areas delivered their final reports. The stakeholders involved have been generally very positive about the outcomes of the projects and noted that the activities have been very useful and delivered a lot of learning on processes and experiences from different regions around Europe. An additional batch of eleven targeted analyses is ongoing and two have been contracted and will start its concrete implementation in early 2019.

Under **SO2**, policy briefs and working papers on policy relevant issues including indicators for integrated territorial and urban development, the territorial dimension of future policies, inner peripheries, cross-border public services, migration and the role of European Territorial Cooperation, and green infrastructure have been delivered. The briefs responded to policy demand from targeted stakeholders, mainly the Presidencies of the Council and the intergovernmental networks on territorial cohesion and urban matters and were also

closely related to the needs of national governments developing their policies on regional development. The thematic papers have supported a wide range of policy processes including territorial review of functional areas, spatial development and regional development policy preparation, developing national strategies on regional and other territorial issues, cross-border agglomeration development, for ESIF operational programming, and preparing operational and impact evaluations of Interreg programmes.

Under **SO3**, the development of a modern database portal is under way to support all ESPON analytical activities. The database portal is of significant importance for the quality of ESPON's outputs as it will ensure the availability of comprehensive and comparable data for all other ESPON research-based activities. The exchange will be on two directions, the core database will provide data to the projects but at the same time will incorporate the data provided by all activities facilitating the standardisation and dissemination of the datasets. The update of the Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) tool is nearing completion as its integration in the ESPON website is in progress. The tool will allow for continued support to EU level policy development through an ex-ante evaluation of policy initiatives to make sure that they are territorially sensitive. Additional functionalities now include the possibilities to carry out TIA focused on urban areas and cross-border areas and to capture impact assessments in more detail. The macro-regional monitoring system is still under development since 2017 with the aim to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of policy making processes, monitoring and evaluation across all four macro-regions. The Functional Urban Areas and Regions in Europe tool has been launched and it will update the ESPON OLAP cube and fill existing data gaps to facilitate policy debates at various levels. The call for the sustainable development goals localising tool has also been launched. The tool will support local and regional governments to play their role in localising the SDGs by developing a web application. Finally, the activities on big data for territorial analysis and housing dynamics and on housing market dynamics in cross-border areas will investigate to what degree new Big Data collection approaches can be used to enrich existing territorial policies and enhance cross-border data and indicators collection by developing a methodology to produce cross-border information for better policy making.

Under **SO4**, a total of 29 events have been organised. The overarching goal of all outreach activities is to better integrate science in policy making and to increase the use of ESPON results in different policymaking levels. The events allowed engaging with the audience to make sure outputs are demand driven and policy relevant. Inputs were notably received on the future of EU development policies, including Cohesion Policy, in the form of new narratives for territorial development in the context of the renewal of the Territorial Agenda 2020. They also provided an opportunity to share and discuss experiences and upcoming challenges in territorial development and cohesion with scientists and experts, and to discuss how to apply new scientific approaches and tools in territorial research. The transnational outreach events allowed for reaching out to new target groups and increase the participation in particular from local and regional stakeholders and from the scientific community.

From a more management point of view, there are no major issues to be underlined with the exception of the adjustment of the internal procedures due to the entry into force of the directive on e-procurement. From a financial point of view the de-commitment targets

were easily reached. During 2018 the programme underwent an external mid-term evaluation which final report was approved in March 2019.

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 2018 ESPON has continued the development of territorial evidence towards key ongoing and new policy processes at all levels. ESPON has as continuously been involved in a debate with key EU, national, regional and local stakeholders for the identification of the main policy-needs. In 2018, the research activities and the outreach activities have been actively supported the following key policy processes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The debate on the territorial dimension of the future EU Cohesion policy post 2020; 2. The development of the EU Territorial Agenda post 2020; 3. The implementation of EU Urban Agenda; 4. The implementation, monitoring and further development of macro-regional strategies. <p>In addition, the programme has supported EU sectoral policies and the development of national policies on regional development, spatial planning, thematic areas (rural, digital, cultural heritage, industrial etc.) and regional/local/urban development strategies.</p> <p>Specific measures have been implemented in 2018 to ensure full compliance with the directive on e-Procurement and the protection of personal data.</p> <p>During 2018 the programme has also received assistance from the Public Procurement Good Practices initiative from the DG REGIO Administrative Capacity Unit. Two roads maps have been developed and assistance has been developed in the form of voluntary oversight and risk assessment tools in particular in the field of "prior market consultations" and "competitive dialogue" public procurement".</p> <p>From a financial point of view the Single Operation is progressing without delay.</p>
P2	Technical Assistance	<p>During 2018 the efforts were concentrating mainly on the steering and monitoring of the implementation of the Single Operation whose third Annual Work Plan was approved in January 2018. From a management point of view, a key objective for the first months of 2018 was the successful implementation of the round of audits (system audits and audit of operations) and the launching of the mid-term evaluation of the programme. The implementation of the foreseen communication activities for 2018 was also ensure during the entire year. 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 2018.</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 2019.

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
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 2019 by the Assessment Committee and its approval by the Monitoring Committee in January 2019. <p>From a financial point of view the TA is being implemented according to the initial forecast.</p>

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

Priority axes other than technical assistance

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

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators - P1.11f

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2018	Observations
F	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	6.00	6 Applied research projects have been finalised in 2018.
S	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	22.00	17.00	A total of 17 applied research projects have been so far launched since the beginning of the programme implementation until the end of 2018, six of which have been finalised.
F	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	4.00	4 targeted analysis have been finalised in 2018.
S	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	25.00	17.00	A total of 17 targeted analysis projects have been so far launched since the beginning of the programme implementation until the end of 2018, four of which have been finalised.
F	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	17.00	17 Thematic Papers have been published to date7 of which published in 2018.
S	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	Number	45.00	17.00	17 Thematic Papers have been published to date7 of which published in 2018.
F	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	Number	8.00	1.00	The maintenance/creation of 1 tool has been completed in 2018.
S	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	Number	8.00	6.00	The maintenance/creation of 5 additional tools has been launched during 2018.
F	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	41.00	29 additional outreach events were held during 2018 the total for outreach events to 41 since the beggining of the programme implementation.
S	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	Number	40.00	41.00	
F	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	Number	20.00	38.00	The target initially accounted only for the European outreach publications, The indicator has been outperformed due to the fact that the number of transnational 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.
S	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	Number	20.00	38.00	The target initially accounted only for the European outreach publications, The indicator has been outperformed due to the fact that the number of transnational 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	1.00	The ESPON EGTC, single beneficiary of the programme, was set up in 2016.
S	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	Number	1.00	1.00	The ESPON EGTC, single beneficiary of the programme, was set up in 2016.

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O101	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	14.00	7.00	0.00	0.00
F	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O102	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	14.00	3.00	0.00	0.00
F	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	10.00	5.00	2.00	0.00
S	O103	Number of thematic focus papers produced under SO2 e.g. policy briefs, working papers etc	10.00	5.00	2.00	0.00
F	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	O104	Number of ESPON tools maintained and created under SO3	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	12.00	5.00	1.00	0.00
S	O105	Number of ESPON outreach events held under SO4	12.00	5.00	1.00	0.00
F	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	23.00	18.00	5.00	0.00
S	O106	Number of ESPON outreach publications produced under SO4	23.00	18.00	5.00	0.00
F	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
S	O107	Establishment of the ESPON EGTC implementing the single operation	1.00	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	2018 Total	2018 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%.)		77%	The 2017 annual value represents a 36% increase from the baseline value. The 2018 annual value represents a 31% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	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.		80%		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	2018 Total	2018 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)		94%	The 2017 annual value represents a 10% increase from the baseline value. The 2018 annual value represents a 13% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	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.		83%		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	2018 Total	2018 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%)		84%	The 2017 annual value represents a 98% increase from the baseline value. The 2018 annual value represents a 110% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	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.		79%		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	2018 Total	2018 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%.)		62%	The 2017 annual value represents a 40% increase from the baseline value. The 2018 annual value represents a 24% 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%.)		92%	The 2017 annual value represents a 45% increase from the baseline value. The 2018 annual value represents a 47% increase from the baseline value.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	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.		70%		n.a		50%		n.a
RI05	Total number of potential users within selected target groups making use of ESPON publications.		90%		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	2018 Total	2018 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%.)		18%	In terms of the overall efficiency of the ESPON 2020 programme architecture, the opinion of stakeholders was split generally regarding whether it was moderately or largely efficient. Compared to the previous programming period the stakeholders leaned towards the view that efficiency gains had been made during ESPON 2020. When asked regarding 'to what extent is participation in the ESPON 2020 procedures not burdensome', the moderate to large extent responses were selected most frequently. Moreover, compared to ESPON 2013, the results indicated that some gains had been made in ensuring that the procedures were less-burdensome under ESPON 2020.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	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		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	2018	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	2.00	Ongoing evaluation exercises only

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI08	Guidance documents elaborated for the Single Beneficiary	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
F	OI09	Computerised system set	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI09	Computerised system set	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
F	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI10	Communication strategies elaborated	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
F	OI11	Evaluations carried out	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	OI11	Evaluations carried out	1.00	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	2018	Observations
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros	5,600,000	45,758,109.00	10,816,719.40	
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	0	22.00	6.00	
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	0	25.00	4.00	
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	17.00	

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	2017	2016	2015	2014
P1	F	FI01	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Euros	3,864,157.44	1,229,099.62	0.00	0.00
P1	I	OI01	Number of applied research outputs produced under SO1	Number	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
P1	I	OI02	Number of targeted analysis activities undertaken under SO2	Number	0.00	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	10.00	7.00	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	Total eligible expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid by 31/12/2018 and certified to the Commission
P1	ERDF	Total	46,207,234.00	85.00	46,207,234.00	100.00%	46,207,234.00	10,816,719.40	23.41%	1	10,816,719.40
P2	ERDF	Total	2,471,617.00	85.00	2,471,617.00	100.00%	2,471,617.00	543,213.90	21.98%	1	
Total	ERDF		48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	11,359,933.30	23.34%	2	10,816,719.40
Grand total			48,678,851.00	85.00	48,678,851.00	100.00%	48,678,851.00	11,359,933.30	23.34%	2	10,816,719.40

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)

Not applicable.

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

Introduction to the external mid-term evaluation

The evaluation has been centered around two dimensions. The first focus has been on “relevance, quality, outreach and uptake” of outputs from the ESPON programme. The second dimension has focused on the architecture, management and administration of the programme. The 8 main challenges which were brought forward in the current program period and which are all related in one way or another to the evaluation topics highlighted in this evaluation were also assessed specifically. Besides reviewing program documents, projects and outreach material, 2 different surveys were conducted together with 25 interviews, 4 project case studies, 5 uptake stories and engaged in dialogue with programme managers of ESIFs.

Conclusion on the progress of the programme

Assessment against the performance framework monitoring indicators indicates that ESPON has met its interim targets, and is likely well on its way to meet the performance indicators set for the end of the programme. As such, there were no concerns identified regarding progress purely considering the volume of projects launched and implemented.

Conclusion on the relevance, quality and uptake of ESPON outputs

The value added of ESPON research seem to be very high and many results and policy implications are disseminated and discussed across Europe. Results are often taken into account in policy and planning processes, and case studies seem to be one important way of approaching ESPON for local and regional actors. Our interviews and observations indicate that ESPON projects are relevant and timely and are focusing on topics which are not researched in other programmes or academic research to any larger extent; the comparative analysis of territorial trends and policy implications across Europe being the trademark where ESPON evidence is the main source of information in Europe today.

Project outputs are perceived to be of high quality, and to be reliable. The challenge for ESPON (which remains from previous program periods as well) is that results, and tools, should be differentiated more to cover more aspects of policy development and impacts. Case studies in ESPON TA and AR projects seem to offer this aspect for many stakeholders; this aspect of ESPON research should be pursued further according to us.

Clearly, ESPONs work in providing evidence and tools is highly appreciated by the stakeholders and clearly adds a territorial dimension to e.g. impact assessments for different policies and legislations, something that would not be done otherwise. The work is for most part perceived to be policy relevant and add to the knowledge of policymakers. The processes for selecting topics for projects and for absorbing topics from the bottom up (for e.g. TA projects) seem to be well appreciated. Caveats relate to the geographical scales of analyses, the possibility for different policy levels to absorb the (sometimes complicated) material, and to the general knowledge about ESPON evidence across Europe (among researchers, policymakers, ESIF program bodies, etc.). To better align ESPON to the policy and

planning needs of also trans-national programmes, macro regional strategies, ESIFs and other sub-national stakeholders would improve the policy relevance and uptake of the programme results.

Both survey and interviews suggest that ESPON evidence is used rather frequently by those familiar with ESPON and with prior participation in projects, seminars, MC, etc. Uptake is a difficult aspect to study as most people state that they are using the evidence as inspiration or background material – but we can also find examples illustrating how a more structured and direct uptake into policy and planning processes takes place. Outreach and uptake is strongly related obviously and as outreach activities are being accentuated in this programme period it is probable that uptake of project results and policy briefs will be even better in the future. We suggest that a separate study on uptake is necessary to learn more about how ESPON results are used across Europe (a deeper study on uptake stories and further tracing out mechanisms and critical factors).

From the uptake stories we learnt that having persons or institutions which have familiarity with ESPON seem to strengthen the possibilities for successful uptake of evidence at the national, regional or local level. ESPON can stimulate participants (and previous participants) to act as catalysts/ambassadors in making sure results, tools and data is used more frequently across Europe. ECP probably holds one of the keys to open up for the use (uptake) of results in countries and regions since they should know most of these actors and networks on the national and regional level.

For a successful uptake of results, it seems crucial to use/build on existing networks and associations across Europe to work with outreach activities and to stimulate uptake. The capacity to absorb material and transform it to useful input into planning processes and policy making is higher within these networks already existing and they can act as transmitters of evidence to member regions, cities or local planning bodies.

ESPON has been doing a lot of work with outreach both when it comes to published material and when it comes to workshops, seminars and conferences. We are yet to see the full impact of this work on uptake and use of ESPON evidence. Given the fact that quality and relevance is so highly valued the work on outreach and improving the use of results from ESPON projects should be a priority of the ESPON EGTC. The work of the service contractor for outreach is very dependent on the active support of the ECP, MC members and EGTC and it is really important that all actors around the ESPON programme work together on tailoring and targeting events, regional seminars as well as larger conferences. Feedback from local seminars can and should also be used for improving policy briefs and other material developed by ESPON EGTC.

Outreach has clearly been improved in this programme period and most respondents are in general happy with the material that is being produced, and the way outreach activities are now being conducted. As part of the outreach activities regional seminars are now being conducted and these seem to be well attended and well perceived. However, compared to other aspects of the ESPON program the results in the surveys indicate that outreach is not as well perceived and that there are some challenges when it comes to both the way seminars and the printed material is tailored and useful to some actors.

Conclusion on the administrative aspects and program implementation

The overall message that emerge is that the management and coordination from ESPON had been very good and that the staff is competent and also have a large network with helps the projects in many different ways. The message concerning the way the management of the PST (as a new structure) has been handled is a bit diverse, some mention that there are no concerns while others mean that there are some problems with the structures, information and implementation (mandate, way of working) of the PSTs.

In general, the new administrative procedures with service contracts are well received by the researchers and project managers. It is acknowledged that although this has simplified the tendering and administrative processes, the way deliveries are now required puts some extra strains when it comes to specific deliveries and less flexibility for shorter projects. Even before, for longer projects, there were deliveries for inception, interim and draft final phases of the projects – but today this is prevailing also for shorter projects.

The administrative burden has been heavier on the EGTC with these new service contracts, but with more staff it is perceived to be functioning well. Respondents among the EGTC and MA in general have no real concerns about the current architecture of the ESPON programme but rather expects to evaluate this further once some time has allowed the new routines to be tested. The concern is primarily about how ToR, service contracts, PST, etc. is perceived by participants and what could possibly be improved to make sure quality and uptake is improved.

The fact that the ToR are now more specific about the framework and content of each project seem to have improved the perception of quality of the outputs. But, at the same time it also means that there is less room for academic creativity and coming up with results outside of the box.

A recommendation is made to ESPON to make some further inquiry into the way current ToR are perceived by the target group for future projects. Some evidence suggest that ToR might be perceived as unrealistic in some cases and in that case, it is important to engage in a consultation with contractors to understand what can be done in the really of service contract and current “frames” of ESPON projects.

Conclusion on the 8 main challenges

The renewed architecture and procedures of the ESPON 2020 programme were designed to address 8 main challenges which were developed from the lessons learned from the previous programme and in the development of the new programme. These challenges relate to both the architecture and administration of the programme, as well as the quality and outreach of research. We have assessed these challenges and conclude that ESPON overall is well on track to deal with all of them, although there are some aspects which must be addressed during the remainder of this program period and its implementation. The main progress has been in setting up the new administrative structures and the “in-house” capacity of the ESPON EGTC. This seem to be well established by now.

While there has been greater attention given to outreach in this period, the are challenges remaining relating to further enhancing the transfer of outputs, encouraging new actors to participate in the

programme as well as using outputs, and making the results of research more relevant and useful for also local and regional level stakeholders.

The follow up of the recommendations will be ensured during 2019.

Name	Fund	From month	From year	To month	To year	Type of evaluation	Thematic objective	Topic	Findings
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5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN

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

Following the implementation of e-Procurement, from 18 October 2018 e-submission has become mandatory for all European open calls. The delays of the different member states with the notification of the eID schemes (and the fact that the recognition of the notified eID schemes takes place no later than 12 months after the publication to the OJEU) make more difficult for service providers located outside Luxembourg to access the e-tendering platform. At the end of 2018 only the German eID scheme was recognised. The only other way non Luxembourgish service provider could access the e-tendering platform was to opening of an account to the Luxembourg Portal of Public Procurements by the mean of an electronic certificate delivered by Luxembourg authorities.

Taking into account that all activities under P1 of the ESPON programme are implemented via service contracts and procured, to ensure access to all interested economic operators, the Single Beneficiary implemented a series of mitigating actions:

- translated from French into English the User guide to participate in e-Procurement on the Luxembourgish Public Procurement Portal (which was then published on the ESPON website).
- significantly increased the publication period for the calls, to ensure enough time for the potential tenderers to implement the procedures needed to submit an e-Tender (by getting the Luxembourg electronic ID certificate).

The situation will be monitored during 2019.

(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.

The progress with the implementation of the programme are considered to be on track on the basis of the targets. All key implementation steps and milestone targets for 2018 have been met as detailed as follows:

- **SO1:** 21 activities (Applied Research Projects) have been launched to date out of the 2023 target of 22 foreseen in total for the entire programming period. An additional activity has been included in the Annual Work Plan 2019. The 2018 milestone to launch 14 activities has therefore been met by far. Of the 21 Applied Research Activities that have been initiated, 6 have been completed and it is expected that an additional 8 will be completed by the end of 2019.
- **SO2:** the total target for the programme is to implement 25 Targeted Analysis Projects. 17 have already been launched and the milestone for 2018 was to launch 15 of them. In relation to their stage of implementation it can be said that 4 have been completed, 11 are ongoing, 2 will be kicked off in early 2019, 3 have been selected and an additional 8 will be selected in 2019.
- **SO2:** 20 thematic focus papers have been produced and the milestone of 15 to be reached by end 2018 has therefore been met. Taking into account a foreseen increase in the annual output of papers during 2020 and 2021 there is no risk that the output target of 45 thematic focus papers will not be met.
- **SO3:** 8 territorial observation tools should be created or maintained during the programming period, according to the set targets. The maintenance/creation of 6 tools has been launched. The maintenance of 1 tool has been completed (MapFinder). The creation of 5 other tools has been launched: the ESPON Database Portal, the TIA tool upgrade, the European and Macro-Regional Territorial Monitoring Tool, the Functional urban areas and regions in Europe tool and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) tool. The maintenance/creation of 3 further tools will be launched during 2018. It is therefore considered that the Single Operation is on track to achieve the target (8 tools).
- **SO4:** The target to hold 40 outreach events during the programming period has already been met. 41 outreach events have been hosted in total so far of which 15 organised during the last trimester of 2018: 1 scientific conference, 5 European outreach events linked to the European Week of Regions and Cities, 1 ESPON seminar in Vienna, 1 European outreach workshop in Cyprus, 1 transnational conference, 1 transnational seminar, 2 transnational workshops, 2 transnational trainings and 1 transnational elearning.
- **SO4:** The target of 20 outreach publications during the programming period has already been met as so far. So far a total of 38 publications has been produced of which 4 were prepared during the last trimester of 2018: 3 working papers and 1 transnational observation.

The Single Operation with the last progress report covering the year 2018 has declared to the Managing Authority a total cumulative spending of €15,719,975.54 of which €12,854,285.35 of ERDF.

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 Investment priorities	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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

8.2. Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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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Considering the strategic priorities outlined in the Annual work plan, during 2018 particular attention was devoted to ensure a wide outreach of the research results developed so far and supporting the debate on a range of policy processes defined in the strategic orientations.

Debate on the territorial dimension of the future Cohesion policy post 2020. The debate is one of the key strategic policy orientations of the work plan. Publications prepared in the previous reporting period were used to stimulate the debate. All publications were presented and discussed at the intergovernmental meetings on territorial cohesion and urban matters and received a positive appreciation from the stakeholders. The “ESPON contributions to post-2020 programming of European Structural and Investment funds” was developed as a guidance material for national, regional and local stakeholders on a range of ESPON evidence that can be used in post-2020 programming of European Structural and Investment Funds. The policy brief on the territorial dimension of future policies received a very broad visibility throughout 2018 as its key messages were presented at various pan-European events and meetings, organised by ESPON, as well as European stakeholders (EP, EC, CoR etc.). Moreover, the policy advice of ESPON on the territorial dimension of future Cohesion policy was largely reflected in the EC proposals for draft regulations.

The development of the EU Territorial Agenda post 2020. ESPON is supporting the debate on the EU Territorial Agenda post-2020 in the framework of the applied research activity “Towards the European Territorial Reference Framework”. ESPON contributed to the work of the Task force for the preparation of the next Territorial Agenda and to the debate among Directors’ general for territorial cohesion by presenting the key messages on the main territorial development trends, challenges, scenarios and policy pathways. The project deliveries served as a useful background for debating the key strategic orientations of the next Territorial Agenda.

Implementation of the EU Urban Agenda The targeted analysis on future digital health has ensured a direct contribution of analysis results into the action plan and policy proposals of the urban partnership on the digital transition. Close consultations with the partnership continue, particularly on the potential contributions of ESPON towards achieving one of actions of the action plan on developing a local DESI index. ESPON will be able to build on the outcomes of the policy brief on the digital transition of public services (Digital Public Services is one of the pillars of the DESI) and has also shared the results of the rerun of the survey in 2018. The SO1 activity on the circular economy and the urban partnership on circular economy continued their active exchanges. These resulted in a paper on “measuring urban circularity based on a territorial perspective” addressing several aspects of interest for the partnership. ESPON has also been exchanging information with the partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees and has been actively participating in their Stakeholder Working Group meetings. Furthermore, the project has included representatives of the partnership, DG Regio and DG Home and

Joint Research Centre in the project meetings to discuss the results and the policy scenarios to ensure their relevance to the stakeholders.

Policy processes related to functional geographies The activity to design monitoring systems across all four macro-regions is implementing a participatory process to develop a web tool that provides territorial evidence to stakeholders and policymakers in the Baltic Sea, Danube, Alpine and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions on key development trends over time and on the progress, implementation and contribution of policy objectives as defined in the EU macro-regional strategies. A first round of participatory approaches with VASAB, EUBSR, EUSAIR and EUSDR and the EC has taken place during 2018 and the dialogue will continue in 2019. The targeted analysis on Alps2050 has provided a territorial vision and common spatial perspectives for the Alpine area until 2050. It offers effective solutions for a balanced sustainable development as well as help to strengthen informal and formal cooperation between actors in the macro-region. The results will also contribute to the discussions with the EC about the framing of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme and other Programmes post 2020. The outcome of Alps2050 will also contribute to the joint work of Alpine countries and regions towards a better implementation of the EUSALP. The results of Alps2050 have been used by the office of the government of Carinthia for the further development of EUSALP and an alpine convention in the field of joint spatial planning, by the ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning in Slovenia for the preparation of the new Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia and Guidelines for regional strategies, and by the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development as input for the Swiss policy for rural and alpine areas. The targeted analysis on territorial scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region will produce trend analyses and territorial scenarios for the BSR. Key topics to be addressed will be identified and the role of the Baltic Sea Region in a larger European and global context outlined. The territorial scenarios to be developed will increase evidence on the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as contribute to EU member state policy making and cooperation between BSR countries on territorial development. Finally, the targeted analysis on cross-border public services (CPS) will support cross-border policy making processes on joint public service provision in the short and medium term. The outcomes of this work will directly influence and renew general regional/cross-border development planning and promote political decisions in a wide range of regional/local sectors relevant for cross-border cooperation in public services provision.

Development of national policies on regional development, spatial planning, thematic areas (migration, green infrastructure, public services etc.) and regional/ local/ urban development strategies

During 2018, on the basis of available research results a range of publications were prepared and events organised at various scale. They all contributed to many external events supporting policy development with a view to improving the national/ regional and local governance models, redesigning spatial planning systems, overcoming challenges of inner peripheralisation, developing solutions for integration of migrants, developing green infrastructure networks and promoting service accessibility at cross-border scale. Stakeholders were given an opportunity to contribute to the content of ESPON publications during the events, learn from each others' experiences through a peer-learning methodology and to develop further their knowledge and understanding of key regional development challenges and potential policy options for addressing them through a place-based approach. In the framework of all outreach activities it was underlined the need to address the development challenges of cities and regions and design policies at the scale of functional areas and through more collaborative

practices. The collaborative working method has allowed tailoring the content of ESPON's outreach activities to the needs of different target audiences and thereby ensure co-ownership.

Measures relating to the need to expand the scientific pool of ESPON have also been addressed. Under the title 'Building the next generation of research on territorial development', ESPON invited researchers from all over Europe to present 17 selected papers out of 39 submitted abstracts revolving around territorial interrelations, monitoring of integrated territorial development and new data sources. The conference raised the attention of a number of scientific umbrella organisations. The Secretary-General of the European Council of Spatial Planners, the Executive Director of the European Regional Science Association and the President of the European Association of Geographical Societies have all lauded the initiative and expressed their interest in cooperation with ESPON, referring to the selected conference themes as highly relevant. The conference contribution on 'The Europeanization of territorial governance and spatial planning' was published in Springer's 'The Urban Dimension of EU Cohesion Policy'.

With the view of maintaining high the level of satisfaction in relation to the Targeted Analysis some measures have been introduced at different phases of implementation of the Targeted Analysis to reinforce a closer exchange among stakeholders and researchers and a co-creation of a policy framework that remains responsive to policy needs at all stages so as to synthesise the most relevant policy recommendations. This closer exchange is likely to mitigate discrepancies between scientific assertions and policy expectations and has already resonated with Targeted Analysis stakeholders who are consequently more likely to express satisfaction with the project results.

During 2018 efforts have also been made to address the media with the results of increasing the visibility of the programme. The ESPON Seminar in Sofia attracted a number of mainstream outlets including Bulgarian National Radio, TV Европа (news and policy) as well as the most influential daily newspapers in Bulgaria. In April 2018, the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy visited the ESPON in Luxembourg. The meeting was a conduit for recent ESPON territorial evidence that necessitates more targeted support for functional areas as well as capacity building for a systemized cooperation and integration of different policies and funding streams. The meeting was followed by a live-streamed press conference that attracted major outlets of Luxembourg as well as journalists from France and Euractiv.

These measures are accompanied by continuous internal quality assessment and introduction of remedial micro-measures (PDCA), which is also practiced by the TNO service provider based on a constant loop of feedback collection, processing as well as programming and implementation of actions for improvement.

Priority axis

P2 - Technical Assistance

In relation to the Technical Assistance the revised implementation framework has allowed the reduction of the administrative burden at least in relation to the implementation of the activities financed under P1 under the Single Operation, which are now contracted as service contract. The close coordination

established between the MA and the Single Beneficiary allowing for a smooth implementation of the Single Operation is continuing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not applicable.

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

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

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

Not applicable

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

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

The partnership principle is well considered and acknowledged in the ESPON programme. Comments and feedbacks are usually provided during annual consultations such as the needs assessments and the annual surveys conducted by the Single Beneficiary and on which we have already reported in other sections of the report.

Several MS have run national consultations to receive feedbacks on the implementation and steering of the programme in the framework of ad hoc organised meetings, surveys or in the context of national committees. The feedback was in general all positive and resulted, in some countries, in the request for more regular information on the achievements of the programme. In other countries, the consultations highlighted the importance of giving sufficient attention to the regional administrative level of analysis but also to the participation of the regional level to the steering of the programme.

All the feedback received is in line with the results of the mid-term evaluation, which recommendation will be discussed and dealt with during 2019.

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

The programme evaluation plan also include ongoing evaluation and for the year 2018 an external mid-term evaluations which results have already been reported under section 4. The MA also relies on the information delivered by the Single Beneficiary for the implementation of the evaluation plan and its reporting to the EC. Below are provided information on the annual evaluation implemented by the Single Beneficiary of the programme which aims at collectind data related to six results indicators via an annual online survey.

The 2018 annual survey was launched on 6 November 2018, which remained open until 15 January 2019. The goal of the online survey was to elicit feedback and opinion on ESPON outputs and activities from a wide range of potential and actual users and specifically aims at collecting information from different categories of stakeholders to ensure that the specific target groups for each of the four content-orientated Specific Objectives were reached. The data analysis also included complementary information from additional sources (testimonials, endorsements, social media engagement analytics, website statistics, Google Scholar, press reviews and the conclusions of direct exchange with service providers and stakeholders).

The multi-source analysis translated to conclusions related to the overall orientation for outreach, policy needs, European outreach and the next generation of the Transnational Outreach (TNO) project. Based the conclusions of the report a set of measures has been identified and will be taken into account for the 2020 Annual Work Plan of the Single Operation. These measures include the redesign of the needs assessment process so as to capture more accurately and responsively existing and emerging policy needs as well as the need to consult the Member States about the needs for which no evidence on use could be identified. Additional measures relating to each of the Specific Objectives were also identified.

The suggested a set of remedial measures raising from the 2017 report have been successfully addressed in the course of 2018. Potential improvements were mainly related to the use of ESPON at local and regional level and the results are visible in all content-related SO, notably in SO1. Four out of ten of surveyed regional policymakers declare to have been using ESPON Applied Research in their work weekly or at least once per month doubling the share as compared with 2017. These findings can, in part, be explained with the transnational outreach measures implemented in 2018 that increased ESPON's visibility at local and regional level.

Creating an additional channel for information that complements the annual survey, the TNO service provider has carried out an impact assessment of the transnational outreach activities implemented in 2018, based on surveys distributed online and offline after every event. The survey design is aligned with the annual ESPON survey so as to feed the overall ESPON performance framework. In addition, the TNO survey elicits project-specific information related to both the project's mission and implementation. The performance analysis of all activities reveals that nine out of ten surveyed participants are satisfied with the event outcomes. Nearly a third of them had limited or no awareness of ESPON before the event. Furthermore, the results of the impact assessment reveal a well-balanced and purposeful segmentation of participant profiles, whereby the share of local and regional policymakers reached a quarter of all addressed stakeholders. As additional response to the remedial measures aiming

at an intensified use of ESPON at local and regional level, the EGTC has embarked on efforts to capitalise on ESPON Targeted Analyses through the format of stakeholder peer-learning.

Measures relating to the need to expand the scientific pool of ESPON have also been adequately addressed. Under the title 'Building the next generation of research on territorial development', the EGTC invited researchers from all over Europe to present 17 selected papers out of 39 submitted abstracts revolving around territorial interrelations, monitoring of integrated territorial development and new data sources. The conference raised the attention of a number of scientific umbrella organisations. The conference contribution on 'The Europeanization of territorial governance and spatial planning' was published in Springer's 'The Urban Dimension of EU Cohesion Policy'.

One of the conclusions from the survey in 2017 related to Result Indicator 2 is the need to maintain high levels of satisfaction with Targeted Analyses. Measures addressing this need have been introduced at different phases of a Targeted Analysis project, where the EGTC seeks to ensure a closer exchange among stakeholders and researchers and a co-creation of a policy framework that remains responsive to policy needs at all stages so as to synthesise the most relevant policy recommendations. This close exchange is likely to mitigate discrepancies between scientific assertions and policy expectations and has already resonated with Targeted Analysis stakeholders who are consequently more likely to express satisfaction with the project results.

In response to the suggestion to strengthen measures that serve target groups who are not likely to attend ESPON events, the ESPON embarked on media relation efforts. The ESPON Seminar in Sofia featured a press conference which attracted a number of mainstream outlets including Bulgarian National Radio, TV Европа (news and policy) as well as the most influential daily newspapers in Bulgaria, resulting in a potential outreach to 6m viewers, listeners and readers. In April 2018, the ESPON hosted a meeting in Luxembourg with EU Commissioner for Regional Policy. The meeting was a conduit for recent ESPON territorial evidence that necessitates more targeted support for functional areas as well as capacity building for a systemized cooperation and integration of different policies and funding streams. The meeting was followed by a live-streamed press conference that attracted major outlets of Luxembourg as well as journalists from France and Euractiv.

These measures are accompanied by continuous internal quality assessment and introduction of remedial micro-measures (PDCA), which is also practiced by the TNO service provider based on a constant loop of feedback collection, processing as well as programming and implementation of actions for improvement.

Status	Name	Fund	Year of finalizing evaluation	Type of evaluation	Thematic objective	Topic	Findings (in case of execution)	Follow up (in case of execution)
Executed	ESPON mid-term evaluation	ERDF	2019	Mixed	11	The evaluation has been centered around two dimensions. The first focus has been on “relevance, quality, outreach and uptake” of outputs from the ESPON programme. The second dimension has focused on the architecture, management and administration of the programme.	The findings have been detailed in section 4. Synthesis of the evaluations.	The follow up of the findings of the mid-term evaluation will be decided during 2019.

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

The main communication activity for 2018 under the responsibility of the MA has been to inform the wider public about the results and achievements of the Cooperation Programme via direct mailing(s). Preliminary discussions have started in the second half of 2018 in relation to the major communication event to be organized in 2019 which will be held most probably in the first half of the year 2019. The main objective of this event is to raise the awareness on the content, objective and targeted results of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The MA has also participated in networking activities at external events, ensure a smooth information flow with the Single Beneficiary in relation to the implementation of the Single Operation and further update the web-portal.

The Single Beneficiary on its side has also implemented communication related activities during 2018. The information and publicity measures carried out by the Single Beneficiary aimed to increase awareness of the ESPON programme and actively promote its results. Increased awareness focuses on more generic audiences where promotion of results targets specific needs of current and potential stakeholders. The final goal of all activities serves the strategic objective to better integrate science in policy making and to increase the use of ESPON results in different policymaking levels.

The implementation of the outreach strategy is based on digital tools, publications and events. The new website, that is now in full functionality, allows the Single Beneficiary to coordinate activities and offer more possibilities to the audience to reach ESPON content.

The new mailing platform (sendinblue) will allow integrate all direct mailing communication and enhance the outreach activities. The redesigned newsletter and the systematic use of social media allows to engage with old and new actors and build a community that engages virtually and face-to-face at events tailored to the needs of different stakeholders.

At events and through electronic communications the Single Beneficiary has developed the preconditions for achieving results (promoting use and satisfaction) by keeping the audience continuously informed, promoting discussion and learning opportunities and providing guidance to use ESPON support and products.

The uptake of the content being developed through the applied research projects was encouraged by introducing and debating the ongoing work during the ESPON seminar. The adoption of ESPON tools was facilitated by introducing their functionalities and providing hands-on guidance on how to use them in practical terms. By communicating directly with stakeholders with a potential demand for territorial evidence and analyses and explaining the support available through ESPON a wide-ranging demand for targeted analyses was developed as demonstrated by the number and diversity of applications. To support the implementation of Targeted Analyses, dedicated sessions at seminars were organized to engage with stakeholders in order to create ownership of the results of the analyses.

The Single Beneficiary also included new outputs in the terms of reference of both applied research and targeted analyses to receive content that can be used directly for communication to social media, news portals and specialized media.

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

Even this element is not applicable to the ESPON programme, ESPON was actively promoting the integrated approach to territorial development. The policy advice presented in the completed ESPON studies, revealed the need to address the different regional development challenges from a broader territorial perspective and through a place-based approach. The publications prepared by ESPON in 2018 on the basis of these research results, advocate for a stronger integrated territorial approach by:

- tailoring public policies and interventions to functional areas;
- designing policy frameworks that incentivise cooperation;
- developing shared governance solutions;
- expanding cooperation practices in planning and making investment through joint investment initiatives and using integrated tools for territorial development (like ITI and CLLD);
- strengthening the capacities of national, regional and local actors to engage in cooperative activities.

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

Not applicable

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

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

ESPO is developing a macro-regional monitoring system to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of policy making processes, monitoring and evaluation across all four macro-regions. The web tool to be developed through a participatory process will provide territorial evidence to stakeholders and policymakers in the Baltic Sea, Danube, Alpine and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions on key development trends over time and on the progress, implementation and contribution of policy objectives as defined in the EU macro-regional strategies. A first round of participatory approaches with VASAB, EUBSR, EUSAIR and EUSDR and the European Commission has taken place during 2018 and the participatory dialogue will continue in 2019.

The ESPON targeted analysis on Alps2050 has provided a territorial vision and common spatial perspectives for the Alpine area until 2050. It offers effective solutions for a balanced sustainable development as well as help to strengthen informal and formal cooperation between actors in the macro-region. The results will also directly contribute to the discussions with the European Commission about the framing of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme and other Programmes (Cross-Border Cooperation, rural development, etc.) post 2020. In addition, the outcome of Alps2050 will contribute to the joint work of Alpine countries and regions towards a better implementation of the EUSALP.

The targeted analysis on territorial scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region will produce trend analyses and territorial scenarios for the BSR. Key topics to be addressed under various policies related to the Baltic Sea Region's territorial development will be identified and the role of the Baltic Sea Region in a larger European and global context outlined. The territorial scenarios to be developed will increase evidence on the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as contribute to EU member state policy making and cooperation between BSR countries on territorial development.

No additional information is provided in the following sections in relation to the specific direct contributions to each of the individual strategies as this does not fall under the content and objectives of the programme.

- 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)

Objective(s), policy area(s) and horizontal action(s) that the programme is relevant to:

	Objectives
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Save the Sea
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connect the Region
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Increase Prosperity
	Policy areas
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 – Bioeconomy
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.2 – Culture
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.3 – Education
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.4 – Energy
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.5 – Hazards
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.6 – Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.7 – Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.8 – Nutri
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.9 – Safe
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.10 – Secure
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.11 – Ship
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.12 – Tourism
<input type="checkbox"/>	4.13 – Transport
	Horizontal actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.1 – Capacity
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.2 – Climate
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.3 – Neighbours
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.4 - Spatial planning

Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the EUSBSR

A. Are macro-regional coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Policy Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Coordinators, or members of the Steering Committees/Coordination Groups) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?

Yes No

B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the EUSBSR?

Yes No

C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the EUSBSR?

Yes No

D. Obtained results in relation to the EUSBSR (n.a. for 2016)

E. Does the programme address the EUSBSR sub-objectives (with corresponding to specific targets and indicators) as stated in the "EUSBSR Action Plan"? (Please specify the target and the indicator)

The pillar(s) and priority area(s) that the programme is relevant to:

	Pillar	Priority area
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Connecting the Danube region	1.1 - Mobility – waterways
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Connecting the Danube region	1.2 - Mobility - rail, road & air
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Connecting the Danube region	1.3 – Energy
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Connecting the Danube region	1.4 - Culture and tourism
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protecting the environment in the Danube region	2.1 - Water quality
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protecting the environment in the Danube region	2.2 - Environmental risks
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protecting the environment in the Danube region	2.3 - Biodiversity, landscapes, air and soil quality
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Building prosperity in the Danube region	3.1 - Knowledge society
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Building prosperity in the Danube region	3.2 – Competitiveness
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Building prosperity in the Danube region	3.3 - People & skills
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Strengthening the Danube region	4.1 - Institutional capacity & cooperation
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Strengthening the Danube region	4.2 – Security

Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the EUSDR

A. Are macro-regional coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Priority Area Coordinators or Steering Group members) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?

Yes No

B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the EUSDR?

Yes No

C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the EUSDR?

Yes No

D. Obtained results in relation to the EUSDR (n.a. for 2016)

E. Does the programme contribute to the targets as validated by the national coordinators and priority area coordinators in 2016 (uploaded on the EUSDR website)? (Please specify the target(s))

Pillar(s), topic(s) and/or cross cutting issue(s) that the programme is relevant to:

	Pillar	Topic / Cross cutting issue
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.1.1 - Blue technologies
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.1.2 - Fisheries and aquaculture
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.1.3 - Maritime and marine governance and services
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.2.1 - Strengthening R&D, innovation
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.2.2 - SMEs development
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Blue growth	1.2.3 - Capacity building
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.1.1 - Maritime transport
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.1.2 - Intermodal connections to the hinterland
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.1.3 - Energy networks
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.2.1 - Strengthening R&D, innovation
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.2.2 - SMEs development
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Connecting the region	2.2.3 - Capacity building
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environmental quality	3.1.1 - The marine environment
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environmental quality	3.1.2 - Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environmental quality	3.2.1 - Strengthening R&D, innovation
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environmental quality	3.2.2 - SMEs development
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environmental quality	3.2.3 - Capacity building
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Sustainable tourism	4.1.1 - Diversified tourism offer (products and services)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Sustainable tourism	4.1.2 - Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Sustainable tourism	4.2.1 - Strengthening R&D, innovation
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Sustainable tourism	4.2.2 - SMEs development
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Sustainable tourism	4.2.3 - Capacity building

Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the EUSAIR

A. Are macro-regional coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Pillar Coordinators, or Thematic Steering Group members) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?

Yes No

B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the EUSAIR?

Yes No

C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the EUSAIR?

Yes No

D. Obtained results in relation to the EUSAIR (n.a. for 2016)

E. Does the programme contribute to the objectives and/or targets which are attached to each topic under the Pillars, as stated in the Action Plan? (please specify the objective(s) and target(s))

Thematic policy area(s) and action(s), and/or the horizontal issue (governance) that the programme is relevant to:

	Thematic policy area	Action / Horizontal issue
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Economic growth and innovation	1.1.1 - Research and innovation ecosystem
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Economic growth and innovation	1.1.2 - Economic potential of strategic sectors
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Economic growth and innovation	1.1.3 - Economic and social environment of economic operators in strategic sectors (incl. labour market, education and training)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Economic growth and innovation	1.2.1 - Governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Mobility and Connectivity	2.1.1 - Intermodality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Mobility and Connectivity	2.1.2 - E-connect people (digital agenda) and accessibility to public services
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Mobility and Connectivity	2.2.1 - Governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environment and energy	3.1.1 - Natural resources (incl. water and cultural resources)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environment and energy	3.1.2 - Ecological connectivity
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environment and energy	3.1.3 - Risk and climate change management (incl. major natural risks prevention)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environment and energy	3.1.4 - Energy efficiency and renewable energy
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Environment and energy	3.2.1 - Governance

Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the EUSALP

A. Are macro-regional coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Policy Area Coordinators or members) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?

Yes No

B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the EUSALP?

Yes No

C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the EUSALP?

Yes No

D. Obtained results in relation to the EUSALP (n.a. for 2016)

E. Does the programme contribute to specific targets and indicators of the EUSALP actions, as stated in the EUSALP Action Plan? (Please mention the target and the indicator)

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

Not applicable

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

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

ESPON delivers territorial evidence to key territorial development policies at European, national, regional and local level with an aim to improve the quality of policy making and through that -promoting the positive impacts on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. In the reporting period, ESPON's research results on various subjects like inner peripherality, spatial planning systems as well as SMEs have supported a broad range of policy processes at all levels as presented in the individual activity reports.

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).

The ESPON programme has achieved the milestones for 2018 and is on track to meet the performance targets.

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	2.37	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' at least one relevance should be selected for strategy EUSAIR
Warning	2.37	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' at least one relevance should be selected for strategy EUSALP
Warning	2.37	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' at least one relevance should be selected for strategy EUSBSR
Warning	2.37	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' at least one relevance should be selected for strategy EUSDR
Warning	2.38	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' questions A, B and C should be answered for strategy EUSAIR
Warning	2.38	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' questions A, B and C should be answered for strategy EUSALP
Warning	2.38	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' questions A, B and C should be answered for strategy EUSBSR
Warning	2.38	In Section 'Macro-regional and sea basin strategies' questions A, B and C should be answered for strategy EUSDR
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 102.50% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI05, year: 2018. Please check.
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.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 190.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI06, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.53.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 102.50% of the total target value for "F", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI05, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.53.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 115.00% of the total target value for "F", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI06, year: 2017. Please check.
Warning	2.53.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 190.00% of the total target value for "F", priority axis: P1, investment priority: 11f, indicator: OI06, year: 2018. Please check.