

Mid-term Evaluation of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

Final Report

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Draft Final Report

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations	
AA	Audit Authority
AR	Applied Research (project)
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CA	Certifying Authority
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
EC	European Commisison
ECP	ESPON Contact Point
EGTC	European Grouping for Territorial Cohesion
ESDP	European Single Procurement Document
ESIF	European Strucural and Investment Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
MA	Managing Authority
Multi Annual Work Programme	MAWP
Monitoiring Committee	MC
Member States	MS
OS	Operation Specification
PST	Project Support Team
SB	Single Beneficiary
TA	Taregted Analysis (project)
TNO	Transnational Networking Outreach

Executive summary

The aim of the ESPON 2020 Programme is to promote a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors at all levels. The programme does this by implementing “applied research and analyses producing new evidence and facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange for policy processes by delivering territorial evidence to support policy development at the EU, national, regional and local level as well as in a transnational and cross-border context”. The program also supports the development of tools and datasets to further study territorial trends across Europe. One important aspect of ESPON is to enhance the use of territorial evidence in policy development and programmes related to EU Cohesion Policy (economic, social and territorial cohesion) at EU level and in Member States and regions. This is pursued by developing an effective, timely and prompt communication and of outreach strategy, and with an ambition to work continuously on facilitating on-going coordination and cooperation with a wide range of target institutions at EU, national, regional and urban level and across ESI programmes, in particular at transnational and cross-border level.

ESPON was partly redesigned in the current programme period with a new programme architecture, a new and larger administration and outreach secretariat (the EGTC) and with new types of projects (service contracts) for the participants. The way topics are determined is also done through a new process, and projects are followed once they have started by a project support team (PST) to improve relevance and usefulness for stakeholders. The renewed architecture and procedures of the ESPON 2020 programme was designed primarily 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.

Introduction to the evaluation

This is the mid-term evaluation of the ESPON 2020 programme. This means that the program is in full activity and that projects, outreach activities, uptake and administration is still fully active, and results are emerging every day. Hence, we are in a way studying a moving target and sometimes we are approaching evaluation topics where the implementation is still early on and the results and effects will emerge further towards the end (as well as after) the programme period.

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. We have also assessed specifically 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.

Besides reviewing program documents, projects and outreach material, we have implemented 2 different surveys, conducted over 25 interviews, performed 4 project case studies, 5 uptake stories, engaged in dialogue with programme managers of ESIFs, and participated to workshops and seminars

organized by ESPON. The evaluation is a triangulation of all of these sources and the database behind our conclusions and recommendations is the surveys, case studies and uptake stories which are presented in condensed formats in the annexes to this report. We also hold a library of interviews conducted as part of stakeholder interviews, cases and uptake stories.

Progress of the programme

The performance framework indicates that ESPON is well on its way to reach the performance indicators in terms of number of projects launched. The concern might be the number of projects under SO2, the targeted analyses. Here ESPON is trying to create awareness and interest and stimulate local, regional and national stakeholders to submit proposal for topics which could be turned into targeted analysis projects. This is done, for instance, through the work of the ECP and MC and their contacts throughout the program area. Since the launch and performance of projects under SO2 is a critical factor for the success of the programme we recommend that further efforts are made to make sure that projects get initiated during 2019.

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 our uptake stories we know 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 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.

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.

We do recommend that ESPON 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 reality of service contract and current “frames” of ESPON projects.

Current status - 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. The challenges still remaining relates to transfer of outputs, encouraging new actors to participate in the programme as well as using outputs, and making the results of research relevant and useful for also local and regional level stakeholders. In the concluding section of this report we go thorough each challenge and make remarks and recommendations as to the progress made until today.

1. Introduction

This final report is the conclusive deliverable to be submitted by Oxford Group as part of the mid-term evaluation of the ESPON 2020 programme. This report shifts the focus from implementation and data collection to results, analysis and recommendations. Hence, the structure of this report, and its content, differs rather substantially from the two first reports (inception and interim). The reader who is interested in the way the mid-term evaluation was implemented, what methods that were implemented and how we have worked from a methodological perspective is referred to either the *inception* or *interim* reports; the latter submitted in September 2018.

The mid-term evaluation of ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme is set at an interesting time, also given that the programme has undergone a significant revision to its architecture and procedures since the previous period, and therefore should be subject to review. Furthermore, the evaluation will provide opportunities to introduce adjustments to enhance the ESPON 2020 Programme implementation in the current period and beyond.

The fact that this is a mid-term evaluation means that the program is in full activity and that projects, outreach activities, uptake and administration is still fully active, and results are emerging every day. Hence, we are in a way studying a moving target and sometimes we are approaching evaluation topics where the implementation is still early on and the results and effects will emerge further towards the end (as well as after) the programme period. A mid-term evaluation hence focusses on providing insight and recommendations on how to further improve the current implementation of the program, as well as offering advice on what topics to focus on for a potential follow up programme. An ex-post evaluation is usually too late to have any true impact on future programme development, and hence the mid-term evaluation can provide useful insight on what is working well and what should be revised.

1.1 THE ESPON 2020 PROGRAMME

The aim of the ESPON 2020 Programme is to promote a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors at all levels. The programme does this by implementing “applied research and analyses producing new evidence and facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange for policy processes by delivering territorial evidence to support policy development at the EU, national, regional and local level as well as in a transnational and cross-border context”. The program also supports the development of tools and datasets to further study territorial trends across Europe. One important aspect of ESPON is to enhance the use of territorial evidence in policy development and programmes related to EU Cohesion Policy (economic, social and territorial cohesion) at EU level and in Member States and regions. This is pursued by developing an effective, timely and prompt communication and of outreach strategy, and an ambition to work continuously on facilitating ongoing coordination and cooperation with a wide range of target institutions at EU, national, regional and urban level and across ESI programmes, in particular at transnational and cross-border level.

The geographical coverage of the ESPON 2020 Programme extends to the entire territory of the 28 EU Member States and 4 Partner States, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

The ESPON 2020 Programme has the remit of supporting the Common Strategic Framework Objective 11: ‘improving the efficiency of the public administration’. Under the European Territorial Goal Regulation, ESPON supports the investment priority under interregional cooperation: ‘enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by 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’.

ESPON’s mission is to continue the consolidation of a European Territorial Observatory Network and grow the provision and policy use of pan-European, comparable, systematic and reliable territorial evidence. The ESPON 2020 Programme strategy builds on the mission of ESPON by concentrating on the following elements:

- Contribute to enhancing the use of territorial evidence in policy development and programmes related to EU Cohesion Policy (economic, social and territorial cohesion) at EU level and in Member States and regions, in relevant European and national sectoral policies and in relevant policy processes, such as the Territorial Agenda 2020.
- Implement applied research and analyses producing new evidence and facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange for policy processes by delivering territorial evidence to support policy development at the EU, national, regional and local level as well as in a transnational and cross-border context.
- Monitor major European territorial trends, potentials and challenges, and provide analytical tools in order to contribute actively with EU-wide territorial evidence and experience to relevant policy processes and political debates as well as to territorial strategy building.
- Ensure effective, timely and prompt communication, maximisation of outreach and use by potential stakeholders together with facilitating on-going coordination and cooperation with a wide range of target institutions at EU, national, regional and urban level and ESI programmes, in particular at transnational and cross-border level.

With a view to supporting effective implementation of the mission and programme strategy, the ESPON 2020 Programme has been structured according to the following five Specific Objectives (SO):

- SO1: Enhanced production of territorial evidence through applied research and analyses.
- SO2: Upgraded knowledge transfer and analytical user support.
- SO3: Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses.
- SO4: Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence.
- SO5: Leaner, and more effective and efficient implementation provisions and more proficient programme assistance.

Under each of the SO 1 to 5, the ESPON 2020 Programme indicates a series of actions, activities and outputs. Clearly, the extent of the activities to be generated is ambitious given the large number of outputs to be generated in the timeframe. A summary of these aspects is indicated in table 1

Table 1 Summary of ESPON 2020 Actions, Activities and Outputs.

Specific Objectives	Actions	Activities	Outputs (target values)
SO1: Enhanced production of territorial evidence through applied research and analyses.	To produce applied territorial research and analyses on European territorial development. This action will contribute to the knowledge base of ESPON and produce new European territorial evidence in response to focused policy demand, steered by policymakers.	<p>European wide, comparable information and evidence on territorial potentials and challenges focusing on opportunities for success;</p> <p>Cross-thematic applied research integrating existing thematic analysis and adding new themes in areas, for example research and innovation, climate change mitigation and adaptation; energy; demographic and migratory flows; economic crisis and resilience etc.</p> <p>Territorial impact studies of EU policies</p>	22 applied research activities
SO2: Upgraded knowledge transfer and analytical user support.	The action shall be to undertake targeted analyses and to produce thematic papers, on specific thematic areas in response to stakeholder demand.	<p>Targeted analysis for and defined by stakeholders at national, regional and local level enhancing their understanding of the larger context and providing a European perspective to the development of their territories.</p> <p>Territorial evidence briefs and packs to ETC Programmes, ESIF Programmes and EU macro-regions.</p> <p>Short policy briefs/working papers, fast and timely, benefiting from increased in-house senior scientific and outreach capacity at the Single Beneficiary.</p>	25 targeted research activities 45 thematic papers
SO3: Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses.	The action shall be to (a) undertake territorial observation/ reporting (b) develop tools for territorial analyses and (c) stimulate the use of tools.	<p>Examples of activities include:</p> <p>ESPON Database development with focus on data update and user-friendliness.</p> <p>European Monitoring System with custom-made macro-regional sub-systems meeting stakeholder demand.</p>	8 ESPON tools maintained and created

		<p>Territorial Monitoring Reports and Reviews related to European policy orientations and strategies.</p> <p>A reviewed and fine-tuned ESPON set of tools for territorial analyses.</p> <p>Support to users in terms of technical queries and help in the practical use of tools.</p>	
SO4: Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence.	<p>Actions to be carried out related to SO4 shall be to (a) hold events and (b) produce publications, in order to support outreach to users and the widest possible use of ESPON 2020 territorial evidence in practice.</p>	<p>Examples of activities include:</p> <p>Events at European level, as seminars, conferences or workshops.</p> <p>Events at transnational / national level in coordination the ECP network.</p> <p>Active participation in debates with policymakers and practitioners.</p> <p>Publication of thematic and synthetic reports, short material and web-based communication.</p> <p>Translated material to be used in outreach activities targeting regional and local policymakers and practitioners.</p>	<p>40 Outreach ESPON events</p> <p>20 Outreach publications</p>
SO5: Leaner, and more effective and efficient implementation provisions and more proficient programme assistance.	<p>The ESPON 2020 Programme will engage a Single Beneficiary, receiving a Grant Agreement to carry through the content under Priority Axis 1 as a Single Operation under this Programme.</p>	<p>Establishment of the EGTC as Single Beneficiary implementing the single operation.</p> <p>The role of Single Beneficiary will be awarded to an ESPON EGTC with a tailor-made set up. In carrying through SO 1-4, all belonging to Priority Axis 1, the Single Beneficiary shall contribute to the fulfilment of SO5.</p>	<p>1 EGTC established.</p>

The ESPON 2020 Programme provides flexibility regarding the focus of the activities, research and outputs of ESPON as they may optionally correspond to one the eleven thematic objectives of the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 with a view to enhancing the impact of regional policies across the EU and Partner States.

The ESPON 2020 Programme has a streamlined structure according to two Priority Axes:

- Priority Axis 1: Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach;
- Priority Axis 2: Technical Assistance.

Priority Axis 1 is an “umbrella measure” tasking the Single Beneficiary, the European Grouping for Territorial Cohesion (EGTC), with the implementation of the research and knowledge related Specific Objectives 1-4 as well as indirectly supporting Specific Objective 5. Key building blocks of the Priority Axis 1 include the:

- **Operation Specification:** established the specifications for the implementation of Priority Axis1. It was agreed in 2015 by the ESPON Monitoring Committee, and provided by the ESPON Managing Authority MA to the EGTC inviting the submission of an Operational Proposal in response;
- **Operational Proposal** agreed by the MC in 2015 included a Multi Annual Work Programme and an Annual Work Plan for the first year specifying in further detail the actions and activities to be implemented under the relevant Specific Objectives.

Priority Axis 2 supports leaner, effective and efficient functioning of the ESPON 2020 Programme with a view to encouraging the renewal of the administrative setup by switching to public procurement only, enabling the use of service contracts, and the Technical Assistance provided by the Managing Authority (MA) provides support to the renewed structure and organisational arrangements. An overview of key elements of the ESPON 2020 governance structure is indicated below.

- **European Grouping for Territorial Cohesion (EGTC)** has been established to act as Single Beneficiary to implement ESPON 2020 and deliver the knowledge and research related content under the ESPON 2020 Programme. The EGTC is based in Luxembourg and has an Assembly composed by the three Belgian regions of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital as well as Luxembourg.
- The **Managing Authority (MA)** is based in the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure in Luxembourg and is responsible for the efficient management and implementation of the ESPON 2020 Programme in line with the principles of sound financial management.
- The **Monitoring Committee (MC)** has an oversight role in monitoring the implementation of the ESPON 2020 Programme and consists of one representative from each of the EU 28 and relevant Partner States as well as advisory support provided by the European Commission.
- **Project Support Teams (PST)** provide direct support to Applied Research projects. PST includes at least one representative of the ESPON MC and one representative of the European Commission. PST, together with EGTC experts, follow and guide the implementation of the AR.
- **ESPON Contact Points** are a network of designated national bodies responsible for programme outreach at transnational and national levels.

- **Certifying Authority (CA)** is based in the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure in Luxembourg and has a role in guaranteeing and verifying the accuracy of the accounts and making payment applications to the EC.
- **Audit Authority (AA)** is based in the General Inspection of Finance in France and is charged with conducting audits to verify the correct functioning of the management and control system of the ESPON 2020 Programme.

1.2 PERFORMANCE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

A key feature of the mid-term evaluation is to verify the progress of the ESPON 2020 Programme at the half way stage of implementation against its own output and financial expenditure indicators set in the 2020 planning documentation.¹

To begin, the assessment considered the progress so far in terms of the numbers of outputs launched in the context of the milestone targets for 2018 and the final targets for 2023. See Table 2.

Table 2: Performance Framework and Common and Specific Output Indicators of ESPON 2020

No	Indicator	2018 Number of outputs launched	2018 Milestone Target	2023 Final Target
1	Absorption of Priority Axis 1 Programme Budget	Expenditure level met	5,600,000 EUR Auto decommitment target	45,758,109 EUR (Total Priority Axis 1 budget)
2	SO1 - Number of applied research activities/outputs produced	14 launched	14 launched	22
3	SO2 - Number of targeted analysis projects undertaken	20 launched	15 launched	25
4	SO2 - Number of thematic focus papers produced	17 launched	None specified	45
5	SO3- Number of ESPON tools maintained and created	5 launched	4 launched	8
6	SO4 – Number of outreach events	27 held	None specified	40
7	SO4 – Number of outreach publications	34 produced	None specified	20

Based on the data received from the Managing Authority, the overall progress to date indicates that ESPON 2020 has met its milestone output targets and is on track to meet its final output targets, for example:

1. The 2018 milestone target regarding financial expenditure was met; this related to an auto decommitment target of 5.6 million EUR;
2. Regarding the second indicator, 14 applied research activities were launched as of 2018 and a further 6 were included in the 2018 work plan. It is expected that 14 will be completed by the end of 2019;
3. In terms of the targeted analysis projects, 20 have been selected of which 3 are completed and 11 are ongoing. It should be the case 17 are completed by the end of 2019;

¹ ESPON (2013) Cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

4. The production of thematic focus papers is on track with 17 launched in 2018, and it is envisaged that 22 will be completed by the end of 2019;
5. To date, 5 projects to maintain or create tools have been launched and 2 of these will be completed by the end of 2019;
6. The number of outreach events held by the end of 2018 was 27;
7. The number of outreach publications produced by the end of 2018 was 32, exceeding the final target of 20.

Interviews with ESPON stakeholders responsible for programme financial management suggested that there are no financial pressures that may negatively affect the remainder of the programme and care has been taken using Annual Work Plans to efficiently allocate the funding between the Specific Objectives.

Therefore, based on the qualitative feedback, it appeared that there is enough funding remaining to ensure that the 2023 final outputs targets are met. Further stakeholder considerations on the extent of programme financing and the distribution of funding between the Specific Objectives are indicated in section 4.5.

Key conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- ESPON 2020 has met its own milestone output targets for 2018 and will likely meet the final output targets for 2023.
- ESPON 2020 has invested a sufficient amount of funding up to the interim period and has access to enough resources to finance the remaining outputs.

Recommendation for the future ESPON Programmes

- The milestone auto decommitment target was set at a low level as indicated in the ESPON 2020 Programme documents. To better reflect the actual amount of financial expenditure at the interim period, this could be increased for future ESPON programmes.

1.3 REVIEW OF THE RESULTS INDICATORS

In addition to the output and financial expenditure indicators, ESPON 2020 established six results indicators at the outset of the Programme.

While the Cooperation Programme does not establish the methodology to be used for the results indicators, the measurement approach suggested is based on comparing quantitative use and approval ratings between 2015 and 2023. Examples of two of the indicators are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of the results indicators

Specific Objective	Indicator	Target Value
Enhanced European territorial evidence production through applied research and analysis (SO1)	Number of potential users within selected target groups affirming use of ESPON applied research outputs and results in policy and programming processes	Increase by 15-25% (from 2015 to 2023)
Upgraded knowledge transfer and use of analytical support (SO2)	Number of potential users in selected target groups affirming they are satisfied with ESPON knowledge transfer and analytical user support.	Increase by 15-25% (from 2015 to 2023)

While it is commendable to measure the extent of ESPON output usage, it is not clear what is meant exactly by the term “number of potential users”. The number of potential users extends to all EU and Member State authorities and other stakeholders that have policy making competencies in the scope of the research covered by ESPON. Therefore, unless there is significant investment in constructing a sampling frame that covers all potential users, it is difficult to see how a survey strategy could be employed to measure uptake using this definition.²

The second results indicator type aims to measure the level of user satisfaction. Presumably, one would need to collect Likert scale data to measure this concept. Again, there would be issues in surveying a group of organisations that could be considered as potential users. Also, the targets set are ambitious considering that the respondents selected would need to have a very good understanding of the context in both 2015 and 2023 to provide meaningful comparative feedback concerning their level of satisfaction. The survey approach would also not reveal the reasons for the feedback provided.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the pilot behavioural additionality indicator survey

Conclusions

- The current approach to measuring results is not currently specified sufficiently and possibly will not generate meaningful feedback on ESPON programme performance.

Recommendation for the ESPON 2020 Programme and the future ESPON Programmes

- The feasibility of measuring the results of the programme quantitatively should be reviewed;
- As a suggestion, it could be useful to examine the results of the ESPON Programme qualitatively using Target Group representatives’ workshops. The idea would be to facilitate in-depth discussions in selected areas of ESPON Programme governance to compare the situation in 2015 to 2023 to produce a collectively agreed Target Group assessment of progress. The aims would be to establish the strengths and weaknesses of

² For the mid-term evaluation, the assessment of the uptake of the outputs was based on surveying organisations that were part of the ESPON mailing list. However, this list does not cover all potential users but only those that have self-selected themselves to be part of the ESPON network.

the Programme in 2015, identify the measures that have been introduced to strengthen Programme performance, and analyse their effectiveness in realising the necessary results in the 2023 context. Ultimately, the feedback provided would provide practical insights regarding the extent to which the Programme meets the needs of the Target Group and how the ESPON Programme could be reformed going forward.

1.4 PILOT TESTING OF BEHAVIOURAL ADDITIONALITY INDICATORS

An area of Programme performance that is not currently being examined relates to the positive changes that are being realised by beneficiaries via participation in ESPON 2020 projects.

Previous research has revealed that often programme beneficiaries experience multiple types of benefits from participation in grant funded activities that go beyond the public value of the outputs themselves known as behavioural additionalities.

Typically, behavioural additionality approaches seek to identify and measure a wide array benefits that may be derived due to project participation; this includes benefits that were not considered originally by the programme planning documentation such as the development of beneficiary cognitive and other capabilities. Items normally considered include enhanced learning, capacity building, strengthened networks and strengthened strategic capabilities etc.

One aim of the mid-term evaluation was to test the suitability and feasibility of behavioural additionality indicators using Likert scales on a pilot sample of ESPON project participants. Please see Annex 1 for more details on the results. The key conclusions of this pilot exercise are as follows:

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the pilot behavioural additionality indicator survey

Conclusions

- The pilot results suggest that ESPON project beneficiaries are experiencing a range of unintended beneficial impacts across several dimensions such as skills development, network building with other research organisations and public authorities, and the strengthened ability to attract future public research funding etc;
- ESPON funding is helping to channel university research towards issues that are policy relevant to public authorities, for example, by encouraging researchers to target their future work toward the needs of policy-makers;
- Researchers on ESPON projects are experiencing enhanced levels of job satisfaction by linking their expertise to the research needs of public authorities;

Recommendation for the ESPON 2020 Programme and the Future Programmes

- The likely benefits of ESPON project participation should be communicated to tenderers and relevant members of the Target Group to help further promote the Programme.

2. Evaluation objectives and methods

2.1 THE EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The mid-term evaluation of ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme is set at an interesting time, also given that the programme has undergone a significant revision to its architecture and procedures since the previous period, and therefore should be subject to review. Furthermore, the evaluation will provide opportunities to introduce adjustments to enhance the ESPON 2020 Programme implementation in the current period and beyond.

As indicated in the terms of reference, the **evaluation objectives** were to:

- identify **strengths and potential weaknesses** in the ESPON 2020 Programme;
- identify the **achievements** of the ESPON 2020 Programme realized up to now;
- suggest possible **improvements to strengthen the implementation** of the current ESPON 2020 Programme;
- suggest possible elements that could be considered by the Monitoring Committee for the following **ESPON post-2020**;
- and indicate the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and consistency** of the ESPON 2020 Programme including the programme architecture.

The objectives also set-out the core issues to be explored by the evaluation by focusing on strengths, weaknesses and achievements, and the types of findings, conclusions and recommendations needed to strengthen the ESPON 2020 Programme performance in the current and future periods.

The renewed architecture and procedures of the ESPON 2020 programme was 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.

The evaluation should also indicate whether and to which extent the ESPON 2020 Programme has addressed these challenges, as indicated below.

1. Improve substantially the transfer of territorial evidence, knowledge and results to the policy arena ensuring appropriateness, timeliness, clarity, relevance and quality of the evidence.
2. Offer policy-relevant analyses upon demand from target stakeholders at EU and national, regional and local level. The analyses should provide territorial evidence to European, national and regional/local policy-making in a timely and responsive manner, being understandable and efficiently communicated.
3. Provide stronger validation of the scientific quality of results and the comparability of data in support of innovative policy actions.
4. Ensure the effective outreach of ESPON 2020 evidence to new users through coordinated efforts including the ECP Network.

5. Reinforce the in-house capacity by strengthening senior scientific and communicative expertise in order to improve knowledge transfer and outreach and make it feasible to “fast track” territorial evidence into the policy debate.
6. Encourage other ESI funding programmes and bodies to use territorial evidence.
7. Establish an institutional set up which significantly reduces the overall administrative burden of the ESPON 2020 Programme for Member and Partner State administrations and for beneficiaries.
8. Apply administrative procedures, including the use of service contracts that, through a lower level of administrative burden, will promote further the interest in being involved in delivering ESPON 2020 territorial evidence.

2.2 THE EVALUATION APPROACH

The terms of reference indicate a series of indicative questions covering the objectives, outputs and results, and the programme architecture of the study. The purpose of the indicative questions has been to provide guidance on the main elements to be addressed by the evaluation.

By focusing a series of questions on the objectives, outputs and results, key issues could be examined regarding the quality of the outputs, their policy relevance, the extent of their uptake, and the level of outreach. These questions have helped to shed light on the perception of the target groups towards the ESPON 2020 Programme and its outputs, their views on whether they consider the outputs to be practically useful, the extent of target group engagement in the ESPON 2020 Programme, and the extent to which territorial evidence has fed into relevant policy making and strategic planning activities etc.

In addition, the questions around involvement of the Monitoring Committee (MC), appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures and the ESPON EGTC /MA, have led to insight being generated around the performance of key implementation mechanisms of the ESPON 2020 Programme, identifying relevant strengths and weaknesses, as well as how the approach to implementation can be improved.

In addition, as requested by the terms of reference, we have reviewed the proposed Programme indicators to assess if they appropriately catch the main added value and contribution of the ESPON 2020 Programme. We agree that Programme indicator frameworks are often insufficient for evaluation as they typically only generate data on inputs and outputs, rather than seeking to identify a wide range of other benefits that materialise through actors gaining access to programme resources, support and new networks when participating in research projects. To frame our approach to this assessment, we have explored the concept of ‘additionality indicators’. Additionality indicators are used to identify additional benefits of programmes and typically focus on how project participation can lead to development of cognitive and other capabilities therefore enabling actors to better overcome problems and failures going forward. Such indicators include enhanced learning, capacity building, strengthened networks and strengthened strategy capabilities etc.

2.3 ADDRESSING THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation questions have been defined based on the categories of “quality of output”, “policy relevance”, “uptake of evidence”, outreach”, “involvement of the MC”, “Appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures”, etc.

Within the main assessment topics, we have linked the research questions to the relevant evaluation criteria’s of the EU better regulation framework, namely; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of the ESPON 2020 Programme. With a view to clarifying the analytical framework, the aim of this task is to learn which evaluation criteria the main assessment topics relate to.

Quality of the outputs: in respect of the quality of the outputs, multiple sub criteria are touched upon including relevance, effectiveness, consistency and additionalities. To begin, we explore whether the outputs are relevant to the stakeholders and target groups, for example, whether the terms of reference for projects are realistic / well focused, and the outputs themselves are made available in a format that are user friendly for the target groups. Moreover, we explore if the ESPON 2020 Programme is working effectively considering the quality of the outputs, whether any changes to their quality have occurred since the last programme, whether stakeholder satisfaction is increasing, and whether the quality of the outputs are consistent across the Specific Objectives and the Annual Work Plans. In addition, we consider whether the increased number of staff / management measures has led to a more effective validation of the scientific quality of the results etc., and if additionalities are occurring, for example, around effects resulting from the added value of the knowledge produced by ESPON.

Policy relevance off the outputs: the concept of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and consistency are applied here examining if the outputs are relevant to the policies (and also geographies) managed by target groups and to what extent, whether the outputs are making an effective and consistent contribution to the policy fields concerned and the role of the PST’s in this respect. In addition, we explore if ESPON efficiently provides outputs according to a shorter timetable.

Uptake of evidence: the evaluation criteria of effectiveness and consistency is applied to explore whether there have been improvements in the effective and consistent transfer of the outputs to the target groups, whether stakeholder ownership is sufficient to encourage uptake, whether ESIF programmes and other bodies are more involved in the uptake of ESPON products, whether the outreach strategy is sufficient and targeting a differentiated range of stakeholders, and the extent to which outreach is consistently occurring at EU, national, regional and local levels.

Outreach: the extent of outreach activities is examined in terms of their effectiveness and consistency considering issues such as whether there are more researchers and target groups attracted to ESPON, is the ECP network consistently effective and coordinated in supporting outreach activities, whether the outreach events and publications meet the needs of the target groups, the added value of the ESPON network in support the transfer of territorial evidence etc.

The following main assessment topics relate to the renewed programme architecture and follow the logic of the assessment questions in the terms of reference.

Involvement of the MC: applying the sub criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and consistency, we explore a range of issues, for example, if the dialogue between the EGTC and MC in order to identify issues to be included in the AWP is efficient, if the role of the MC in the PSTs is sufficient and effective, the extent of the administrative burden for the MC participating in the PST, is the changing members of the PST affecting the consistent policy relevance of the outputs etc.

Appropriateness of the administrative and procedures: the sub-criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and consistency is used to examine the overall performance of the programme architecture, whether streamlined procedures e.g. services contracts, are providing increased levels of efficiency and promotion of academic interest, whether there is a consistent level of interest from service providers from all MS, and whether the administrative burden has been reduced for all stakeholders.

ESPON EGTC/MA: using the sub-criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and consistency a range of issues is explored including whether the scientific and communicative capacity of EGTC matches the efficient transfer of knowledge and outreach reducing at the same time the need for external services, if the increased number of staff have effectively and consistently offered policy relevant analyses, and whether the staff of the EGTC are relevant to meeting the needs of the ESPON 2020 Programme.

Allocation of resources: under the sub-criteria of efficiency and consistency, we examine if the resources have been consistency allocated across the Priority Axes and Specific Objectives with a view to matching the needs of the stakeholders and target groups, exploring if any readjustment is thought to be needed.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection phase was the main part of the evaluation where we collected new information to address the evaluation questions. The data collection phase was built around the research tools that are explained further below; they were:

- A survey of the 4000 target groups members that are part of the ESPON mailing list who can comment on the objectives, outputs and results of the ESPON 2020 Programme;
- A survey of relevant stakeholders (as many as possible) e.g. officials, project partners and experts that can provide feedback on the performance of the programme architecture;
- In-depth interviews with stakeholders;
- Case studies and uptake stories – including further interviews with stakeholders and interviews - to explore dimensions of quality of outputs, relevance, uptake and impact of programme support teams and other programme implementation on participants and outcomes. Uptake stories have been used to analyse in detail the mechanisms behind successful examples where ESPON results have really been used as part of national, regional or local policy development or planning.

Survey to the ESPON target group

The target group survey to the ESPON target group concerning outputs, results and impacts was launched in July after confirmation from the client that the approach was satisfactory.

The target group survey approach reflects a client request to examine the impact of the changes to the new 2020 programme. Therefore, for each question, respondents with knowledge of both programmes have been asked to comment on the performance of the 2020 programme, and to compare the 2013 programme to the 2020 programme.

A number of separate approaches / analyses were requested by the client to ensure that the data collected / results are appropriate, this includes:

- A separate survey to the relevant organisations that have engaged with the EGTC to comment on the uptake, policy relevance and the efficiency of the provision of the on-demand research;
- Addressing the following questions through analysis of existing procurement data rather than collecting survey data:
 - Is the programme attracting a higher number of researchers?
 - Has the programme succeeded in attracting more and new researchers?

Online Survey with key stakeholders

The second survey on the administrative architecture and procedures was sent to representatives from the key ESPON stakeholders such as the Monitoring Committee (MC), Managing Authority (MA), the ESPON EGTC, and ESPON Contact points. The survey is contained in the Annex.

Filtering: Survey respondents to the two surveys have been guided by a filtering mechanism so that persons with appropriate experience of ESPON and relevant organisational characteristics have been guided to the questions of relevance to them. In the inception report we included the entire “filter schematics” so any interested reader is referred to our previous report.

Interviews

Interviews have been undertaken with stakeholders, MA/MC/EGTC officials, and experts who have been involved in ESPON activities in this and previous programme periods. Interview questions have focused on quality and policy relevance of outputs and impacts, and around the effect of changes that have been made to the current programme compared to last period. They have also addressed the national/regional perspective on the use of ESPON knowledge in policy development. These interviews are used for the analysis of evaluation questions – but mainly they have served the purpose of validating the approach to the evaluation questions, to get more familiar with the programme, pilot specific questions for the surveys, and to pick up on aspects of the programme only known among different stakeholders.

Case studies

The purpose of the case studies was to collect information that was useful in analysing the evaluation questions related to main assessment topics and to the architecture of the programme as well as to indicate whether and to which extent the ESPON 2020 Programme has addressed the eight main challenges. Outcomes from the case studies also help us to develop recommendations for the implementation of ESPON in the current and future periods. The case studies furthermore provide testing

grounds for the identification and exploration of additionality indicators such as ‘enhanced learning, capacity building, strengthened networks and strengthened strategy capabilities etc.’.

The desk research for the case study analysis include existing material from selected projects derived from the ESPON homepage such as final reports, case study reports and other deliverables. We also conduct in-depth interviews with selected project leaders and project members, stakeholders, and Project Support Team (PST). Besides talking to the people closest to the projects, we use experts in the policy-field of the project, as well as the target groups most clearly defined for the projects uptake, to gain an objective view as to the relevance and effectiveness of the material produced. Condensed case-study reports can be found in a separate annex.

Uptake stories

In addition to the case studies, we have investigated and exemplified how ESPON outputs and results have been used in policy processes with a focus on delivery mechanisms and what are the most important factors for encouraging uptake of ESPON results. Fact-sheets from the uptake stories can be found in a separate annex.

The evaluation is a triangulation of all of these sources mentioned above, and the database behind our conclusions and recommendations is the surveys, case studies and uptake stories which are presented in condensed formats in the annexes to this report. We also hold a library of interviews conducted as part of stakeholder interviews, cases and uptake stories.

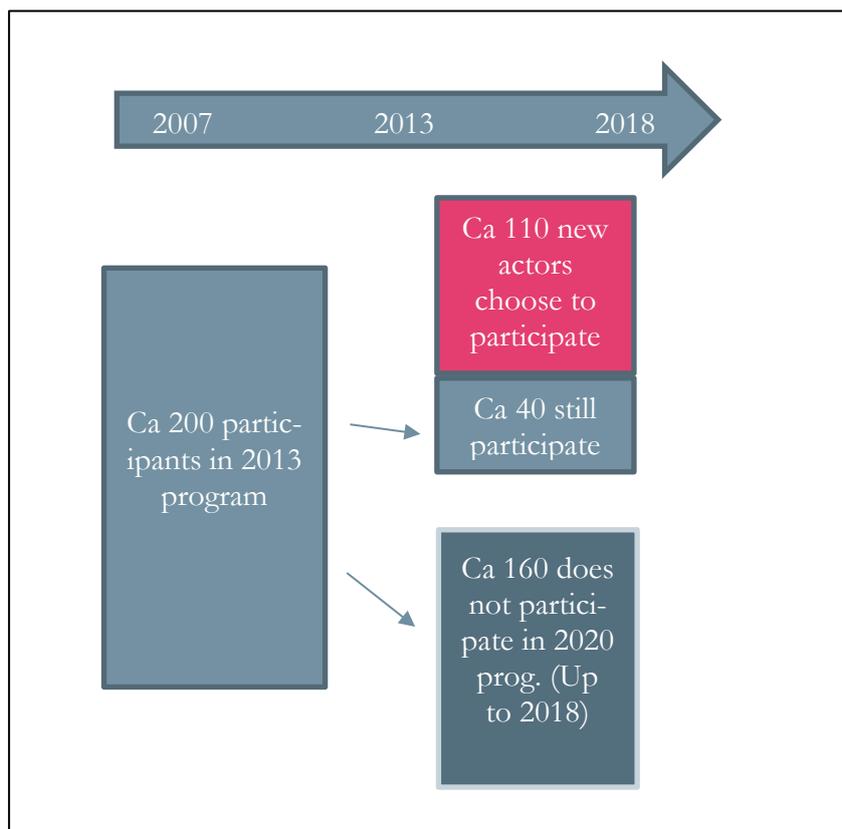
3. Analysis of participation – institutions and countries

A systematic analysis which we have performed based on lists of beneficiaries (all participants) in the 2013 and 2020 program is showing us that ESPON 2020 program is actually reaching a high share of new institutions. Based on the material in the databases it is not possible to reveal if it is new actors getting involved with ESPON projects or if it is the case that researchers are moving between universities, institutes and private firms in countries and across Europe.

It is evident that there is a core of actors that are participating quite a lot in both programme periods, but that the “long tail” of participants that participate in 1 or 2 projects in a period is dynamic and that there are more than 160 participants which were active in the 2013 program which are not taking part in this 2020 program period. Looking into the detailed list of participating institutes, firms and university institutions we can see that there is quite a replacement of participants with a lot of new names and even universities in newer MS in this program period; even though they are only participating in 1 or 2 projects. Some new actors, which did not have projects in the 2013 program, are now found in the list of top participants in the 2020 program. At the same time some of the established participants seem to have participated to a much lesser extent. It is unclear if this is due to a lack of applying or a lower success rate in applications accepted. What is clear though it that the result is that ESPON is working with many new actors in the 2020 programme.

What we also see, and what can complement the message from some of the actors in the interview study (reported further in following chapters), is that the number of consultancy firms that participate is increasing rather dramatically. On the top 20 list of participating institutions in the 2020 programme we find no less than 7 firms (consultancies and research/analysis firms). In the 2013 programme the corresponding number on the top 20 was 2 such firms. It is clear from looking at the full list of participants that this trend is evident also looking at participants with only 1 or 2 projects. More consultancies and more “individuals” are found on the list of beneficiaries.

Dynamics in participation	
Participants in 2013-prog.	203
Participants in 2020-prog. (until 12/2018)	150
Institutions participating in both programs	41
Newcomers in 2020 program	109
2013 participants not found in the 2020-prog	162



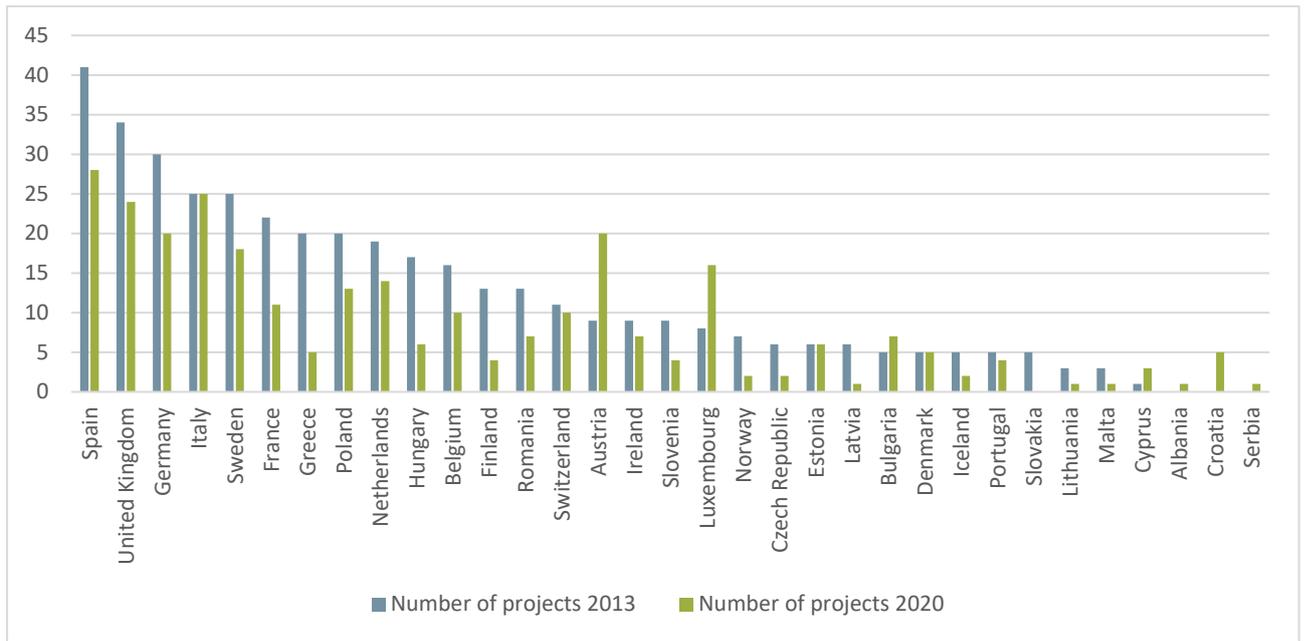
Top 30 participants 2013 prog		Top participants 2020 prog	
Institution	Nr. Projects	Institution	Nr. Projects up to 2018 (nr in 2013)
Nordregio - Nordic Center for Spatial Development, Sweden	18	Nordregio	14 (18)
Free University of Brussels, Belgium	12	Spatial Foresight	12 (0)
Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain	10	MCRIT	8 (6)
Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland	8	OIR GmbH	7 (2)
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania	7	Delft University of Technology	5 (5)
Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Norway	7	University of Geneva	5 (4)
Polytechnics of Milan - ABC, Italy	7	Ecorys	4 (0)
MCRIT S.L., Spain	6	Politecnico di Torino	4 (2)
Warsaw University, Poland	5	Technopolis	4 (1)
Delft University of Technology, Netherlands	5	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	4 (10)
BBSR, Germany	5	University of Valencia	4 (2)
French National Centre for Scientific Research, France	5	Accademia Europea di Bolzano - EURAC Research	3 (0)
Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden	5	Spiekermann&Wegener	3 (5)
Spiekerman & Wegener Urban and Regional Research, Germany	5	TCP International GmbH	3 (0)
University of Akureyri, Iceland	5	Universite Paris Diderot	3 (5)

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia	5	University College Dublin	3 (1)
University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg	5	University of Lisbon	3 (0)
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom	5	University of Liverpool	3 (3)
University of Tartu, Estonia	5	Valdani Vicari Associati VVA	3 (0)
University Paris Diderot - Paris 7, France	5		
Fundación Tecnalia Research & Innovation, Spain	4		
Leibniz Institute, Germany	4		
National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland	4		
National Technical University of Athens, Greece	4		
Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Netherlands	4		
Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece	4		
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary	4		
State Regional Development Agency, Latvia	4		
University of Geneva, Switzerland	4		
University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Italy	4		

Looking at the number of projects that participants from different countries are active in (as lead or participants) the distribution is rather similar as in 2013-program, with some important differences. For instance, Austria and Luxemburg are participating more intensively in this period; and this is projects and not the services provided to the ESPON EGTC, MA or MC. For **Luxemburg** Spatial Foresight are participating in 12 projects made up of 4 AR, 4 TA, 2 Tools/database, 1 policy brief and 1 territorial review. For **Austria** there are a mix of participants, but ÖIR is participating in 7 projects.

Also, it is interesting to note that some countries are participating to a lesser extent than before – e.g. Greece, Finland, Norway, Czech Republic, Latvia and Hungary – while some new countries are participating for the first time – e.g. Albania, Croatia and Serbia. From discussions with participants and officials of the ESPON program we know that there are particular stories and explanations behind many of the fluctuations we see in the figure below. Sometimes there are individuals which have been or are very active in ESPON, sometimes the organisation of the ECP have an impact, and sometimes domestic policies have an impact. Without going further into the details for each country displaying higher or lower levels of participation we recommend that ESPON MA and EGTC continue to monitor the activities across participating countries to best target efforts to ensure a wide and active participation.

One important note to make about the participation of Nordregio is that we have noted this down as Swedish participation, but the institute is governed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and staffed with researchers from across the Nordic countries (as well as rest of the world). Hence, to be true, the participation rate for Nordregio (in the 2020 program making up 14 projects so far) should perhaps be credited to other countries such as Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, as well.



4. Analysis of the responses related to relevance, outputs and results

This chapter reports the results and analysis of the survey, interviews, cases and uptake stories focusing on assessment topics related to relevance, quality of outputs, outreach activities and uptake of ESPON evidence. At the end of each sub-chapter, conclusions are provided for each assessment topic.

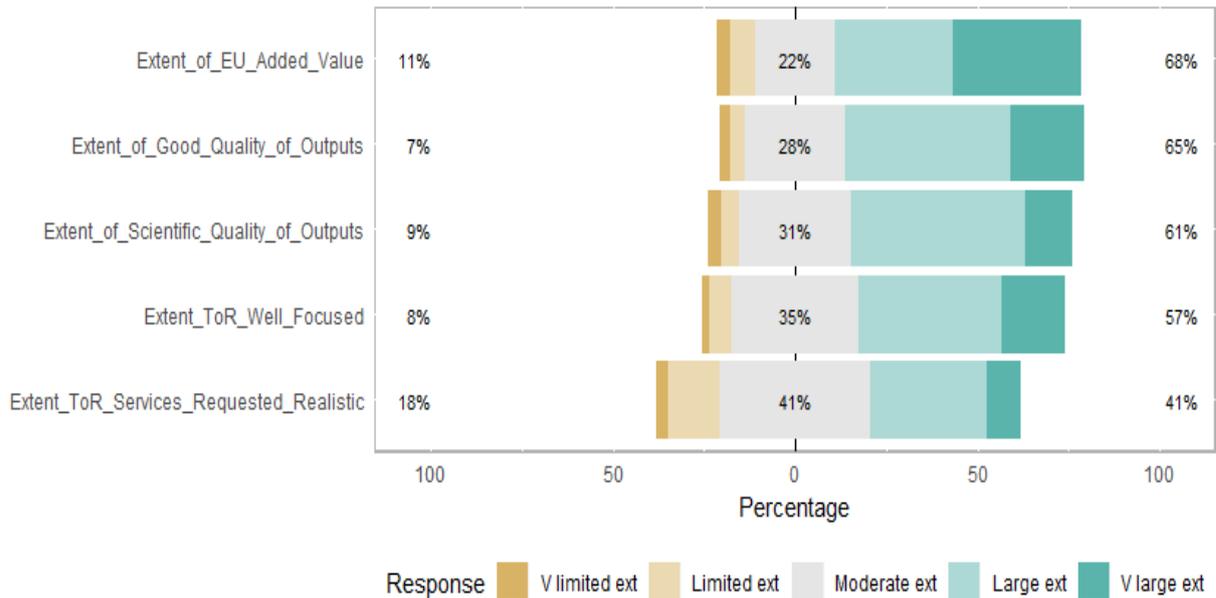
4.1 QUALITY OF OUTPUTS

In the interviews and case studies we have had the opportunity to discuss with various stakeholders how they perceive the relevance and quality of the material produced in both ESPON projects and the material produced by the EGTC as part of the outreach and dissemination processes. Together with the survey responses this provides a good picture about how stakeholders and users perceive the quality of ESPON, and what aspects of the outputs that need to be developed further.

To begin, specifically, the Target Group survey respondents were invited to provide feedback on several questions in the assessment topic area of the ‘quality of the outputs’. This included questions on to what extent respondents considered ESPON to provide European Added Value, whether the ESPON 2020 outputs were a good quality and a good scientific quality overall, whether the terms of reference for ESPON 2020 projects were well focused, and whether the services requested by ESPON 2020 terms of reference were realistic, as indicated in Figure 5.1.

Please note that the order of the questions as presented in the visuals are arranged from highest to lowest according to the sum of the percent of the responses to the ‘large extent’ and ‘very large extent’ categories, as indicated by the scores on the right hand-side of the visuals. The online survey questions are indicated in the footnotes with summarised questions presented on the left-hand side of the visuals.

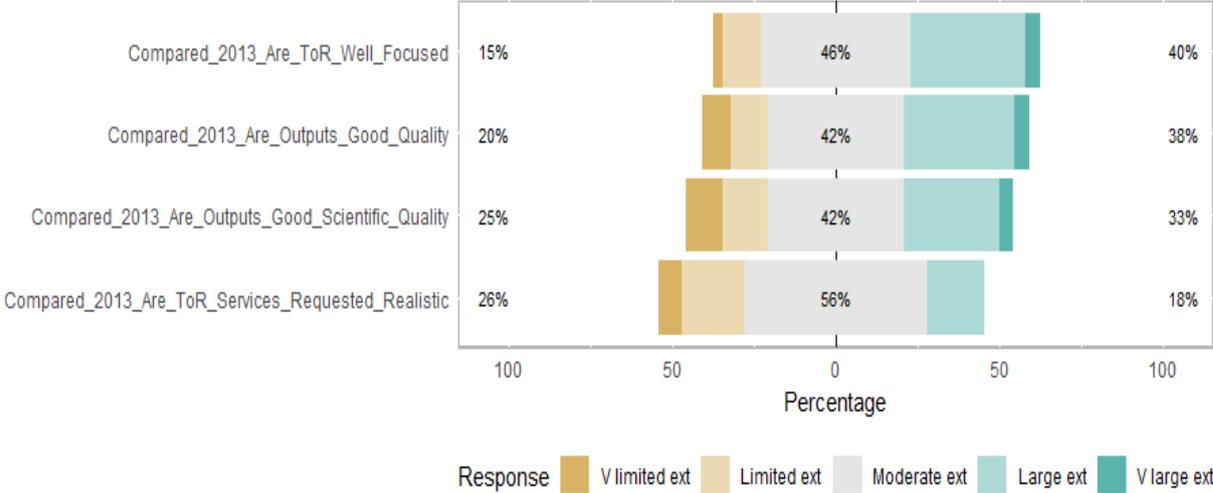
Figure 5.1: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Quality of the outputs’³



Similar questions in the assessment topic area of the ‘Quality of the Outputs’ were also put forward to the Target Group survey respondents asking them to comment on the extent to which improvements have been made under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013 from very limited to very large extents.

-
- ³ Considering the type of research results generated by ESPON, to what extent does ESPON 2020 provide European Added Value over and above what could be achieved by Member State bodies acting alone or bilaterally?
 - To what extent do you consider ESPON 2020 financed outputs to be good quality overall?
 - To what extent do the ESPON 2020 outputs have a good scientific quality?
 - To what extent are the terms of reference for ESPON 2020 projects well-focused?
 - To what extent are the services requested by the terms of reference for ESPON 2020 projects realistic?

Figure 5.2: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Quality of the outputs’ for ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013⁴



According to Figure 5.1, **the most positive survey responses received concerned the extent to which ESPON 2020 had obtained European Added Value.** Given the survey responses, it can be deduced that the role of ESPON is well-appreciated by the Target Group, and likely fulfils a unique role in the institutional research landscape that is not easy to duplicate by Member States acting alone or bilaterally.

Similarly, the qualitative evidence suggested that ESPON provides clear European Added Value by conducting comparative analyses and producing territorial evidence at the pan-European level. Our interviews and observations indicated also that the ESPON outputs, that provide analyses across different territories, are sometimes complementary to the data gathering activities and analyses being conducted at national and regional level. Thus, ESPON provides corresponding and unique comparative territorial knowledge useful for policy and planning processes.

Other comparable feedback suggested that the project results are relevant and timely and are focusing on topics which are not researched by other major actors, further suggesting that ESPON provides outputs within a demanded niche.

- ⁴ Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the terms of reference for ESPON 2020 projects well-focused?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent do you consider ESPON 2020 financed outputs to be of a good quality overall?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent do the ESPON 2020 outputs have a good scientific quality?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the services requested by the terms of reference for ESPON 2020 projects realistic?

Similarly, as indicated by Figure 5.1, **there was positive feedback from the Target Group in response to the measure examining whether the ESPON 2020 outputs were of a good quality.** Thus, it appears that the research outputs generally meet a high-quality standard as determined by the Target Group, **suggesting that the approach to project design and implementation is subject to sufficient quality control mechanisms and meet the needs of users broadly speaking.**

As indicated in Figure 5.2, **in comparison to ESPON 2013, the research outputs for ESPON 2020 were considered to have made a moderate improvement mainly.** Clearly, the results suggest that improving the quality of the outputs over time has its challenges if they meet a high standard already, although it is promising that some perceived improvements were made.

A further series of questions were put forward to the target group regarding the extent of the scientific quality of the outputs realised. These questions are indirectly related to the performance of the ESPON 2020 Scientific Quality Management action that has role of providing scientific guidance to the EGTC project experts responsible for project development and implementation around applied research activities and other areas.

Again, **the Target Group suggested that scientific quality of the outputs under ESPON 2020 was largely to a high standard,** see Figure 5.1. Moreover, compared to ESPON 2013, ESPON 2020 is perceived to have made moderate improvements regarding the scientific quality of the outputs, please see Figure 5.2 Again, while a positive finding, it may be difficult to make large improvements in a short timeframe if the scientific quality standards are already to a relatively high level.

Similarly, the qualitative feedback revealed that the ESPON financed outputs are considered to be good quality overall, suggesting that the ESPON 2020 outputs have already obtained broad approval.

However, some issues were mentioned. One key aspect was the way in which the ESPON results are presented typically in an undifferentiated manner to different Target Group members with different needs. Policy recommendations, which are often seen at a measure of quality of the project results, are difficult to transfer to a heterogenous environment with different countries and different policies. Also, it was suggested that the indicators and tools should be *differentiated* more to increase their applicability and usefulness and cover more policy relevant domains. Some respondents highlighted how indicators were often too general to be useful in applied policy or program discussions such as CBC programmes or other ESIFs.

Thus, there are two aspects to consider going forward: the first relates to better research design considerations to ensure that the end results are more policy relevant to the needs of different Target Group members; the second is better nuanced communication of the results so that they are tailored to different contexts.

However, it should be recognised that the Applied Research and Territorial Analyses projects already have strong public authority involvement procedures, meaning that potential users have a role in shaping the content to the practical needs of policy makers. The authorities interviewed appreciated this unique way of conducting research compared to other research programmes where they are less involved in the design aspects. Therefore, going forward, further strengthening this existing practice would be beneficial in supporting tailoring of the outputs.

Nevertheless, overall, respondents are satisfied with the quality of outputs presented at the pan-European level using comparative analysis approaches. Here, it was typically considered that ESPON provides high-quality outputs with a clear added value in relation to transnational, national and regional-level data and analyses.

Again, in terms of the reports produced by the projects, the consensus is that they are well perceived and of high quality.

However, according to some respondents, the usability and uptake of the ESPON reporting outputs will be tested further in the coming period as stakeholders will increasingly use the documentation as the basis for discussions with their political representatives. At this point in time, we are only at the mid-point in assessing the ESPON 2020 programme, and it could be slightly too early to say how the quality is perceived among the wider community of official and political users e.g. how the evidence can be used for policy making or strategies.

Thus, there are some indications that challenges lie ahead in turning high quality (academic level) research into high quality policy making inputs. One respondent stressed that: *“We really need to discuss the problem of having an academic product. If the report is meant for decision-making, it must be easy to understand for decision-makers (i.e. politicians)”*.

Clearly, while at this mid-stage point it is difficult to gauge whether this really is a significant problem, it is suggested that this potential issue is monitored to see if a change in the approach to presenting the ESPON results in an academic format is needed. However, it could be the case that supporting outreach procedures could help to solve this problem, such as communicating the results via “policy labs”.

Target Group survey respondents were invited to comment on was the extent to which the Terms of Reference for ESPON 2020 projects were well-focused; again, the results were positive mostly, see Figure 5.1.

Compared to ESPON 2013, there seems to have been a moderate improvement mainly under ESPON 2020 concerning the extent to which the Terms of Reference were well focused according to the Target Group survey respondents. However, as indicated in Figure 5.2., this measure was ranked most positively compared to the other measures in this assessment topic, suggesting that a good level of improvement has been made.

Related to the question above, the Target Group were asked to comment on the extent the services requested by ESPON 2020 Terms of Reference were realistic. Compared to the other measures in the assessment topic, **the Target Group survey respondents were least positive about this measure**, with opinion divided between those that held moderate or positive views on the matter. See Figure 5.1.

In comparison to ESPON 2013, most of the Target Group survey respondents thought that moderate improvements had been made in ensuring that the services requested by ESPON 2020 Terms of Reference were realistic, although this was the least positively rated measure in this assessment topic, as indicated by Figure 5.2.

With regard to the two questions above, the more nuanced qualitative feedback from the interviewees suggested that the ToR for projects under the ESPON 2020 program seem to be well focused but some respondents are concerned about how realistic projects are in the face of new time restrictions, and in the scope of the new service contracts. 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. However, this constraining effect could be considered as a positive factor if the project design results in policy relevant outputs with a high level of usability.

Furthermore, the way projects are managed with multiple reporting steps for projects with a short timeframe means that there is less room for conducting the actual research. We would recommend that a separate investigation is conducted into the perception of tenderers (and possibly non-tenderers) about the clarity, relevance and realism about the current ToR in ESPON. We have asked this question as part of our survey and in cases; but in the light of comments made in interviews we would suggest further evidence and understanding is needed about this aspect of the program.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the quality of the outputs

Conclusions

- ESPON provides clear European added value by conducting comparative analyses and producing territorial evidence at the pan-European level, that are complementary with national and regional research activities. The outputs provide unique territorial policy knowledge not offered by other research organisations;
- Project outputs are considered by stakeholders as offering a high (scientific) quality, with the results perceived generally as relevant and timely;
- However, there are issues around the usability of the ESPON 2020 outputs in terms of their readability and relevance to the needs of specific types of Target Group members;
- The terms of reference are generally well-focused, although issues were detected regarding the (perceived) feasibility of some of the services requested;
- Projects that use short timeframes are now subject to a greater number of reporting requirements due to the new service contracts, resulting in perceived burdens for service providers.

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and future ESPON Programmes

- More tailoring, diversification and adaptation of the (TA and AR) outputs according to the specific needs of the different Target Groups members is required, at EU, national, regional levels, but also in relation to the needs of territories facing comparable phenomena and challenges. Consideration of the nuanced policy development activities and impacts facing specific Target Group members should be better considered;

- Better consideration, specification and contextualisation of the services requested is needed to ensure the feasibility of the types of research activities demanded;
- To test the feasibility of the research methods requested, innovative public procurement procedures that allow consultation of the market could be employed;
- Opportunities could be provided for creative inputs to address specific research challenges while ensuring that these inputs remain relevant to user needs;
- Consideration should be given to reduce the number of reporting outputs expected of projects with short timetables;
- To facilitate the communication of the results, further specialisation and adaptation of the outreach activities and tools to address the practical needs of the Target Group (the context in which the different stakeholders can assimilate and use the evidence and tools produced by ESPON should be taken into account for the design of specific tailored made outreach activities);

Recommendations for future ESPON Programmes

- Review of the academic format of the ESPON outputs to support ease of access to the analyses and results could be considered.

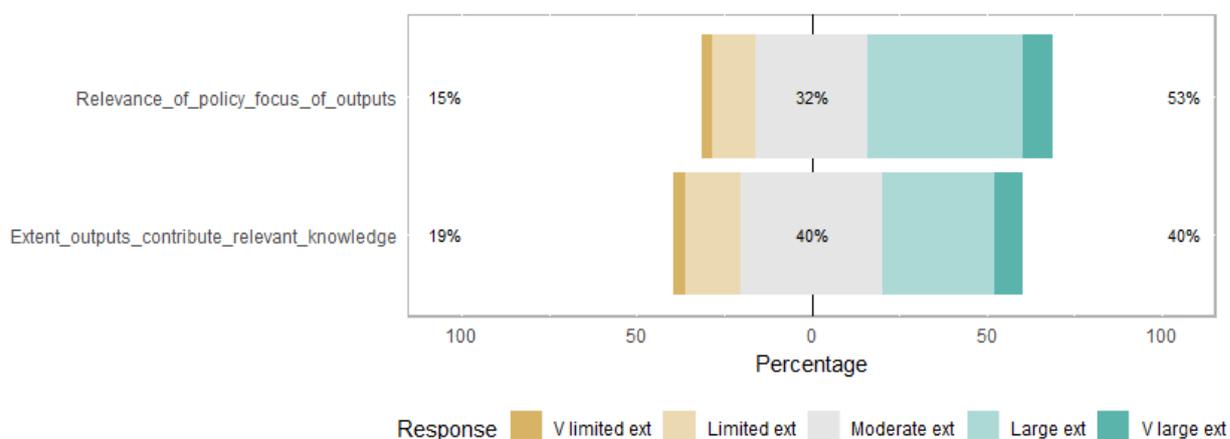
4.2 POLICY RELEVANCE OF THE OUTPUTS

The interviewee and survey respondents were asked to comment on a series of questions under the assessment topic of the policy relevance of the outputs; this broadly covered whether the ESPON outputs and results were relevant to the practical organisational activities of policy makers.

To begin, as part of the online survey, the Target Group were requested to comment on measures related to whether the ESPON 2020 outputs were relevant to the needs of policy making and planning activities, and if the ESPON 2020 outputs were addressing the policy knowledge information needs of public authorities, see Figure 5.3. Please note that the actual survey questions are indicated in the footnotes and abbreviated in the visuals.

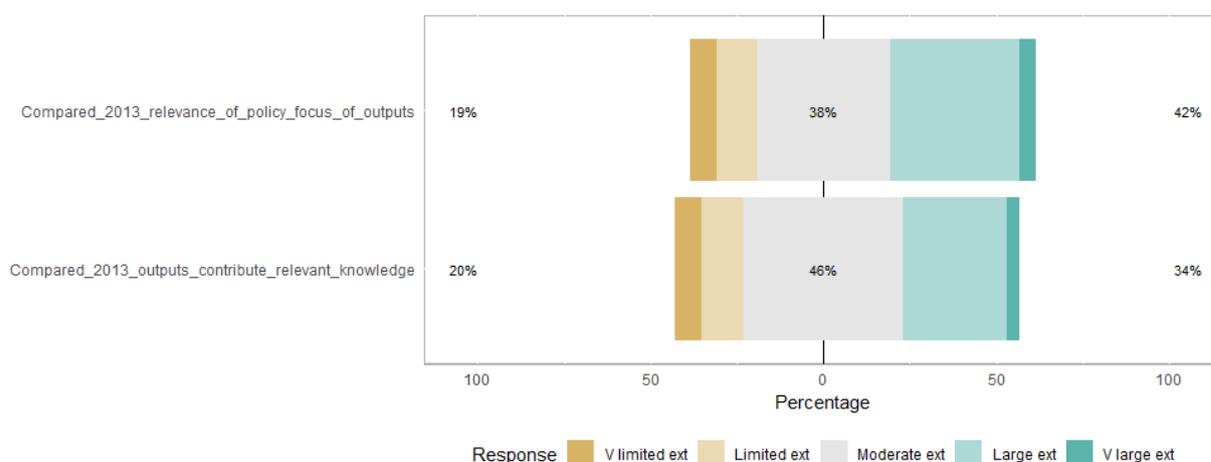
Figure 5.3: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Policy relevance of the outputs’⁵

-
- ⁵ Considering the needs of public authorities, to what extent is the policy focus of the ESPON 2020 outputs relevant to the needs of policy making and/or planning activities?
 - Considering the information needs of public authorities, to what extent are the ESPON 2020 outputs contributing to the development of relevant policy knowledge?



Similarly, the same questions were put forward to the Target Group survey respondents but on this occasion, respondents were asked to compare the situation under ESPON 2020 to ESPON 2013, as indicated in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the 'Policy relevance of the outputs' for ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013⁶



The results of the Target Group survey suggest that the policy focus of the ESPON outputs under ESPON 2020 have a large degree of relevance to policy making and planning activities broadly speaking, as suggested by Figure 5.3. It seems therefore that the processes that ESPON 2020 has established to ensure that the focus of the Programme activities meet the policy needs of the Target Group are working well relatively.

- ⁶ Compared to ESPON 2013, and considering the needs of public authorities, to what extent is the policy focus of the ESPON 2020 outputs relevant to the needs of policy making and/or planning activities?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, and considering the information needs of public authorities, to what extent are the ESPON 2020 outputs contributing to the development of relevant policy knowledge?

Compared to ESPON 2013, opinion seemed to be relatively divided as to whether the relevance of the policy focus of the outputs has improved to moderate or to large extents, although the results suggest that improvements were made under ESPON 2020. Please see Figure 5.4.

However, the evidence from the qualitative part of the investigation is not as clear-cut. On a very general level, most respondents stated that the extent of the policy relevance realised by the ESPON results is high, and that the process of setting the agenda, what topics to focus on and what ToR requirements to prioritize, are working well and making sure that ESPON outputs are focusing on the true needs of policy makers and planners. But, at the same time, there are concerns by some of the interviewees that the extent of the policy relevance obtainable faces challenges such as the geographical scales for comparisons, and the need to “translate” the results to national and local circumstances i.e. in terms of linguistic translations and in terms of ensuring user’ understanding of methods and results. Other issues include the extent of time resources and expertise levels of users to absorb complicated materials, and the extent to which authorities are open to learning about the content i.e. “what’s in it for me”?

On a very positive note, the projects which we have studied in the case studies seem to indicate a high degree of policy relevance, represented by, for instance, in the high demand for projects to be presented, models/tools to be implemented, and requests of information to the projects managers. Moreover, stakeholders indicated that the project results, and activities to disseminate these results, are relevant and useful in the *policy-making* process: *“For me (as a policy maker nationally) the relevance of ESPON knowledge is evident as we are able to incorporate territorial perspectives into policy making – which we cannot do without the work conducted within ESPON”*.

On the separate issue of the development of relevant policy knowledge, the results to the Target Group survey indicated that opinion was split as to whether the ESPON outputs were moderately or largely effective in this respect, although moderate to large improvements had been made when compared to the previous programme, see Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

The qualitative interview feedback on this subject highlighted that the development of “policy knowledge” is a rather difficult aspect to assess since knowledge implies that there is a true learning on the sides of the project participants and users. And as indicated by some respondents, ESPON is not contributing to e.g. evaluation and learning in relation to the impact and results of policies in a direct way. Therefore, “policy knowledge” when discussed is often framed as an increased level of awareness, inspiration and insight among civil servants, but the way knowledge is actually being developed concerning policy is difficult to assess. We have studied some aspects of knowledge development and it is absolutely clear that the workshops developed in collaboration between the EGTC and projects around tools have inspired and helped policy makers to draft policies, have provided insights into other policy making processes (and levels of policy development and implementations) and have served also as forums for supporting discussions and mapping positions of different stakeholders.

Returning to the issue of policy relevance, when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force into 2009, not only economic and social aspects had to be considered but also territorial aspects in terms of territorial cohesion. Consequently, political action was required, and it became necessary to test policies concerning their potential territorial impact and to find methods to do that. So, in a way, the ESPON

activities are directly responding to EU policy making by providing tools that supports EU and regional policy-makers to assess the territorial impact of selected policies in their territories. The cases we have studied clearly support this and highlight how ESPON is fulfilling this task. One stakeholder put it clearly: *“ESPON is truly relevant as it deals with topics not handled by any other actor – e.g. H2020 has no territorial dimension whatsoever. So ESPON helps to develop a culture among researchers and policy makers that “territory does matter” which would not be there otherwise.”*

One important aspect of making sure that policy relevance remains high in ESPON projects is the ownership of results among stakeholders and initiators of projects. Our evaluation suggested that the stakeholder ownership is strong for research conducted under ESPON, also compared to research (projects) conducted under other programmes. The active involvement of stakeholders (particularly in the TA projects) are described as an important aspect for ensuring uptake and use of the results. All projects investigated so far have very active dissemination and uptake activities. This would indicate a rather strong interest from stakeholders in working practically with the project outcomes and models.

However, with a view to strengthening the perceptions around the relevance of the policy focus of the outputs, the qualitative research suggested that strengthened and tailored outreach activities are required to help public authorities better engage with the ESPON 2020 products. One suggestion would be to ensure that the results communicate trends in key groups of regions or territories, so that niche phenomena can be revealed in the data, rather than simply the reporting of general trends.

In addition, as indicated in the section below, these results also need to be seen in view of the results on the performance of the Project Support Teams (PST), which although has helped to improve the policy relevance of the outputs, should also seek to its role to better enhance the policy relevance of the outputs. Please see section 4 for a detailed review of the PST.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the policy relevance of the outputs

Conclusions

- ESPON’s work is perceived generally as policy relevant and adds to the knowledge of policy-makers, although it is felt that improvements to enhance this dimension could be made;
- Policy relevance challenges were identified in terms of the geographical scales of the analyses, the possibility for different levels of public administration to directly utilise the material, and the degree of effort required to manage complex reports;
- The process for selecting project topics to reflect stakeholder’ demand for territorial evidence (e.g. Targeted Analyses projects) is appreciated and benefits the policy relevance of the results.

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- Measures should be introduced to elaborate or transform the ESPON outputs to enhance their policy relevance;

- Procedures that involve stakeholder inputs leading to the enhancement of the policy relevance of the outputs should be expanded upon e.g. the Targeted Analyses project topic selection processes provides a good example of this;
- Stronger territorialisation of the results and a more strategic outreach approach providing targeted information to specific target groups could be employed to address the obstacles around policy relevance;
- As a suggestion, major trends highlighted by applied research projects could be territorialised by considering the dynamics in specific geographical contexts, to ensure that the results better meet the needs of differentiated Target Group members;
- A territorialised outreach strategy could follow to communicate the project results to all levels of policy makers from the relevant typology of regions presenting the benefits, opportunities, challenges represented by certain trends/policy decision etc.
- Thus, the outreach strategy should be directed primarily towards addressing the interests and needs of the specific Target Groups users, rather than focusing on presenting project results that have not been transformed or tailored.
- As part of these efforts, further policy outreach innovations could be considered, for example, policy labs focusing on highly tailored communication of the results to specific Target Group users, and demonstrations on how the results have been used in practice to strengthen policy making activities in policy relevant contexts. Interactive ways of providing output to stakeholders could be explored to enhance the relevance of ESPON outputs for policy making.

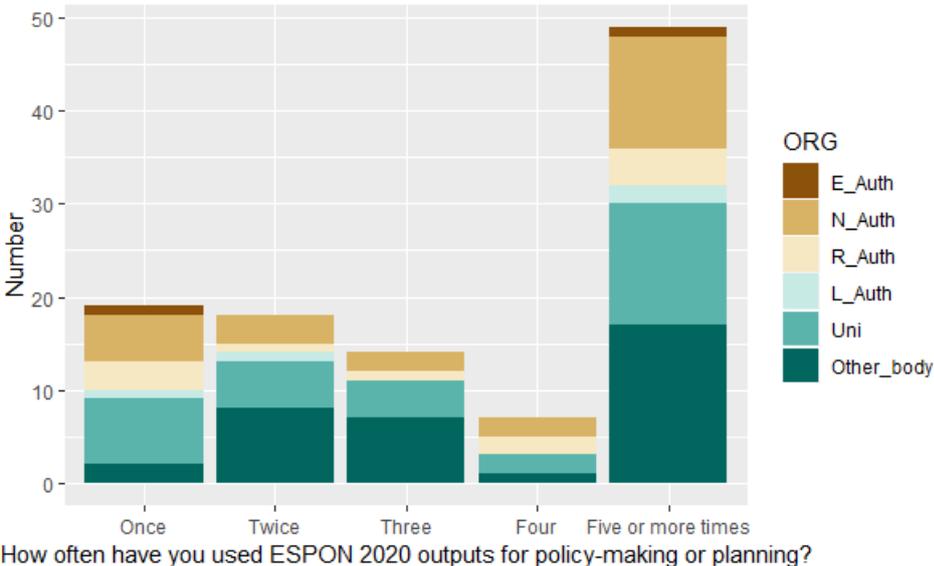
4.3 UPTAKE OF EVIDENCE

The following assessment topic explored using the Target Group survey and interviews examined the extent of the uptake of ESPON 2020 evidence by the Target Group, examining a range of issues such as the frequency of uptake, the transferability of the results to policy making arenas and the extent the ESIF authorities had been stimulated to use the ESPON results.

To identify the extent of the uptake of evidence by public authorities, we asked the Target Group survey respondents how many times they had used the outputs as part of planning or policy making activities; the results suggested that over three quarters of respondents had used the ESPON 2020 outputs in this way, with one quarter suggesting that they had not done so.

However, one must keep in mind that the group surveyed related to the 1500 organisations listed on the ESPON mailing list, and thus the organisations surveyed are not representative of public authorities and other organisations within the EU considering their existing engagement with the ESPON 2020 activities. Yet, the results indicated that the authorities who are active in the ESPON 2020 Target Group community are typically users of the research outputs in practical terms as part of their own policy making or planning activities.

Figure 5.5: How many times have public authorities, universities and other bodies used the ESPON 2020 outputs for planning or policy making purposes⁷



In terms of the organisations that confirmed that they had used the ESPON 2020 outputs as part of policy making or planning activities, **the results suggested that a large proportion of organisations that are active in the ESPON community are frequent users of the outputs considering that many suggested that they had used the outputs 5 times or more**, as indicated in Figure 5.5.

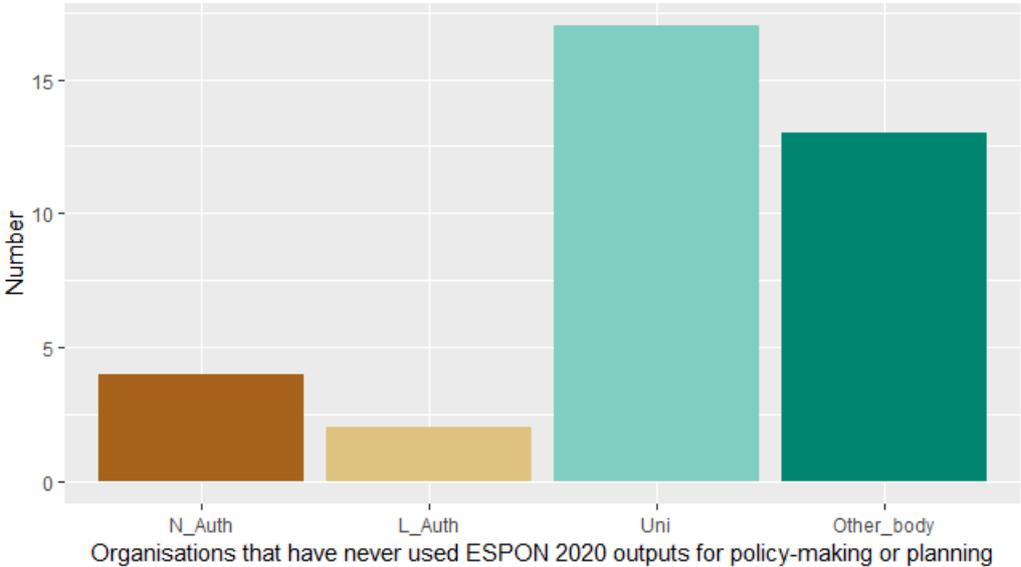
While European, national and regional and local authorities that are part of the ESPON mailing list can be described as typical users, **national authorities seem to be more active than their counterparts, suggesting that further ESPON engagement with regional and local authorities is required going forward**. A further suggestion could be to make the ESPON 2020 outputs more applicable to regional and local contexts, for example, by revealing trends at these governmental levels in data analyses.

It is telling that many universities indicated that they had used the ESPON 2020 outputs in a practical setting, as well as those in the ‘other body’ group which included the PST, ECP, EGTC, MC, research consultancies, freelance researchers etc. Clearly, the use of ESPON 2020 products are finding their

⁷ The other bodies included THE PST, MC, EGTC, ECP research consultancies, freelancers, associations etc

way into policy making activities via processes that involve a wide range of actors already familiar with the results.

Figure 5.6: Overview of organisations that are part of the ESPON community but have never used the ESPON 2020 outputs for planning or policy making purposes⁸



In terms of the organisations that confirmed that they have never used the ESPON 2020 outputs as part of policy making or planning activities, the clear majority were universities and other bodies, with national and local authorities making-up a smaller proportion. This is perhaps not surprising as some of these respondents may not have had a direct role in engaging with policy making processes.

Considering the feedback from the interviews, we agree with most respondents which reflected that that it is too early to make a decisive conclusion on the extent of the uptake of evidence from the current ESPON 2020 programme. The transfer of evidence occurred in the previous period and uptake of territorial evidence is still taking place from projects and models developed in that period. Determining if uptake of evidence has been improved is not an easy task, but we can observe that all of the interviewees from stakeholder interviews, case studies and uptake stories can offer at least anecdotal evidence of transfer of evidence. Just to highlight this, one example is that the Norwegian government is referring to ESPON in their report of redesigning their regional policy, another example is that the TIA tool has been used for many different policy developments.

We have already touched upon some aspects of the policy relevance and quality of results, and how these have an impact on the uptake of evidence. Thus, given the type of results produced so far, and the way this material is “packaged”, it is not surprising that uptake is perceived to be higher right now among EU and institutional policymakers and analysts (like DGs and CoR, etc.). However, among regions and even national level experts the extent of uptake is seemingly less evident, and in the words of one interviewee: *“For the targeted analysis (TA) projects to be used by the administrations in my county there are two issues. First the language, some people cannot use it without translation. Second, the reports/material really*

⁸ The other bodies included ECP, PST, MC, EGTC research consultancies, freelancers etc

needs editing to be useful for anyone below central administration. They cannot pick it up and use it for strategic processes or policy work the way it is written right now”.

This aspect is actually an important one for ESPON strategically since some respondents mentioned it as one of the most important aspects in the discussions and negotiations about the future merits of the ESPON programme. It is equally important to be able to provide a value to the regional and local administrations, as to EU institutions and committees.

Some specific aspects emerge from the **uptake stories** that we have traced as part of this evaluation. The fact that the actors had previous knowledge about the ESPON programme was important for uptake stories to be “successful”. This knowledge was gained through the actors’ own participation in ESPON project application processes, and thanks to other established networks such as METREX and Eurocities. In addition, active communication efforts from the ESPON programme to relevant national stakeholders seems to have been useful in enhancing the level of awareness of governmental authorities and politicians about project results. One peer-to-peer workshop which we have focused on in Latvia is an example of a situation where a project (SPIMA) corresponded very well to the specific needs of a national stakeholder (the Riga Planning Region), which probably is much thanks to SPIMA’s nature of being a Targeted Analysis project led by stakeholders. Furthermore, the SPIMA project report and presentations are appreciated and regarded as useful inspiration and justifying information material for the Latvian stakeholders. The only recommendation of improvement is said to be the summary and conclusion/recommendations part of the report, which the stakeholders said would be good to have translated into national languages in order to make the SPIMA results even more accessible for national stakeholders.

From the uptake stories we learned that there are certain factors or mechanisms that improve and/or facilitate the actual uptake and use of ESPON results by policy-makers:

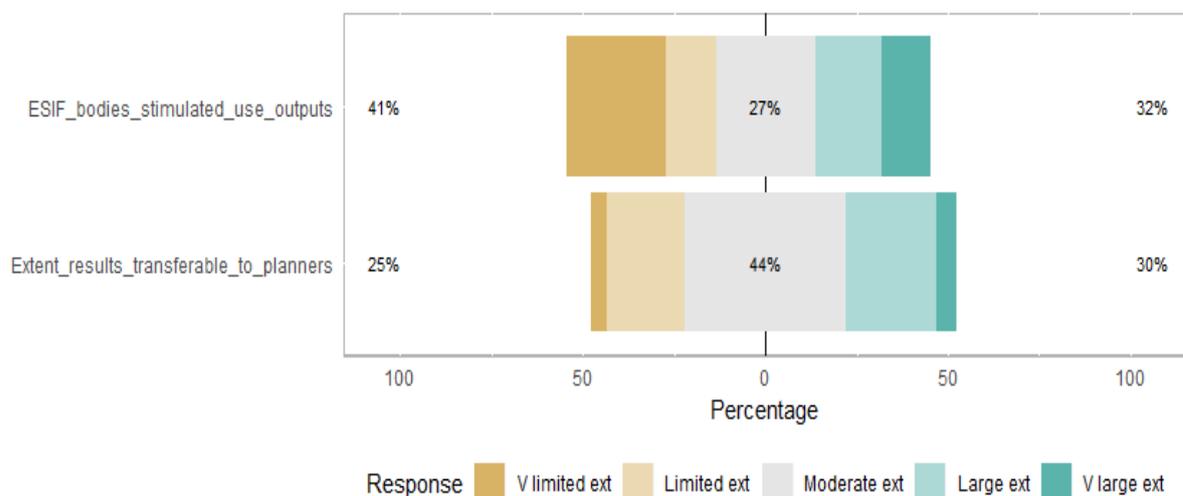
- a) **Knowledge about ESPON:** Policy-makers either knew about ESPON, through e.g. previous involvement in ESPON project, when searching for e.g. territorial evidence or were made aware of ESPON by others, e.g. through networks they participate in (here: METREX, Eurocities, Interact). The uptake stories intend that ESPON is generally well known among policy-makers at national and regional levels. ESPON being an established network in its third programme period, having organized many seminars and conferences is probably as reason for that.
- b) **Demand for territorial evidence:** Policy-makers had defined a demand for data, methodology or evidence within their work. For instance, planners from the Riga Planning Region were assigned to develop a Metropolitan Area Action Plan for Riga and were looking for advice and inspiration from other European policy makers and eventually got in touch with the SPIMA project through ESPON.
- c) **Ongoing policy process:** Policy-makers interviewed for uptake stories were involved or ahead a policy-writing process and thus looking for inspiration or data from ESPON or were made aware of ESPON territorial evidence to be potentially useful in policy-making.
- d) **Applicability of territorial evidence:** Transfer improves if ESPON data is derived from or presented on a relatable territorial scale and thus corresponds to policy needs e.g. “joint settlements” methodology developed by conducting a *Slovenian* case study (ESPON TOWN

project) used for *Slovenian Spatial Planning Strategy* or data provided and harmonized beyond national level to be applied to cross-border programme.

- e) **Uniqueness of ESPON territorial evidence:** The comparable territorial perspective that ESPON provides on EU level adds unique knowledge and inspiration to policy-making processes at national and regional levels.
- f) **Outreach activities:** According to the uptake stories, workshops are valuable for the transfer of ESPON results, tools and methods. Workshops can be organized by ESPON as an outreach activity (ESPON TIA Tool workshop) or stakeholder driven (Riga); within one project and covering different projects.

The interview results seemed to reflect some of the findings indicated by the Target Group survey on the issues of whether the ESPON results are easily transferable to the policy making or planning arenas, the extent to which European Structural and Investment (ESIF) programmes and bodies had been stimulated to use territorial evidence produced by ESPON 2020, as indicated in Figure 5.7.

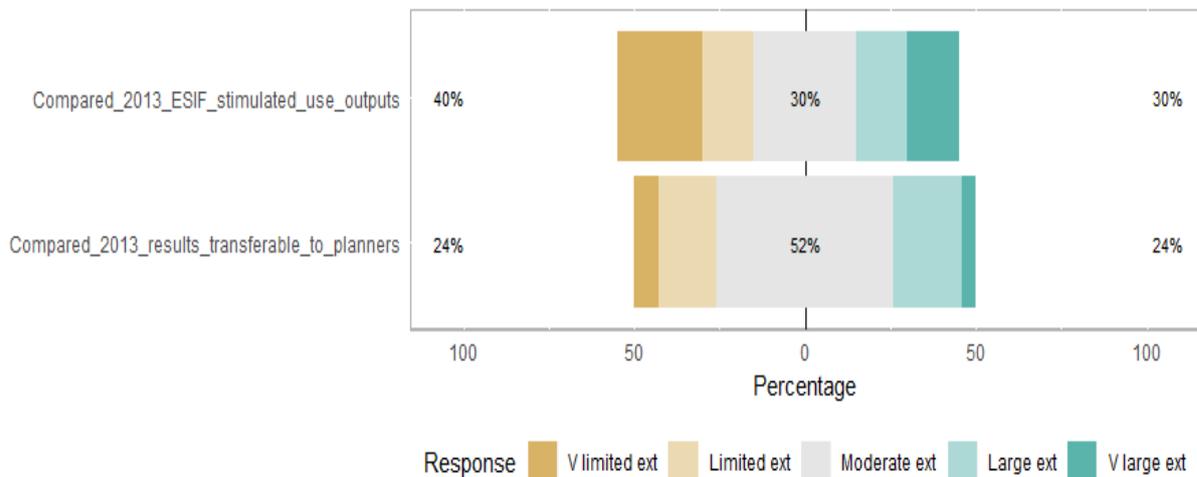
Figure 5.7: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Uptake of evidence’⁹



Similarly, the same questions were asked to the Target Group respondents but this time seeking feedback on whether the situation had improved under ESPON 2020 when compared to ESPON 2013.

Figure 5.8: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Uptake of evidence under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013’¹⁰

- ⁹ To what extent have European Structural and Investment (ESIF) programmes and bodies been stimulated to use territorial evidence produced by ESPON 2020?
- Considering the type(s) of ESPON 2020 outputs that you have experience with, to what extent are the results easily transferable to the policy making or planning arenas?
- ¹⁰ Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent have European Structural and Investment (ESIF) programmes and bodies been stimulated to use territorial evidence produced by ESPON 2020?



Under ESPON 2020, many respondents from ESIF bodies considered that they had not been targeted specifically to use the territorial evidence produced, and that that the situation had only improved from a limited to moderate extent under ESPON 2020 when compared to ESPON 2013. Given that ESIF programmes and bodies are a key element of the Target Group, it is suggested that engagement activities are developed and rolled-out to enhance the uptake by this group. The results also suggest that the existing outreach activities are not sufficiently targeted or extensive.

Similarly, in line with the interview feedback discussed above, the results for Figures 5.7 and 5.8 suggest that a significant minority of the Target Group considers there are challenges in transferring the results to the policy making arenas, although some improvements have been made under ESPON 2020 in this regard.

A small-scale survey conducted among Interreg-programme areas (8 programmes) suggested that there is a knowledge about ESPON, and that people that have been working in Interreg for a long time remember ESPON from the first Interact program in which ESPON was a participant. Respondents state that they know about what ESPON is and have an idea that ESPON evidence could be used to a larger extent, but still, they say that they mainly use some maps to illustrate the different Interreg regions in Europe. Or some specific comparative map or data for some background or SWOT for the programming work. Respondents state that they find it difficult to find relevant material from ESPON to use in their work to develop Interreg programmes and that they are usually too busy to find the time to really engage with the material.

-
- Compared to ESPON 2013, and considering the type(s) of ESPON 2020 outputs that you have experience with, to what extent are the results easily transferable to the policy making or planning arenas?

However, some say that they have engaged in specific project as part of their work and that at those times they have picked up more lessons learned about specific topics or program geographies.

One respondent put it generally about the relation between ESPON and ESIFs: *“it is not well used for other ESIF program development, or at the regional level. It is not a well-known program among those groups even if most people know about it in general terms. Even though the outreach seminars in this period is adding a new audience in some regions - it is still something to develop further “.*

Some respondents reflect on that material from ESPON is often rather theoretical and that this makes it more difficult to directly use this knowledge in the work of the programming of other programs or funds. Hence, there is a work to be done to make sure that ‘the results are more easily transferrable to policy making, other funds and programmes across Europe. This work is already initiated to a much larger extent in this programming period by the EGTC, but it is evident that there is still scope for more to be done.

In addition, Target Group survey respondents tended to consider that the ESPON 2020 results were only moderately easily transferable to the policy making and planning areas, and that the situation had only improved to a moderate extent under ESPON 2020 when compared to ESPON 2013.

Clearly, there does seem to be some demand for identifying solutions to this problem of easing the transferability of the results. However, it needs to be explored if it is appropriate to produce simplified summaries to provide quick access to the findings of complex reports, typically when such research requires knowledge holders to obtain an in-depth understanding of the relevant issues prior to using the results in a policy-making setting. An alternative suggestion would be to roll-out “policy-labs” or other dissemination activities as part of tailored outreach services to relevant authorities and other actors.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the uptake of evidence

Conclusions

- While many organisations in the immediate ESPON target group community indicated that they have used ESPON outputs to support policy making processes, national authorities claimed to be more frequent users than regional and local authorities. Moreover, some key organisation types have not been targeted specifically or sufficiently, namely ESIF bodies;
- Outreach and uptake are strongly related; given the stronger focus on outreach in this programme period, it is likely that uptake of project results and policy briefs will be strengthened;
- The uptake stories have produced a greater level of insight around uptake than typically reported among the ESPON network. For example, they suggest that having persons or institutions which have familiarity with ESPON seemed 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 are used more frequently across Europe;

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- Targeted outreach towards regional and local bodies is required to ensure better “buy-in” of potential key users;
- To learn of the effects and to strengthen the outreach strategy, a focused study to zoom-in on the relevant impacts in-depth across the Member States could be implemented. The study design could be from a user needs perspective and could employ behavioural research methods to identify outreach activities that best animate the Target Group to use the ESPON results in practice. This could be complemented by the development of uptake stories that set-out the mechanisms from the design and implementation of the outreach activities to the uptake and exploitation of the results in the policy-making arena;
- An enhanced use of the ECP network could help to tailor the approach to uptake since they are familiar already with the specific needs of key actors and networks on the national and regional levels and can translate the results to these specific contexts;
- Similarly, building outreach activities around existing networks and associations would help 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 and they can act as transmitters of evidence to member regions, cities or local planning bodies (this is something which we have primarily picket up during our case studies and uptake stories);
- Specific attention should be given to ESIF bodies as part of the outreach strategy given the contribution that ESPON results can make to strengthen the design of the financial instruments to address territorial policy issues;
- Means to ease the communication of the results should be considered:
 - Translated reports and outreach materials supported by inputs from the ECP is a possible solution subject to available financing;
 - Provision of tailored materials to enhance the correspondence between the ESPON results and the needs of specific segments of the Target Groups;
 - As mentioned already, innovative outreach solutions such as policy labs could be a preferable option.

Recommendations for the future Programmes

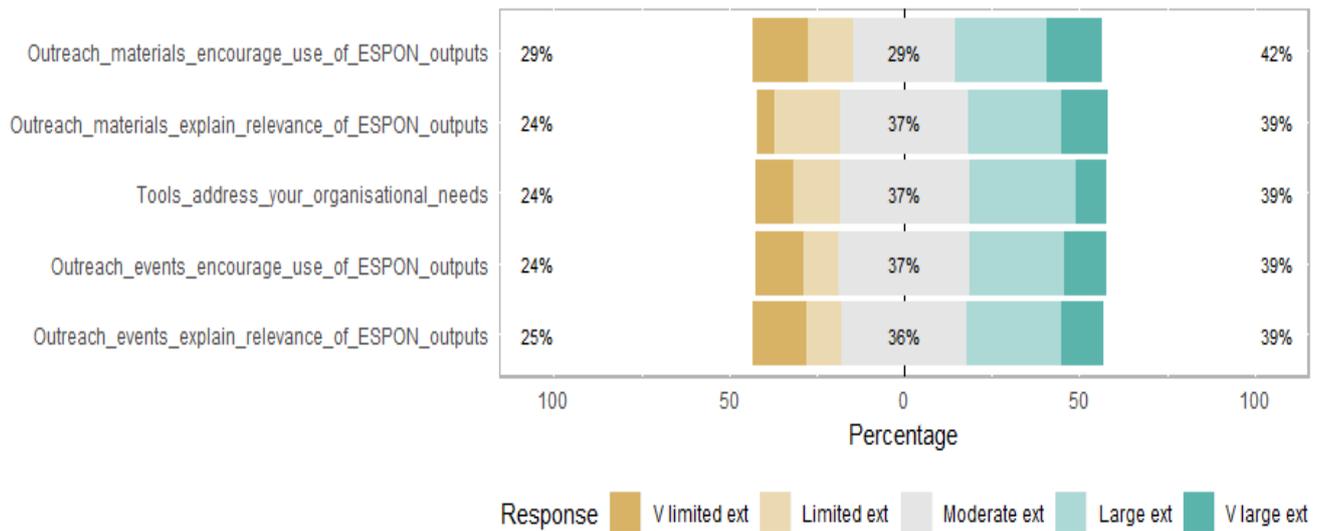
- Defining an overall enhanced role and tasks for the ECP should be undertaken to magnify the impact of the outreach strategy. By consequence, the selection and nomination of the national ECP should be done according to the experience, competence and skills needed to fulfil the identified tasks and role. It must be stressed that an enhanced role of the ECP network cannot be achieved without securing its financing;

- Considering the heterogeneity of the ECP, to ensure a level of consistency in the approach and quality of the outreach activities, a minimum standard of competencies, skills and experiences should be set.

4.4 OUTREACH

The final assessment topic area that the Target Group survey respondents were invited to comment on was the subject of 'outreach'. Several questions were asked in this respect, including the extent to which the outreach materials and outreach events had encouraged the target group to engage with the outputs and tools, the extent to which the materials and events had explained the relevance of ESPON 2020 to the target group organisations, and the extent the ESPON 2020 tools had met the needs of the target group, as indicated in Figure 5.8.

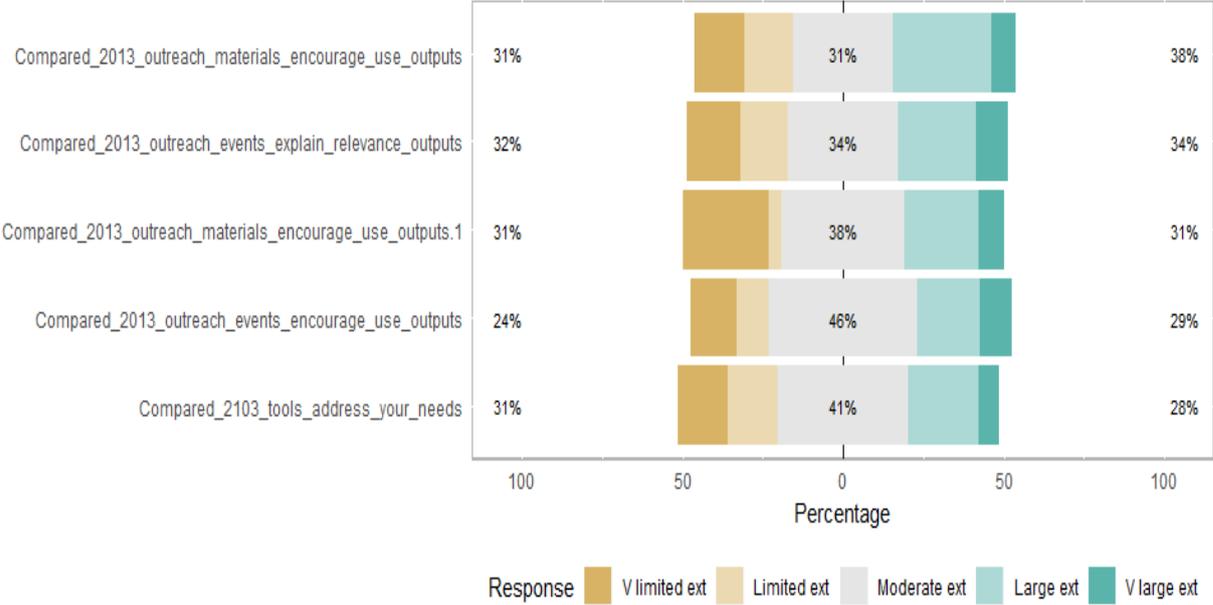
Figure 5.8: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Outreach’¹¹



Similarly, the same series of questions on the outreach materials and events, and tools, were put forward to the Target Group survey respondents but this time enquiring if the situation had improved under ESPON 2020 when compared to ESPON 2013, as indicated in Figure 5.9.

-
- ¹¹ To what extent did any of the ESPON 2020 outreach materials encourage you to review or use ESPON research outputs or tools?
 - To what extent did any of the ESPON 2020 outreach materials explain the relevance of the ESPON 2020 programme to meet the needs of organisations like your own?
 - To what extent did the ESPON 2020 tools address the needs of organisations like your own?
 - To what extent did the ESPON 2020 outreach events encourage you to review or use ESPON research outputs or tools?
 - To what extent did the ESPON 2020 outreach events explain the relevance of the ESPON 2020 programme to meet the needs of organisations like your own?

Figure 5.9: Target group survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Outreach under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013’¹²



The results of the measures indicated in Figure 5.8 suggest that the outreach materials and events generally encouraged users to use the ESPON outputs, although the results for the moderate extent answers were almost the same as the large to very large extent scores. Compared to ESPON 2013, the results of Figure 5.9 suggest that some improvements have been in this respect.

However, while these questions provide general insights into the extent of user approval of the events and materials, it would be helpful if further surveys are conducted, for example, in the form of online pop-up surveys to gather browser feedback, or at the ESPON events, so that examination of the outreach activities can be conducted across more detailed dimensions.

In general, there seem to have been a lot of interest for ESPON projects and evidence and outreach activities seem to have been well attended in regions across the EU. However, and this has to be highlighted, the responses to this part of the survey indicate fewer positive responses and more negative responses compared to e.g. questions about quality. It seems as though the outreach material, the perception of the events and the way outreach target the need of different organisations is not as well

- ¹² Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent did any of the ESPON 2020 outreach materials explain the relevance of the ESPON 2020 programme to meet the needs of organisations like your own?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent did the ESPON 2020 outreach events explain the relevance of the ESPON 2020 programme to meet the needs of organisations like your own?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent did any of the ESPON 2020 outreach materials encourage you to review or use ESPON research outputs or tools?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent did the ESPON 2020 outreach events encourage you to review or use ESPON research outputs or tools?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent did the ESPON 2020 tools address the needs of organisations like your own?

perceived as other parts of ESPON. This observation from the survey goes well with the message from the interviews and cases studies as respondents sometimes have difficulties to relate to the “high level policy discussions” at the conferences and seminars (which are perceived as less hands on and less targeted than would be desirable). Respondents also find it difficult to “pick up” outreach material and use it in an applied way, even though many mention that it is inspirational and certainly contribute to improved knowledge about topics of interest.

Regional seminars are now organized across Europe and our participation to one of these seminars in Sweden suggests that new actors, previously unaware of ESPON, were engaged into the discussion, the topics were interesting and the seminar well prepared and perceived. Using seminars like this seems to be a good way to reach out to new actors, something which is otherwise mentioned as one remaining challenge for ESPON.

Case study investigations highlight how the ESPON EGTC has helped project teams in a good way when it comes to outreach (financially and human resources) in developing the workshops, reports and communication strategies. The projects and ESPON EGTC together discuss how to make outputs/outcomes from the project more user-friendly. The workshop reports are said to be edited until they are self-explanatory and useful for different stakeholders.

One project manager pointed out that academia isn't the primary target group, and this is a problem since the reports are indeed academic research reports. The target group is the decision-makers, the politicians, and they don't read academic reports. “We're trying to address this issue and we're getting there but it is difficult”.

One example which we should highlight from our case studies clearly indicates how ESPON knowledge contributes to the capacity and possibilities to develop policy in specific policy fields, in this case the impact on cities of green energy vehicles. There has been positive feedback from cities and regions on the way evidence and knowledge is utilized in policy making processes in this field, as they feel they have a stronger voice within the EU because of a good evidence base – and policies can be formulated in a more coherent way.

Another example which is brought forward is the process where DG Regio examines legislative proposals from other policy domains, e.g. DG Move or DG Environment which are more or less mature, but where the “Impact Assessment” is not finalized. Experts from cities and regions get involved and give their view on potential obstacles (in this case through a TIA workshop). These workshops can reveal severe obstacles and influence the progress towards legislation. And at the same time cities and regions understand the EU policy process better (because they participate in this process) and can recognize how “their” needs are taken into account.

ESPON aims at EU, national, transnational and regional level but can often not compete with regional data when it comes to really regional analysis, processes and policy development (evidence). Regions have their own data and at a lower geographical level, and they do not have the same need as national, transnational and EU level analysts. For EU comparison, and if MS want to compare data, ESPON evidence has been and will be more significant.

A further series of questions were put to the Target Group to examine if the outreach materials and events explained the relevance of the outputs to meet the needs of their organisation. The responses generally indicated that this was the case, although the number of responses received to the moderate extent answer were similar to the number received for the large and very large extent responses, as indicated in Figure 5.8. Compared to ESPON 2013, the responses received suggested that broadly speaking the events and materials under ESPON 2020 had clarified to a greater extent the relevance of the outputs to the Target Group organisations.

However, as mentioned already, we recommend that further research is conducted to examine the effectiveness of the outreach events and materials at a more detailed level so that more substantive feedback can be considered.

Finally, the Target Group was asked to comment on the extent to which the ESPON 2020 tools addressed their own needs, see Figure 5.8. Again, the results were broadly positive although the moderate extent responses was selected as frequently as the sum of the larger and very large extent answers. Compared to ESPON 2013, the results indicated in Figure 5.9 suggest that moderate gains have been made under ESPON 2020 to enhance the relevance of the tools to the needs of stakeholder organisations.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to outreach

Conclusions

- ESPON 2020 has implemented a significant amount of outreach activities relating to both the published materials and events, such as workshops, seminars and conferences. At this interim stage, we are yet to see the full impact of this work on the uptake and use of ESPON evidence, although the comments received suggest that measures can be implemented to strengthen their ongoing performance;
- Outreach has clearly been improved in this programme period and most respondents are content generally with the material produced and the way outreach activities are conducted. As part of the outreach activities, regional seminars are offered, and these are well-attended and perceived;
- Opportunities now exist for the EGTC to further prioritise and strengthen the outreach strategy and uptake of the results, considering that high standards have been met already in other key areas such as the quality and relevance of the outputs;
- The survey responses suggest that respondents are relatively less pleased with outreach material and outreach activities (compared to the quality or the relevance of the research) and the interviews suggested that e.g. seminars are sometimes not tailored to the needs of stakeholders in learning more about ESPON projects and ESPON tools.

- ESPON events, in particular, seminars, have not fully embraced the outreach notion of tailoring the communication of the results to the needs of those attending. Rather, the events have tended to provide information without any filtering of what would be the most suitable information to provide, resulting in a communication mismatch between the information provided and the needs of the audience;

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- Strengthened collaboration between the relevant stakeholders is needed to ensure the success of the outreach activities managed by the service contractor for Outreach Implementation; the work of the service contractor for outreach is very dependent on the active support of the ECP, MC members and EGTC. Considering that the evaluation has identified that tailoring the ESPON results to the needs of key target groups is critical for their uptake, we propose that it is essential that all actors around the ESPON programme work together on tailoring and targeting events, regional seminars and larger conferences. We have identified from interviews and case studies that there is a scope for improving this targeting, while some also point out that currently the targeting of events on topics of current affairs is much more elaborated compared to before. We encourage this development and emphasise that resources should be made available by Member States to support the necessary inputs into seminars and conferences on current development of policies and programmes for instance;
- To further nuance the ESPON results to the needs of specific Target Group members, feedback from local seminars should also be used for improving policy briefs and other material developed by the ESPON EGTC;
- Outreach materials and events would benefit from further tailoring to attract specific Target Group members. However, the evaluation recognises that there is a fine balance when designing the materials between attracting a broad audience and targeting specific groups that may be interested in certain types of policies or trends;
- Extensive use of satisfaction questionnaires after the events would help to obtain immediate feedback to strengthen the design of the future events (a specific focus should be given to the format, usefulness of the messages/evidence delivered for the specific audience; adequacy of the “language” used to communicate the evidence; etc.).
- A stronger focus on targeting the scientific community, and creating a bridge between academic and policy makers, could help to further stimulate uptake. While ESPON had this type of focus previously for its events, it has become less prevalent. Regular sessions on different periodical scientific conferences could be further followed up.
- Screening of the information to be communicated at ESPON events and seminars should be undertaken to select key issues, messages and findings of most relevance to the needs of those attending. This means selection and communication of the most useful projects and project results so that the outreach objectives can be better met. Seminar timetables should not be squeezed to fit all the ongoing projects; rather, space should be given to open discussions on the most relevant results and evidence to enhance their understanding, uptake

and also learning around how the evidence of the applied research projects can be deepened and further territorialised etc;

- Events and seminars could be organised according to the needs and challenges of specific target group members to ensure and ease the presentation of tailored information leading stronger uptake of the results.

5. Analysis of the responses related to the architecture of the Programme

This chapter reports the results and analysis of survey, interviews, cases and uptake stories focusing on assessment topics related to the implementation and architecture of the ESPON programme. At the end of each sub-chapter, conclusions are provided for each assessment topic.

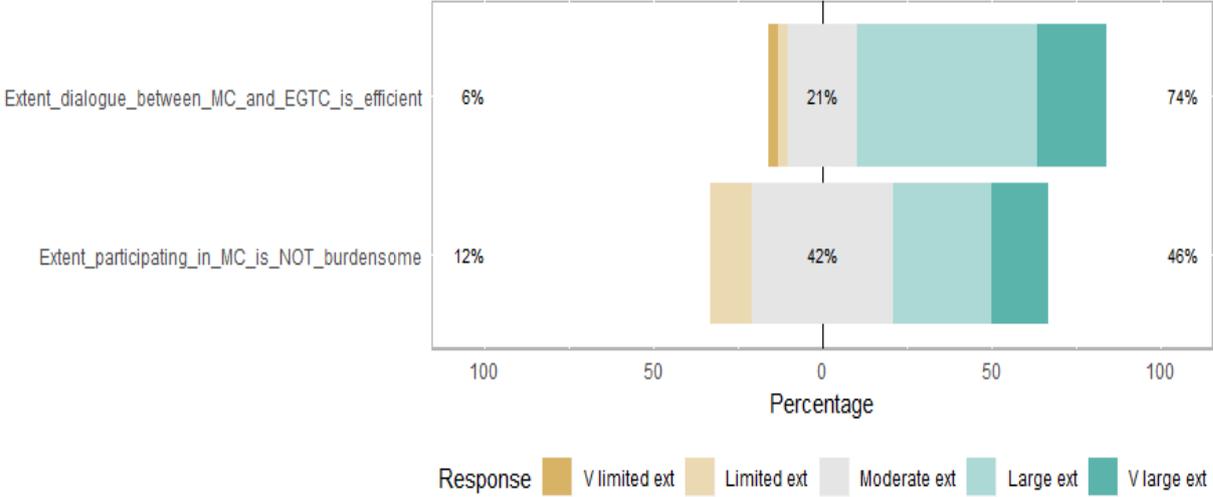
5.1 INVOLVEMENT OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE AND RELATED ISSUES

The assessment topic area of the involvement of the Monitoring Committee (MC) and related issues covered a series of items around the MC's role and functioning.

To begin, Likert scale survey questions were put forward to the stakeholders concerning the role of the MC and other related issues, including whether dialogue between the Monitoring Committee and the ESPON EGTC is efficient when identifying priorities in Annual Work Plans, and whether participation in the MC is burdensome, as indicated in Figure 6.1.

Please note that the order of the questions as presented in the visuals is arranged from highest to lowest according to the sum of the percent of the responses to the 'large extent' and 'very large extent' categories, as indicated by the scores on the right hand-side of the visuals. The online survey questions are indicated in the footnotes with summarised questions presented on the left-hand side of the visuals.

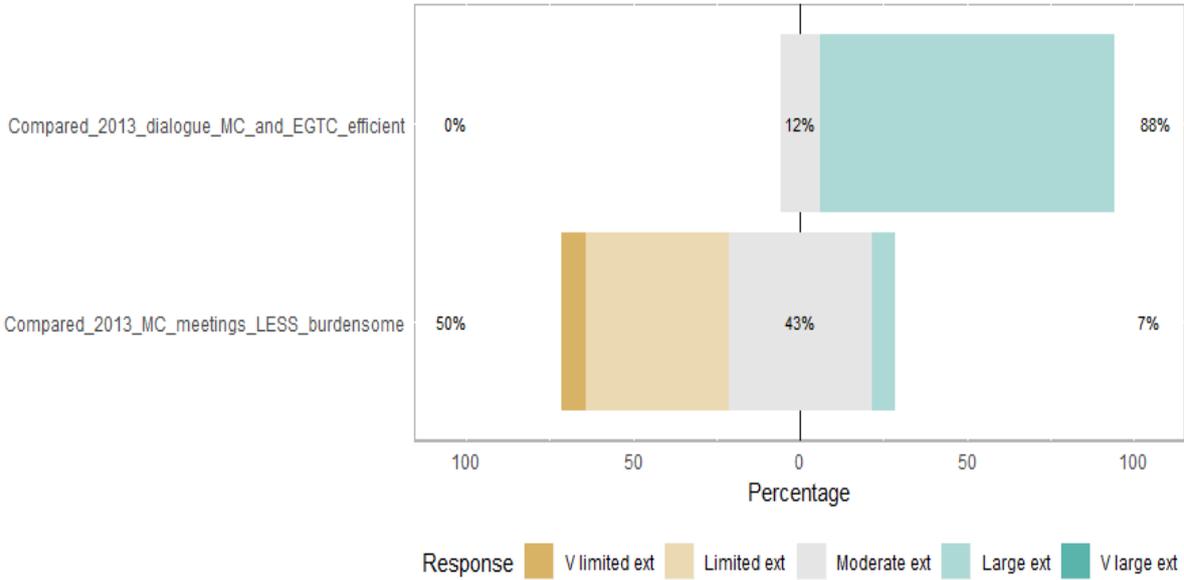
Figure 6.1: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Involvement of the MC’¹³



Similar questions in the assessment topic area of the ‘Involvement of the MC’ were also put forward to the stakeholder survey respondents but on this occasion feedback was requested on the extent to which improvements have been made under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013 from very limited to very large extents.

- ¹³ Considering the need to identify strategic priorities in each Annual Work Plan swiftly, to what extent is dialogue between the Monitoring Committee and the ESPON EGTC efficient?
- To what extent is participating in the Monitoring Committee meetings NOT burdensome?

Figure 6.2: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Involvement of the MC’ under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013¹⁴



As indicated by Figure 6.1, there is a strong impression by stakeholders that under ESPON 2020 dialogue between the Monitoring Committee and the ESPON EGTC is efficient when identifying strategic priorities in Annual Work Plans. Compared to ESPON 2013, as indicated by Figure 6.2, it seems that solid improvements have been made in this respect, with most respondents confirming that the efficiency of the dialogue has strengthened to a large extent under ESPON 2020.

The results of the stakeholder survey suggest that most participants consider involvement in the MC as *not* burdensome or moderately burdensome – see figure 6.1. Compared to ESPON 2013, Figure 6.2. indicates that participation in the MC has not become any less-burdensome under ESPON 2020. Overall, the results suggest that while participation in the MC is not becoming less-burdensome over time, those involved in the MC do not consider it as a major burden and are likely to consider their involvement as fulfilling or beneficial.

The interviews with stakeholders provided further insights around the role of the MC. To begin, some interviewees underscored that the MC under ESPON 2020 is trying to find a new clearly defined

- ¹⁴ Compared to ESPON 2013, considering the need to identify strategic priorities in each Annual Work Plan swiftly, to what extent are the procedures more efficient under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is participating in the MC meetings under ESPON 2020 less burdensome?

role. In particular, it was highlighted that the MC is now less focused on monitoring the policy relevance of the activities and this seem to be frustrating for some members, although opportunities now exist for participation in the PSTs that have a clear policy relevance advisory function.

Moreover, going forward, it is important to clarify the role/position of the MC in relation to the EGTC, PSTs, and MA, considering that it now has less of a “hands-on” role in steering projects in the appropriate direction.

The administration around the MC seem to be working well, and considering the feedback from the survey, mostly, those involved in the MC do not consider it as a burdensome responsibility. At the same time, the burden for participating in ESPON (some mention a total of 8 days each year for MC) is much more than other EU programmes (like Interreg). While the significant number of meetings and conferences were seen as positive generally, particularly considering that they were said to improve ownership and knowledge about ESPON, the functioning of the MC could be streamlined by improving the way some administrative aspects are handled at the meetings, limiting the formal management aspects, reducing the extent of uncoordinated emails coming from the MA and EGTC, and using time more efficiently for strategic discussions and advise to the EGTC.

<p style="text-align: center;">Key conclusions relating to the Involvement of the MC and related issues</p> <p><i>Conclusions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When compared to ESPON 2013, under ESPON 2020, the efficiency of the dialogue between the MC and EGTC when identifying strategic priorities in Annual Work Plans has improved greatly;• While the MC members are keen to reduce the extent of MC administrative, procedural and formal management burdens, they are eager to be more involved in overseeing project content and other strategic issues;• The challenge going forward, therefore, is to identify a way to involve the MC in its preferred activities, without reducing the decision-making role of the EGTC or adding further burdens to those not able to take on further responsibilities; <p><i>Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To better exploit the advisory potential of the MC, key members could be (self)nominated to lead voluntary topic focused sub-groups to produce strategic guidance notes on key areas of interest. These could be shared with the PST and other ESPON bodies where relevant, so that the strategic direction of ESPON activities and projects is enhanced. The topic focused sub-groups should receive feedback on how their advice was addressed so that on-going monitoring can be performed;
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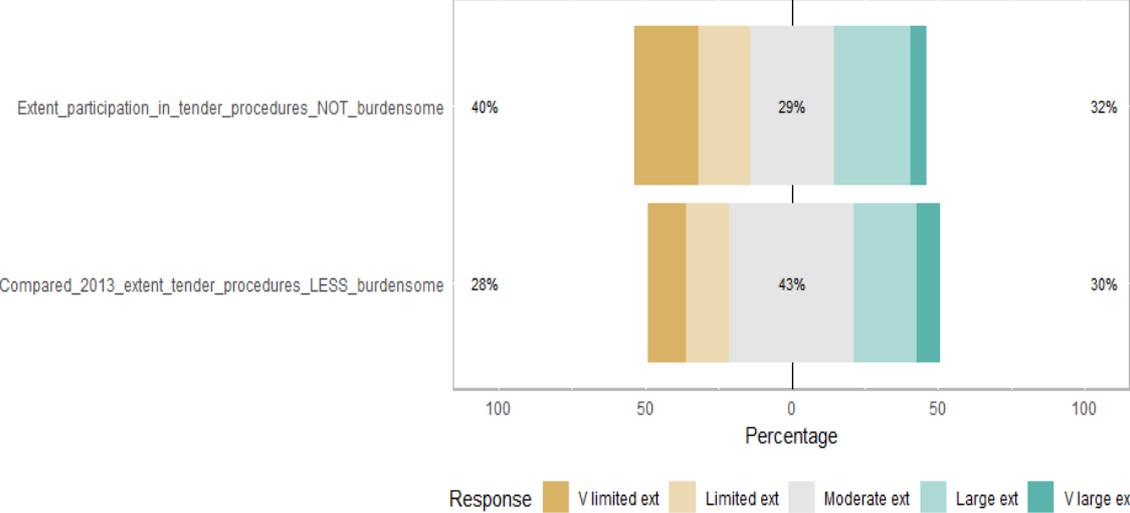
- To enhance the efficiency of the MC, the MA could try to optimize the procedures of the MC meeting by, for example:
 - Providing management information points in a written note instead of presenting them orally during the meeting;
 - Agreeing with the MC the delegation to the MA of certain management tasks and decisions under certain conditions (e.g. the approval of the progress reports of the Single Beneficiary as so far no one single comment has been provided by MC members);
 - Ask the Single beneficiary to provide information on the progress of the implementation of the single operation in a written note rather than in a lengthy presentation;
 - Focusing the MC discussion on key issues, such as strategic orientation, implementation of future activities (rather than past activities); discussion of the draft final results of the selected outputs and their policy implications (including eventually the participation of the service provider);
 - Presentation and discussion of a selected key project at the MC meeting more in depth.

5.2 APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND PROCEDURES

The assessment topic of the appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures explored a range of issues around the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative architecture and procedures, the introduction of the new service contracts, the efficiency of the procurement procedures, and the enhanced role of the EGTC. These items are examined using evidence from the Target Group survey, stakeholder survey and in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

As part of the online survey of the Target Group, two questions were asked regarding whether the tender procedures were *not* burdensome under ESPON 2020, and if the tender procedures were less burdensome under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013.

Figure 6.5: Target Group survey results relating to measures on the burdensomeness of the ESPON 2020 tender procedures¹⁵



In relation to both measures, the views of respondents were relatively divergent, see Figure 6.5. While most respondents considered the tender procedures not burdensome from moderate to large extents, a good proportion indicated that this was to a limited extent. However, compared to ESPON 2013, the Target Group considered that moderate to large improvements had been made mostly.

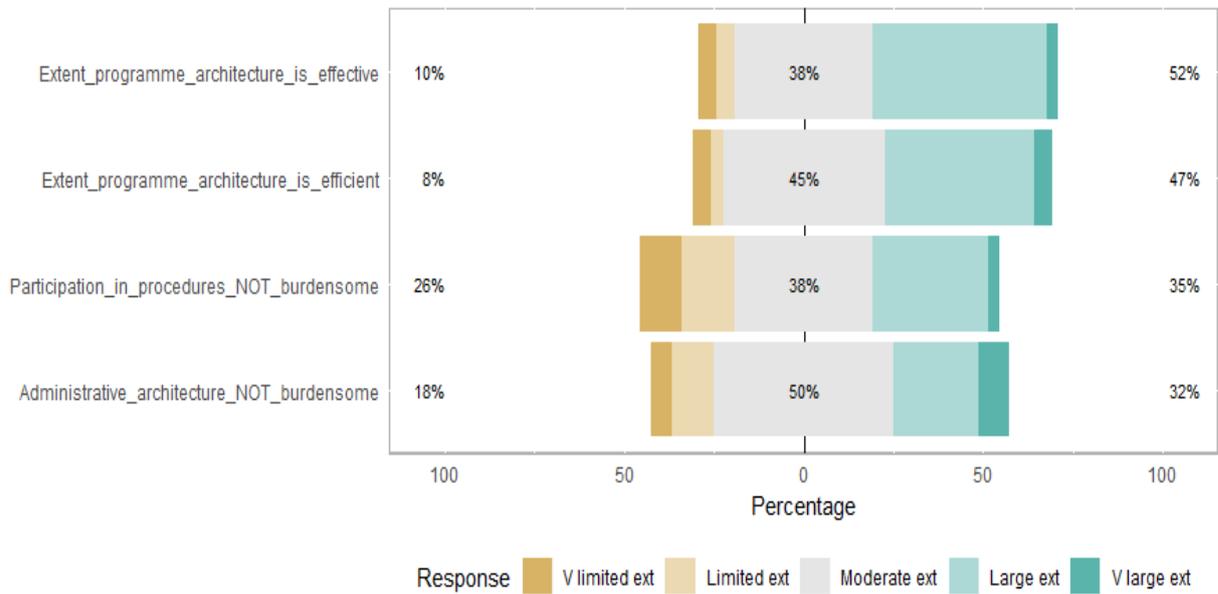
One should recognise that tender procedures will always require in-depth information from applicants, and result in numerous unsuccessful proposals, meaning that it is unlikely that applicants will ever consider them as largely non-burdensome. Therefore, it is difficult to transform the overall process.

However, while a good number of the Target Group considered that improvements to reduce burdens have been made under ESPON 2020, it would be helpful to introduce further improvements to further reduce burdens for applicants. Some feedback from stakeholders suggested that prior market consultation and competitive dialogue could improve the situation.

Regarding the stakeholder survey, respondents were invited to respond to a series of survey questions concerning whether ESPON 2020 was effective and efficient overall, and whether participation in the ESPON 2020 procedures and the overall administrative architecture was *not* burdensome, as indicated in Figure 6.3.

- ¹⁵ To what extent is participation in ESPON 2020 tender procedures non-burdensome.
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is participation in ESPON 2020 tender procedures non-burdensome.

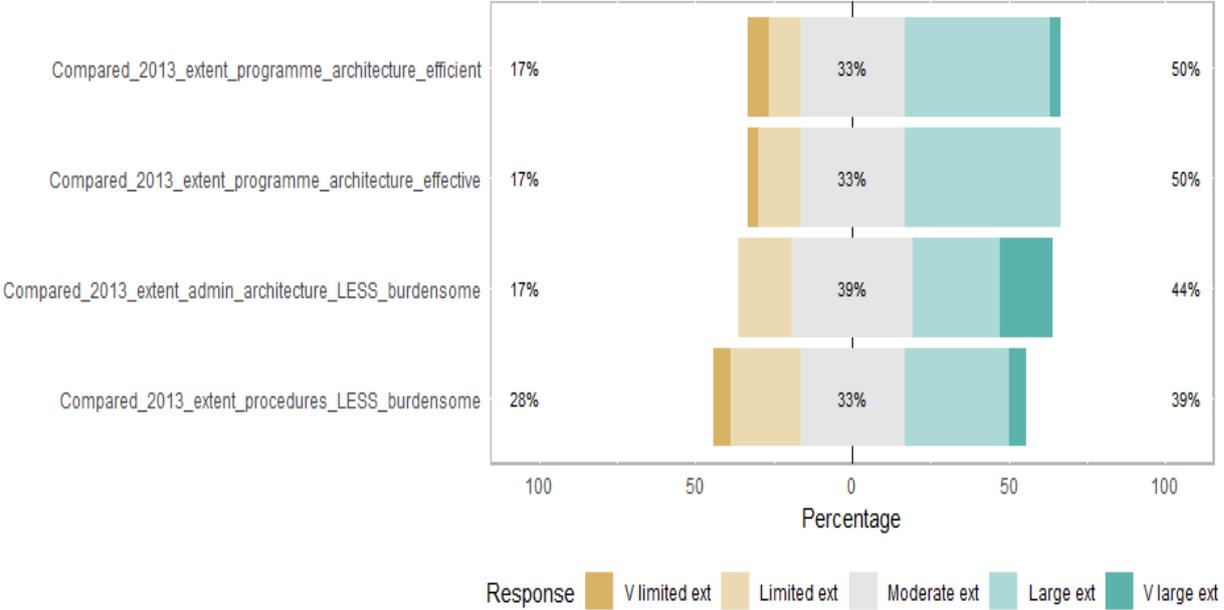
Figure 6.3: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Appropriateness of the Administrative Architecture and Procedures’¹⁶



A similar series of questions on the assessment topic of the ‘Appropriateness of the Administrative Architecture and Procedures’ were listed in the online survey but this time the stakeholders were asked to compare the conditions under ESPON 2020 to ESPON 2013, as indicated in Figure 6.4.

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- ¹⁶ Overall, to what extent is the new programme architecture for ESPON 2020 effective?
 - Overall, to what extent is the new programme architecture for ESPON 2020 efficient?
 - To what extent is participation in the procedures for ESPON 2020 NOT burdensome?
 - To what extent is the administrative architecture for ESPON 2020 NOT burdensome?

Figure 6.4: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Appropriateness of the Administrative Architecture and Procedures’¹⁷



On the issue of the effectiveness of the programme architecture, the online survey feedback from stakeholders suggested that the overall system was considered as largely effective mainly, although there was some concentration of opinion around the view that it was moderately effective, see Figure 6.3. Compared to ESPON 2013, however, it appears that ESPON 2020 has made some considerable gains in this respect, see Figure 6.4.

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, please see figure 6.3. However, compared to ESPON 2013, the stakeholders leaned towards the view that efficiency gains had been made during ESPON 2020, see Figure 6.4.

As indicated in Figure 6.3, when asked the survey question regarding ‘to what extent is participation in the ESPON 2020 procedures *not* burdensome’, the moderate to large extent responses were selected

- ¹⁷ Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is the new programme architecture for ESPON 2020 efficient?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is the new programme architecture for ESPON 2020 effective?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is the administrative architecture non-burdensome under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is participating in the ESPON 2020 procedures non-burdensome?

most frequently. Moreover, compared to ESPON 2013, the results indicated in Figure 6.4 suggest that some gains had been made in ensuring that the procedures were less-burdensome under ESPON 2020.

Regarding ‘the extent to which the administrative architecture for ESPON 2020 is *not* burdensome’, the results to the online survey suggested that it was considered as moderately *not* burdensome mainly, see Figure 6.3. Compared to ESPON 2013, opinion was split as to whether the administrative architecture is less burdensome to moderate or large extents, although overall it seems that ESPON 2020 has made some progress in this area.

While the surveys provided a good high-level overview of the views around the performance of the administrative architecture and procedures, it was possible to gather nuanced feedback during the interviews.

For example, in general, the new administrative procedures associated with the introduction of service contracts are well received by the researchers and project managers.

Overall, it is acknowledged that this has simplified the tendering and administrative processes, although the extent of the reporting outputs required has put some extra strain on the project resources needed for specific outputs and in terms of the extent of flexibility for shorter projects. Although previously, for longer projects, there were outputs requested for inception, interim and draft final phases of the projects – but under ESPON 2020 this approach is demanded also for shorter projects.

Researchers and project participants highlighted that it is extremely demanding to produce the research within one year – and at the same time produce four reports. This is regarded as an inefficient use of resources since too much time is being used for reporting instead of performing the research and analysis. We suggest that this is a highly important aspect to consider since the perceptions of this sort could lead to reduced interest in the programme and participation rates in tendering rounds in the future.

While the administrative burden generated by the new services contracts has been heavier on the EGTC, its increased number of staff has meant that the procurement process is well-managed.

In terms of the current new architecture of the ESPON programme, respondents among the EGTC and MA in general have no significant concerns currently, but they expect to evaluate this feature in-depth after time has passed for the new routines to mature further. The main issues in this respect are primarily about how the ToR, service contracts, PST, etc. are perceived by participants and what could possibly be improved to make sure both the quality and uptake are strengthened.

One positive aspect of reducing the administrative burdens of both tendering and participation is that it is easier for new actors to participate in the procurement procedures; this seems to be important for ESPON since some respondents have mentioned that it has been good to broaden the supply of contractors, such as consultancy firms, and not only receive proposals from long-standing service providers.

However, there were some concerns from stakeholders that there are not enough universities participating in the tender procedures; the rationale is that the extent of scientific knowledge relevant to ESPON is not being exploited fully. Therefore, there could be possibilities to enhance the level of interest in ESPON through testing new procurement initiatives such as a “consortium partner finding platform” like the one currently managed by DG RTD¹⁸, offering procurement training to universities, making the outreach events more attractive to new research institutes, and tailoring the ToR requirements to ensuring that relevant experts with focused expertise are included in the projects.

Similarly, some stakeholders commented that more could be done to enhance the geographical balance of the programme through greater involvement in tender procedures from applicants from across the ESPON Member States. It was suggested that this could be addressed through Targeted Analysis and tailored outreach services, although it is likely that this would require a focused effort post-ESPON 2020.

The new functioning and staffing of the EGTC is (perhaps not surprisingly) appreciated by the EGTC themselves: “One of the main advantages now is that we have much more staff, which means that we are much more autonomous than before. Before, we didn’t have the independence to make our own decisions, on what research and outreach events we should work with. Now we can do so thanks to annual work programmes etc.”. There seem to be a greater emphasis on communicating the evidence and better capacities to set up events based on stakeholder demands; to support policy development in more targeted rather than in general ways.

The involvement of the ESPON EGTC in the projects has been described as insightful and helpful. The knowledge and competence, active participation in project activities and management as well as flexibility has been mentioned positively and contributes to a smooth implementation of the projects.

The TIA Tool project is a good example of ESPON EGTC being able to react upon requests by key target stakeholders (in this case: DG Regio and Committee of the Regions). Here, ESPON contributes to the impact assessment for different kinds of policies, regulations etc. by discussing relevant territorial aspects in workshops using the TIA Tool.

Thus, ESPON is stepping into the policy-making process by providing policy-relevant data, which is appreciated by key target stakeholders and has a clear added value.

The overall message that emerged is that the management and coordination from ESPON has been very good and that the staff is competent and also have a large network which helps the projects in many different ways.

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/find-partners_en.htm

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the administrative architecture and procedures

Conclusions

- While many of the Target Group members consider the tender procedures as acceptable, to address the concerns of some applicants, efforts could be made to reduce the requirements to make the process less-burdensome;
- The introduction of service contracts has helped to broaden the supply of service providers and the EGTC is well-positioned to manage the procedures, however, more could be done to encourage scientific interest in the tender opportunities;
- The use of service contracts has increased the project reporting requirements, meaning that there are greater burdens imposed on shorter projects under ESPON 2020. It would be helpful if the reporting requirements for such projects were reduced;
- The ESPON EGTC is benefiting from its enhanced resources and is more engaged in policy development and stakeholder support activities.

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- Use of innovative public procurement procedures such as prior market consultations and competitive dialogue could increase the scientific quality of the outputs, attract more service providers and contribute to the further simplification of the procedures;
- Use of innovative procurement procedures and the advanced publication of the procurement plan could also provide opportunities for the ECP and the Single Beneficiary to enhance the extent of scientific interest in the tender procedures. For example, discussions on policy questions to be covered by future themes could, under certain conditions, be openly debated during seminars and other dedicated events (an event could be designed to present the procurement plan and discuss the reasons for selecting the suggested applied research service requests; identification of any existing evidence and feasible methodologies could also be explored).
- Increased visibility of the (innovative) tender procedures at scientific conferences could help to raise the awareness of the scientific community to enhance their interest in submitting procedures;
- An extensive use of simplified cost options in the next programming period could further reduce the administrative burden related to the implementation of the programme;
- As stated previously, the number of project reporting deliveries can be adjusted to the length of the contract durations to reduce the reporting burdens.
- To enhance the level of partner networking, a “consortium partner finding platform” like the one currently managed by DG RTD to support its grant procedures could be developed;¹⁹

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/find-partners_en.htm

- To attract scientific experts with highly relevant experience, ToR requirements could be established making it necessary for tenderers to fill key positions with persons with the necessary credentials.

5.3 PERFORMANCE OF THE PROJECT SUPPORT TEAMS

To explore the performance of the newly introduced Project Support Teams (PST) under ESPON 2020, both the Target Group and stakeholders were asked to provide feedback via the online survey. We also pursued this line of questioning in all the qualitative interviews and case studies.

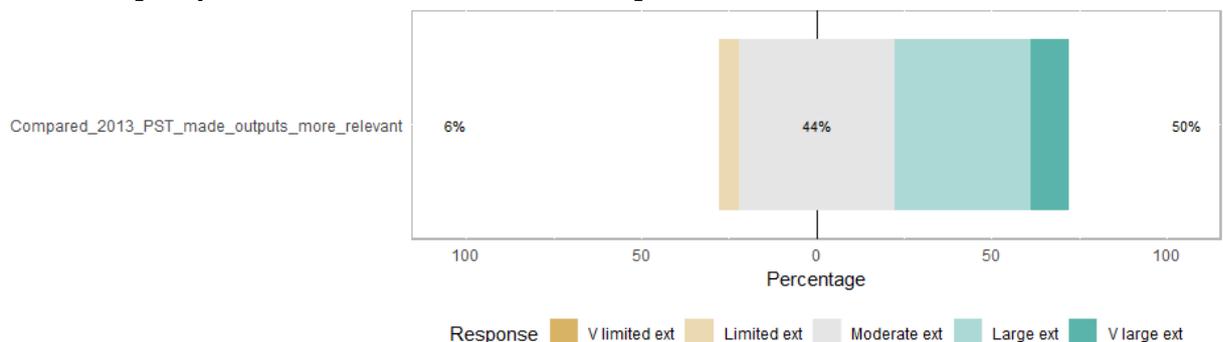
In the Target Group survey, respondents were asked to comment on whether the PST had enhanced the policy relevance of the ESPON 2020 outputs.

Figure 6.6: Target Group Survey: to what extent does the involvement of the Project Support Teams enhance the policy relevance of the ESPON 2020 outputs?



A similar question was asked to the stakeholders about whether under ESPON 2020 the PST had made the outputs more relevant compared to ESPON 2013, see Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.7: Stakeholder Survey: to what extent does the involvement of the Project Support Teams enhance the policy relevance of the ESPON 2020 outputs?

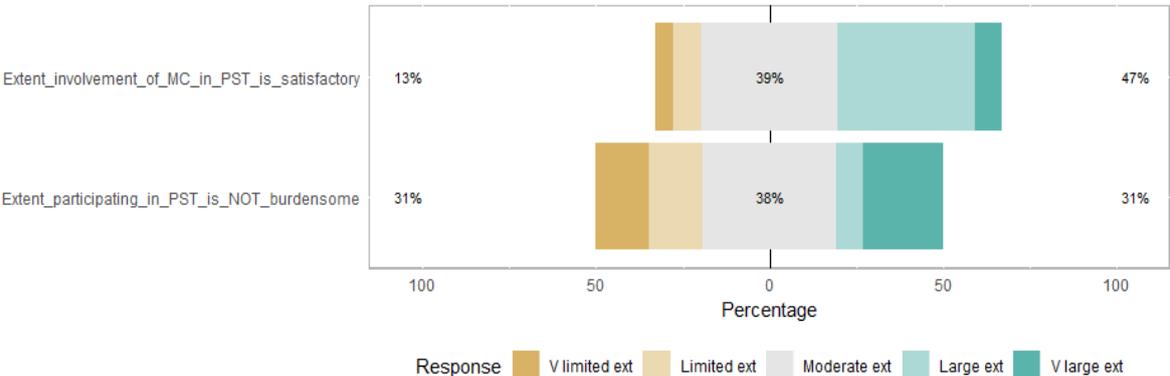


When considering the results indicated in Figures 6.6 and 6.7., the results suggested that the introduction of the PST has been a key benefit in enhancing the policy relevance of the ESPON 2020 programme, particularly when compared to the situation under ESPON 2013.

The in-depth interviews with stakeholders echoed these findings. Generally, the involvement of the PST is perceived positively in terms of providing scientific and policy advice. PST members also participate actively in project activities and provide a stakeholder point of view which is appreciated and perceived as improving the policy relevance of the project outputs. Overall, it seems that efforts to make the outputs more policy relevant under ESPON 2020 using the PST function has been well-justified.

Two further survey questions were asked of the stakeholders regarding whether the extent of the involvement of the MC in the PST is satisfactory, and whether participating in the PST is *not* burdensome.

Figure 6.9: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Performance of the PST’²⁰



In terms of the extent of the involvement of the MC in the PST, the stakeholder survey respondents considered this to be broadly satisfactory. Moreover, the results indicated in Figure 6.9 suggest that while participating in the PST is *not* burdensome to moderate to large extents mostly, a significant minority believe otherwise. Clearly, there are quite polarised views on this issue among the PST members.

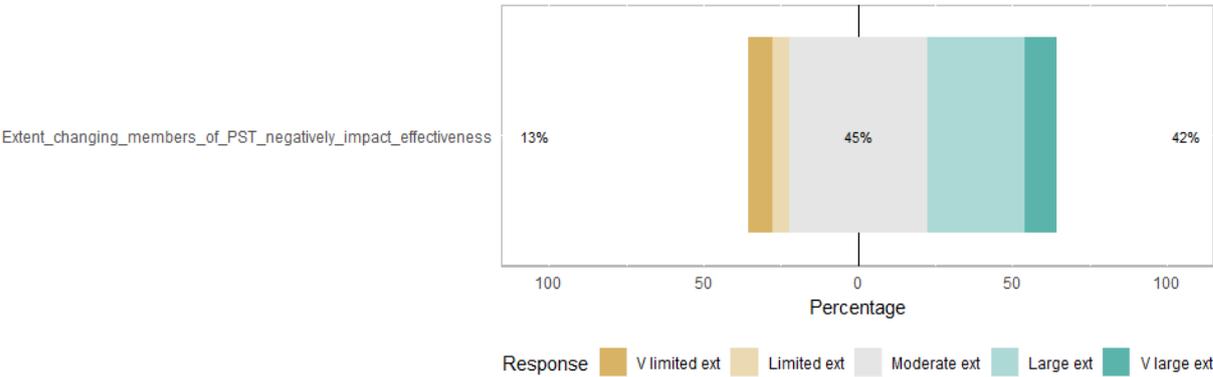
The interview feedback from stakeholders provided some further insights. It has been mentioned that the level of involvement of PST members depend on individual capacity as their contributions are unpaid. This appears to partly explain why some PST members may find the role (non)burdensome. Moreover, engagement in the PST can differ rather substantially across projects and can be rather ambiguous throughout the period of the programme.

²⁰ To what extent is the involvement of the MC in the Project Support Team satisfactory?
 • To what extent is participating in the PST activities non-burdensome?

If the PST become active too late in the project life-cycles their role compared to the staff of EGTC becomes less evident. Towards the end of the project, the task of making results and material policy relevant will be more in the hands of the EGTC staff and if the PST shall be active in this work it requires another form of collaboration and another way of including the PST in the post-project-work. Hence, it is important that the PST really become active in the beginning of projects, and also coordinate the work on both policy relevance, and relevance on different geographical scale, with the project and the EGTC. The evidence so far seems to suggest that PSTs find it difficult to have an impact early on in the projects when so much work is focusing on setting up the research and implementing the projects so there is really scope for some structures and instructions to both PSTs and projects on this aspect.

Moreover, considering that the members of the PST had been subject to continual changes, we explored whether this has had a negative impact on ensuring the policy relevance of the outputs through a stakeholder survey question, see Figure 6.8. Please note that given the wording of this question, the results of those with positive views are now indicated on the left hand side of the visual and vice versa.

Figure 6.8: Stakeholder Survey: To what extent is the continual changing of the members of the Project Support Teams negatively affecting their effectiveness in ensuring the policy relevance of the outputs



As indicated by Figure 6.8, most stakeholders considered that the continual changing of the PST had reduced their ability to enhance the policy relevance of the outputs from moderate to large extents. Thus, while the introduction of the PST is considered as a positive development generally, there does seem to be some demand for improving its role.

In addition, stakeholder feedback suggested that there is absence of instructions and tools that would help to define the PST function, and provide the members with a clearer mandate on how they should perform their role. With a view to assisting the further professionalisation of the services provided, the issue of providing financial incentives to the PST was also raised although this would require serious consideration given the budgetary implications.

Moreover, one implication so far of having the PST as a voluntary and un-financed activity seem to be that those committing to following a project quite naturally do so with national or regional “glasses” on. They make sure that their national or regional contexts are taken into consideration and that the

project results become relevant to their national policy development or context. This has its advantages in that the research outputs are likely to become more policy relevant, but this approach is likely to produce geographical limitations.

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the Project Support Teams

Conclusions

- The PST have contributed to meeting their objectives through activities to support the policy relevance of the outputs, and have been regarded as a positive development under ESPON 2020;
- There are, however, several challenges that limit the impact of the PST:
 - PSTs often become active at the end of the project. Early involvement of PST members in the project setup would increase the possibilities to enhance the policy relevance of final project results;
 - There is sometimes uncertainty around the functioning of the PST; it may not be clear whether specific projects have a PST or not, who is involved and what their role is. This is further compounded by the continual changing members of the PST;
 - While most of the PST members consider their role as not burdensome, a sizeable minority think otherwise, suggesting that this issue should further examined and addressed;
 - Participating in the PST is voluntary and unpaid, and therefore may not be suited to persons unable to devote the necessary time inputs.

Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- The role and functioning of the PST could be improved by:
 - Clarifying the structure around the PST concerning mandate, tasks to be performed, relationship to the supportive functions of the EGTC, guidelines etc.
 - Enhancing their contributions by involving them as early as possible in the drafting of the ToR (this should support the concrete formulation of the policy questions and the reasons behind them and should not be limited to providing final comments on the final draft ToR);
 - The role of the PST should be clarified further prior to their engagement, for instance, through personal briefings, clearer information on the specific role and expectations, defining the minimum level of required participation, the level of burden to be expected from participating in a PST etc.;
 - Although it is normal that public officials move positions, an enhanced level of continuity would improve the performance of the PST. The process of nominating persons to the PST could be a Member State responsibility, for example, and the Member States in charge for the PST should ensure that in instances of personnel rotation, the relevant information needed to ensure continuity is transferred to the new incoming colleague;

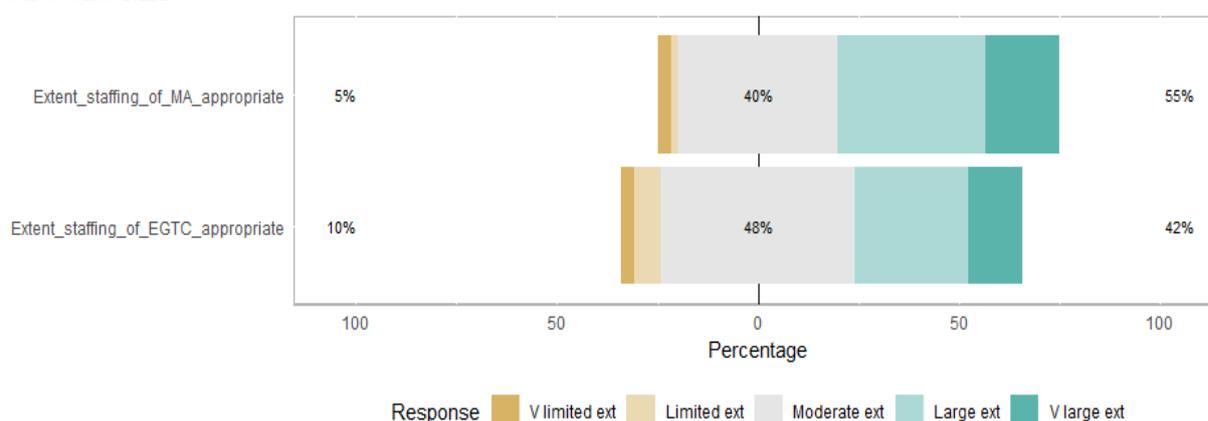
- A more extensive use of distance meetings (video and tele conferences) and the organisation of PST meetings back to back with other events (as far as possible) could help to reduce the burden of participation.

5.4 PERFORMANCE OF THE EGTC AND MA

The subsequent assessment topic that stakeholders were asked to comment on related to the performance of the EGTC and MA. The questions examined covered issues such as whether the staffing of the MA and EGTC is appropriate, and whether the EGTC is able to produce tailored analyses promptly on-demand.

Via the survey, the stakeholders were asked to evaluate the extent to which the ESPON MA and EGTC were staffed appropriately, as indicated in Figure 6.12.

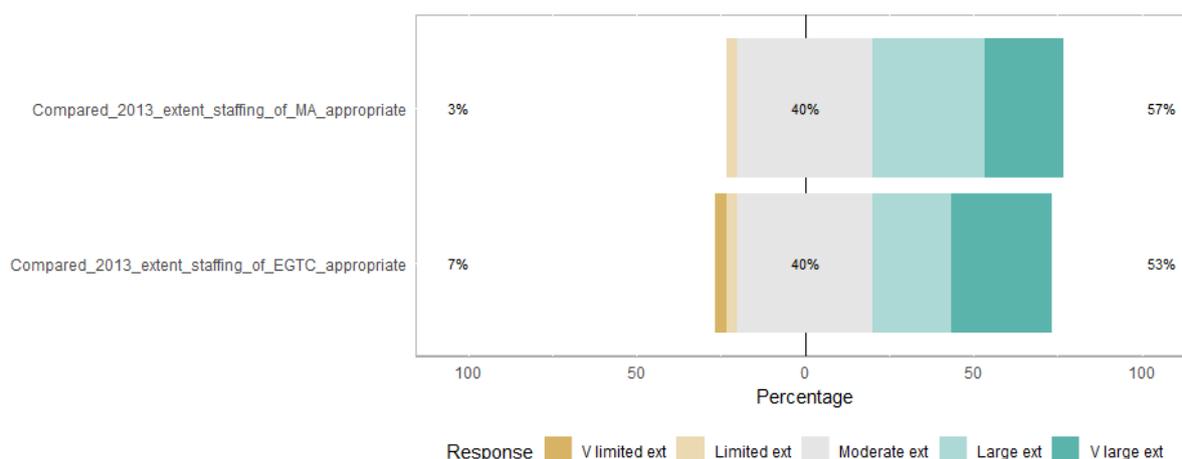
Figure 6.12: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Performance of the EGTC and MA’ ²¹



Similarly, the stakeholders were asked to compare the appropriateness of the staffing of the MA and EGTC under ESPON 2020 to ESPON 2013.

Figure 6.13: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Performance of the EGTC and MA’ under ESPON 2020 in comparison to ESPON 2013 ²²

- ²¹ To what extent is the staffing of the MA appropriate to fulfil its tasks as indicated in the Cooperation Programme?
- To what extent is the staffing of the EGTC appropriate to fulfil its tasks as indicated in the Cooperation Programme?
- ²² Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is the staffing of the MA under ESPON 2020 appropriate to fulfil its tasks as indicated in the Cooperation Programme?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent is the staffing of the EGTC under ESPON 2020 appropriate to fulfil its tasks as indicated in the Cooperation Programme?



The results indicated in Figures 6.12 and 6.13 suggest that the staffing of the MA under ESPON 2020 is appropriate from moderate to large extents, and that some good improvements have been made since ESPON 2013 in this respect.

On the issue of the extent of the appropriateness of the staffing of the EGTC, it was evaluated by the stakeholders as being moderately to largely suitable, and that improvements had been made under ESPON 2020 when compared to ESPON 2013, as indicated in Figures 6.12 and 6.13.

The stakeholder feedback suggested that the new functioning and staffing of the EGTC is (perhaps not surprisingly) appreciated by the EGTC themselves. *“One of the main advantages now is that we have much more staff, which means that we are much more autonomous than before. Before, we didn’t have the independence to make our own decisions, on what research and outreach events we should work with. Now we can do so thanks to annual work programmes etc.”* There seem to be a greater emphasis on communicating the evidence and better capacities to set up events based on stakeholder demands; to support policy development more targeted rather than in general ways.

Moreover, the involvement of the ESPON EGTC in the projects has been described as insightful and helpful. The knowledge and competence, active participation in project activities and management as well as flexibility has been mentioned positively and contributes to a smooth implementation of the projects.

The TIA Tool project is a good example of ESPON EGTC being able to react upon requests by key target stakeholders (in this case: DG Regio and Committee of the Regions). Here, ESPON contributes to the impact assessment for different kinds of policies, regulations etc. by discussing relevant territorial aspects in workshops using the TIA Tool.

Thus, ESPON is stepping into the policy-making process by providing policy-relevant data, which is appreciated by key target stakeholders and has a clear added value.

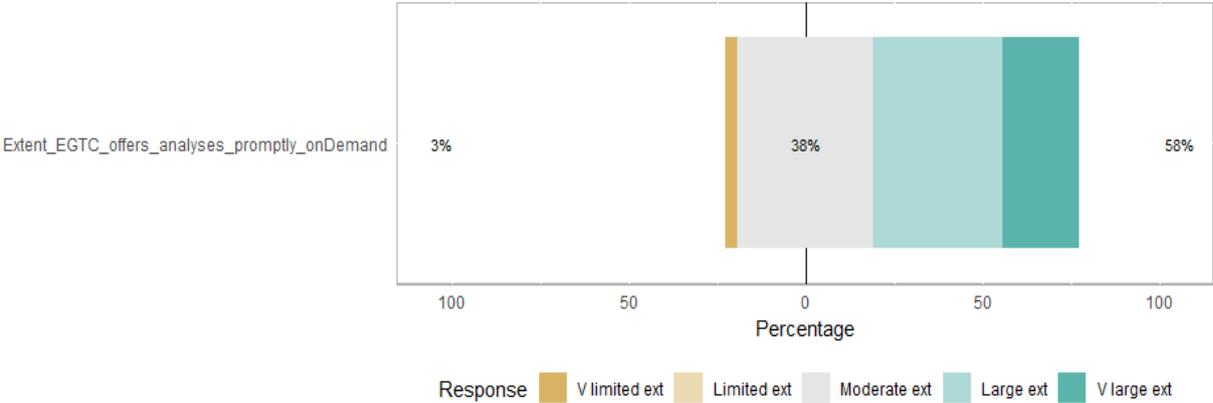
However, there were some concerns from some of the stakeholders that they did not understand fully the tasks and role of the MA and EGTC, such as staff needs, profiles, and duties. Also, there was a reported lack of visibility of the coordination and cooperation of the MA and EGTC. Thus, it is

suggested that further inter and intra-institutional transparency is made available so that stakeholders can gain further insights and knowledge on the functioning of the programme.

Yet, despite some challenges, the overall message that emerged 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.

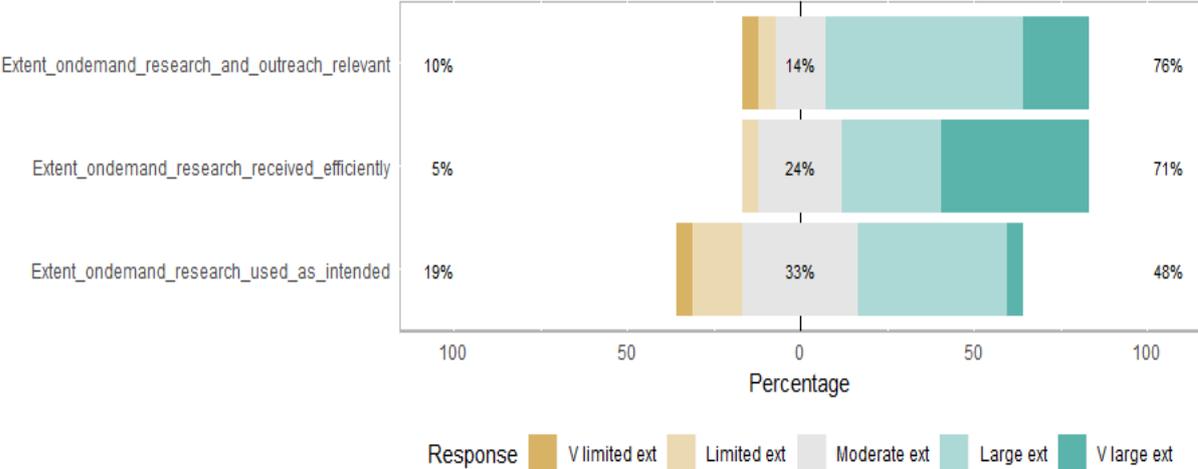
Furthermore, the survey questions addressed to the stakeholders asked whether the ESPON EGTC offers policy relevant analyses efficiently on-demand, as indicated in Figure 6.10.

Figure 6.10: To what extent can the ESPON EGTC offer policy-relevant analyses promptly upon demand to a defined number of key target stakeholders at EU and national level?



Moreover, a separate set of survey questions was circulated to relevant members of the Target Group that had requested on-demand research and outreach services under ESPON 2020; this included questions on the extent to which the on-demand research / outreach outputs requested were policy relevant, whether the on-demand outputs requested were received in a timely manner, and whether the on-demand research outputs requested were used as intended originally, see Figure 6.11.

Figure 6.11: On-demand research survey results under ESPON 2020²³



In terms of whether ESPON 2020 offers research on-demand promptly, the views of the Target Group that had received on-demand research and outreach outputs, and the stakeholders, both considered that the provision of such services was broadly efficient, although much more so in the eyes of the Target Group, as indicated in Figures 6.10 and 6.11.

The results of Figure 6.11 indicate that those that had requested the on-demand research and outreach support considered the outputs to be policy relevant. In addition, it seems that this segment of the Target Group used the on-demand research as largely intended but for some this was only to a moderate extent. It is not clear why this result emerged, and perhaps this could be to do with changing political priorities rather than the quality of the final outputs.

Key conclusions relating to the Performance of the EGTC and MA

Conclusions

- The staffing of the MA and EGTC is largely seen as appropriate, and the EGTC is now in an enhanced position given its extra staffing to participate in policy development activities to support the needs of the Target Group;

- ²³ To what extent was the requested on-demand research / outreach output(s) relevant considering your specific policy needs?
- After requesting the on-demand research / outreach output(s) from the EGTC, to what extent did you receive them in a timely manner?
- After receiving the on-demand research output(s) that you requested from the EGTC, to what extent did your authority / organisation use the research as originally intended?

- However, for some stakeholders there are concerns regarding the extent of the visibility of the work coordinated between the MA and EGTC, and the job specifications of the officials working in these bodies;
- It is encouraging that the EGTC can provide relevant on-demand analyses and outreach services efficiently to stakeholders. However, it seems that a minority of bodies requesting such services are not using the outputs as intended.

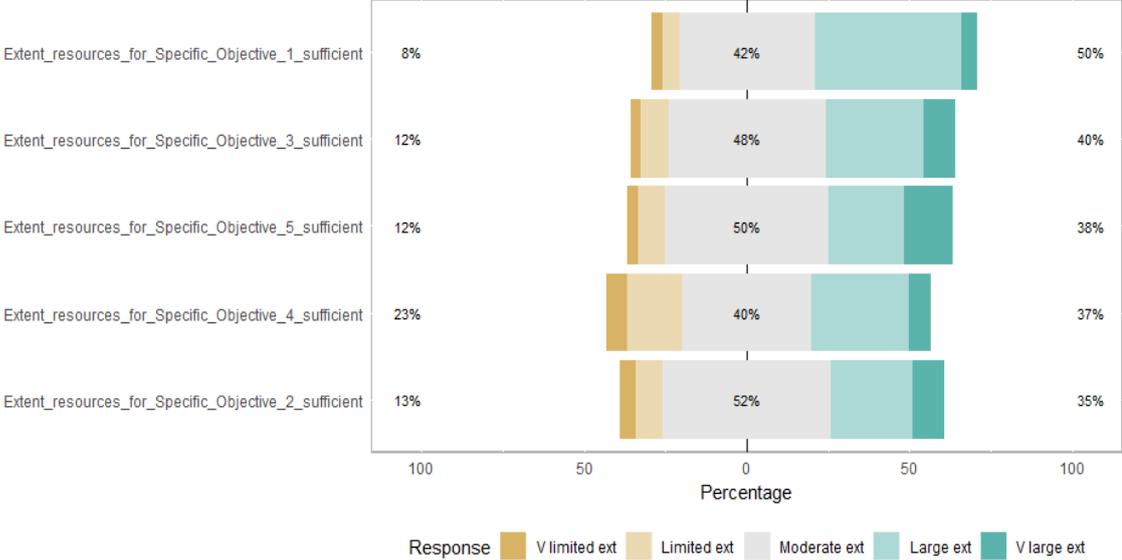
Recommendations for ESPON 2020 and the future Programmes

- Better explanation of the ESPON set-up is required with reporting on the role and coordination between MA and EGTC;
- Elaboration on lessons learned of requesting ESPON services is needed, by asking stakeholders to report on their experiences on using ESPON services in practice.

5.5 ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

When responding to the survey, stakeholders were invited to feedback on the assessment topic area of the allocation of resources. For each of the Specific Objectives 1 to 5, the questions put forward requested respondents to indicate whether the resources allocated were sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups.

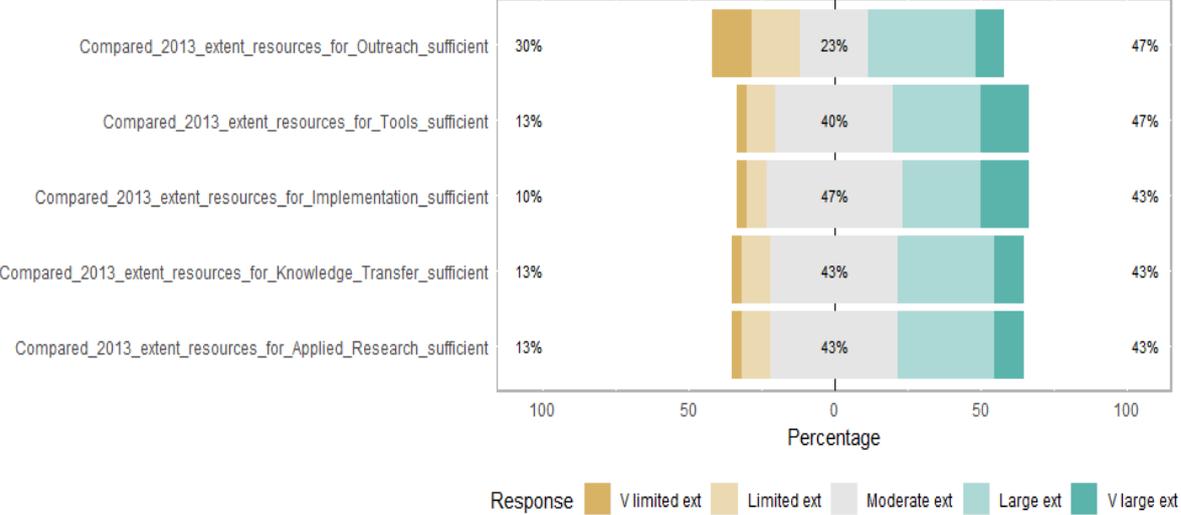
Figure 6.14: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Allocation of resources’²⁴



The same set of survey questions were asked of the stakeholders, but on this occasion, opinions were sought on whether the equivalent items funded under ESPON 2020 were sufficiently resourced compared to ESPON 2013.

- ²⁴To what extent are the resources allocated to Specific Objective 1 (Enhanced production of territorial evidence through applied research and analyses) sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups?
- To what extent are the resources allocated to Specific Objective 3 (Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses) sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups?
- To what extent are the resources allocated to Specific Objective 5 (Leaner, and more effective and efficient implementation provisions and more proficient programme assistance) sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups?
- To what extent are the resources allocated to Specific Objective 4 (Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence) sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups?
- To what extent are the resources allocated to Specific Objective 2 (Upgraded knowledge transfer and use of analytical user support) sufficient to match the expectations of the stakeholders and target groups?

Figure 6.15: Stakeholder survey results relating to the assessment topic of the ‘Allocation of resources’ under ESPON 2020 compared to ESPON 2013²⁵



When considering the sufficiency of the resourcing of the Specific Objectives overall, the main view of stakeholders is that they are all sufficiently resourced although the opinion seems to be polarised between those considering that they are moderately resourced and those thinking that they are well-resourced. Similarly, respondents generally considered that moderate to large improvements have been made under ESPON 2020 in comparison to ESPON 2013 in this respect, see Figures 6.14 and 6.15.

However, there were some more nuanced opinions, namely that Specific Objective 1 (Applied Research) seemed to be the most sufficiently resourced area under ESPON 2020. In addition, Specific Objective 4 (Outreach and Uptake) received the largest proportion of negative responses, when considering the sufficiency of the resources under ESPON 2020, and when comparing the situation between ESPON 2020 to ESPON2013, although this feedback represented the views of a significant minority, see Figures 6.14 and 6.

As an observation, as mentioned already, outreach and uptake is considered as essential in encouraging expansion of the ESPON product user community, in communicating the results in a tailored way to niche audiences, and in encouraging greater geographical and scientific participa-

- ²⁵ Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the resources allocated to wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence sufficient under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the resources allocated to tools and improved territorial observation sufficient under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the resources allocated to implementation provisions and proficient programme assistance sufficient under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the resources allocated to knowledge transfer and use of analytical user support sufficient under ESPON 2020?
- Compared to ESPON 2013, to what extent are the resources allocated to applied research and analyses sufficient under ESPON 2020?

tion in the tender procedures. The calls to address these aspects are likely to explain why a significant minority of stakeholders were critical in response to the funding question for this Specific Objective.

In addition, Specific Objective 2, received the lowest score as to whether it was sufficiently resourced to large or very large extents (Figure 6.14). Therefore, this may suggest that the Targeted Analysis funding stream requires some further investment to ensure that it meets the ongoing needs of the programme.

Key conclusions and recommendations on the resourcing of the Specific Objectives under ESPON 2020

Conclusions

- Stakeholders generally considered that the Specific Objectives were resourced sufficiently under ESPON 2020, however, some areas could be reviewed.

Recommendations for the future Programmes

- To strengthen the impact of the uptake of ESPON outputs, the budget for the ESPON outreach function should be reviewed to assess if it should receive greater funding for the next programming period;
- Similarly, the Targeted Analysis funding stream requires review to ensure that it can meet user demands under the next programme. The regular updating of key maps may require further resourcing.

5.6 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY RESPONSES

An in-depth analysis of the survey responses was undertaken the results for which are indicated Annex 5. The aim of the analysis was to identify insights that may explain the pattern of positive, moderate and negative responses across the survey questions for the stakeholder survey.

This analysis examined whether the differences in opinion per question were due to key respondent characteristics such as respondent's geographical location, organisation type, and prior experience or not with ESPON 2013.

Using these characteristic variables, the results of the analysis illustrated that these variable types did not strongly predict the answers provided. For example, persons with prior experience of ESPON 2013 were just as likely to give positive, moderate and negative responses as those with experience of ESPON 2020 only. Therefore, one cannot make the case that the certain groups are more or less critical of ESPON.

To investigate the matter further, a cluster analysis of the responses was conducted. The cluster analysis illustrated that the pattern of responses could be broadly explained by the behaviour of two broad groups of survey respondents; a larger group consisting of two thirds of stakeholder respondents that tended to provide moderate to positive responses, and a smaller group consisting one third of respondents that tended to provide moderate to negative responses.

Given that just two clusters were identified, it can be surmised that the survey response behaviour of the respondents was not repetitive in that they were selecting the same answers. Rather, generally speaking, they were thinking critically, and were providing a range of responses that were within the range of responses associated with their own cluster i.e. those in the larger “positive cluster” were generally selecting a range of responses on the 3 to 5 Likert scale most of the time and vice versa.

Overall, when considering the distribution of answers to all survey questions, it seems that a majority of stakeholder are generally satisfied with the performance of ESPON 2020. However, a significant minority tends to hold more critical views across the range of different measures examined.

Therefore, the successful implementation of the recommendations across all dimensions is key to encourage an even more positive view of the ESPON 2020 programme to emerge.

A similar series of findings were identified for the Target Group survey; please see Annex 2.

6. Conclusions, recommendations and review of the 8 main challenges

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

ESPON 2020 Performance Framework and Interim Milestones

- ESPON 2020 has met its own milestone output targets for 2018 and will likely meet the final output targets for 2023;
- ESPON 2020 has invested a sufficient amount of funding up to the interim period and has access to enough resources to finance the remaining outputs.

Review of the results indicators

- The current approach to measuring results is not currently specified sufficiently and possibly will not generate meaningful feedback on ESPON programme performance.

Pilot testing of the behavioural additionality indicators

- The pilot results suggest that ESPON project beneficiaries are experiencing a range of unintended beneficial impacts across several dimensions such as skills development, network building with other research organisations and public authorities, and the strengthened ability to attract future public research funding etc;
- ESPON funding is helping to channel university research towards issues that are policy relevant to public authorities, for example, by encouraging researchers to target their future work toward the needs of policy-makers;
- Researchers on ESPON projects are experiencing enhanced levels of job satisfaction by linking their expertise to the research needs of public authorities;

Quality of the outputs

- ESPON provides clear European added value by conducting comparative analyses and producing territorial evidence at the pan-European level, that are complementary with national and regional research activities. The outputs provide unique territorial policy knowledge not offered by other research organisations;
- Project outputs are considered by stakeholders as offering a high (scientific) quality, with the results perceived generally as relevant and timely;
- However, there are issues around the usability of the ESPON 2020 outputs in terms of their readability and relevance to the needs of specific types of Target Group members;
- The terms of reference are generally well-focused, although issues were detected regarding the (perceived) feasibility of some of the services requested;

- Projects that use short timeframes are now subject to a greater number of reporting requirements due to the new service contracts, resulting in perceived burdens for service providers.

Policy relevance of the outputs

- ESPON's work is perceived generally as policy relevant and adds to the knowledge of policy-makers, although it is felt that improvements to enhance this dimension could be made;
- Policy relevance challenges were identified in terms of the geographical scales of the analyses, the possibility for different levels of public administration to directly utilise the material, and the degree of effort required to manage complex reports;
- The process for selecting project topics to reflect stakeholder' demand for territorial evidence (e.g. Targeted Analyses projects) is appreciated and benefits the policy relevance of the results.

Uptake of the evidence

- While many organisations in the immediate ESPON target group community indicated that they have used ESPON outputs to support policy making processes, national authorities claimed to be more frequent users than regional and local authorities. Moreover, some key organisation types have not been targeted specifically or sufficiently, namely ESIF bodies;
- Outreach and uptake are strongly related; given the stronger focus on outreach in this programme period, it is likely that uptake of project results and policy briefs will be strengthened;
- The uptake stories have produced a greater level of insight around uptake than typically reported among the ESPON network. For example, they suggest that having persons or institutions which have familiarity with ESPON seemed 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 are used more frequently across Europe;

Outreach

- ESPON 2020 has implemented a significant amount of outreach activities relating to both the published materials and events, such as workshops, seminars and conferences. At this interim stage, we are yet to see the full impact of this work on the uptake and use of ESPON evidence, although the comments received suggest that measures can be implemented to strengthen their ongoing performance;
- Outreach has clearly been improved in this programme period and most respondents are content generally with the material produced and the way outreach activities are conducted. As part of the outreach activities, regional seminars are offered and these are well-attended and perceived;

- Opportunities now exist for the EGTC to further prioritise and strengthen the outreach strategy and uptake of the results, considering that high standards have been met already in other key areas such as the quality and relevance of the outputs;
- The survey responses suggest that respondents are relatively less pleased with outreach material and outreach activities (compared to the quality or the relevance of the research) and the interviews suggested that e.g. seminars are sometimes not tailored to the needs of stakeholders in learning more about ESPON projects and ESPON tools.
- ESPON events, in particular, seminars, have not fully embraced the outreach notion of tailoring the communication of the results to the needs of those attending. Rather, the events have tended to provide information without any filtering of what would be the most suitable information to provide, resulting in a communication mismatch between the information provided and the needs of the audience;

Involvement of the MC and related issues

- When compared to ESPON 2013, under ESPON 2020, the efficiency of the dialogue between the MC and EGTC when identifying strategic priorities in Annual Work Plans has improved greatly;
- While the MC members are keen to reduce the extent of MC administrative, procedural and formal management burdens, they are eager to be more involved in overseeing project content and other strategic issues;
- The challenge going forward, therefore, is to identify a way to involve the MC in its preferred activities, without reducing the decision-making role of the EGTC or adding further burdens to those not able to take on further responsibilities;

Appropriateness of the administrative procedures

- While many of the Target Group members consider the tender procedures as acceptable, to address the concerns of some applicants, efforts could be made to reduce the requirements to make the process less-burdensome;
- The introduction of service contracts has helped to broaden the supply of service providers and the EGTC is well-positioned to manage the procedures, however, more could be done to encourage scientific interest in the tender opportunities;
- The use of service contracts has increased the project reporting requirements, meaning that there are greater burdens imposed on shorter projects under ESPON 2020. It would be helpful if the reporting requirements for such projects were reduced;
- The ESPON EGTC is benefiting from its enhanced resources and is more engaged in policy development and stakeholder support activities.

Project Support Teams

- The PST have contributed to meeting their objectives through activities to support the policy relevance of the outputs, and have been regarded as a positive development under ESPON 2020;
- There are, however, several challenges that limit the impact of the PST:
 - PSTs often become active at the end of the project. Early involvement of PST members in the project setup would increase the possibilities to enhance the policy relevance of final project results;
 - There is sometimes uncertainty around the functioning of the PST; it may not be clear whether specific projects have a PST or not, who is involved and what their role is. This is further compounded by the continual changing members of the PST;
 - While most of the PST members consider their role as not burdensome, a sizeable minority think otherwise, suggesting that this issue should further examined and addressed;
 - Participating in the PST is voluntary and unpaid, and therefore may not be suited to persons unable to devote the necessary time inputs.

Performance of the EGTC and MA

- The staffing of the MA and EGTC is largely seen as appropriate, and the EGTC is now in an enhanced position given its extra staffing to participate in policy development activities to support the needs of the Target Group;
- However, for some stakeholders there are concerns regarding the extent of the visibility of the work coordinated between the MA and EGTC, and the job specifications of the officials working in these bodies;
- It is encouraging that the EGTC can provide relevant on-demand analyses and outreach services efficiently to stakeholders. However, it seems that a minority of bodies requesting such services are not using the outputs as intended.

Allocation of resources

- Stakeholders generally considered that the Specific Objectives were resourced sufficiently under ESPON 2020, however, some areas could be reviewed.

6.2 RECCOMENDATIONS FOR ESPON 2020 AND THE FUTURE ESPON PROGRAMMES

Review of the results indicators

- The feasibility of measuring the results of the programme quantitatively should be reviewed;
- As a suggestion, it could be useful to examine the results of the ESPON Programme qualitatively using Target Group representatives' workshops. The idea would be to facilitate in-depth discussions in selected areas of ESPON Programme governance to compare the situation in 2015 to 2023 to produce a collectively agreed Target Group assessment of progress. The aims would be to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme in 2015, identify the measures that have been introduced to strengthen Programme performance, and analyse their

effectiveness in realising the necessary results in the 2023 context. Ultimately, the feedback provided would provide practical insights regarding the extent to which the Programme meets the needs of the Target Group and how the ESPON Programme could be reformed going forward.

Pilot testing of the behavioural additionality indicators

- The likely benefits of ESPON project participation should be communicated to tenderers and relevant members of the Target Group to help further promote the Programme.

Quality of the outputs

- More tailoring, diversification and adaptation of the (TA and AR) outputs according to the specific needs of the different Target Groups members is required, at EU, national, regional levels, but also in relation to the needs of territories facing comparable phenomena and challenges. Consideration of the nuanced policy development activities and impacts facing specific Target Group members should be better considered;
- Better consideration, specification and contextualisation of the services requested is needed to ensure the feasibility of the types of research activities demanded;
- To test the feasibility of the research methods requested, innovative public procurement procedures that allow consultation of the market could be employed;
- Opportunities could be provided for creative inputs to address specific research challenges while ensuring that these inputs remain relevant to user needs;
- Consideration should be given to reduce the number of reporting outputs expected of projects with short timetables;
- To facilitate the communication of the results, further specialisation and adaptation of the outreach activities and tools to address the practical needs of the Target Group (the context in which the different stakeholders can assimilate and use the evidence and tools produced by ESPON should be taken into account for the design of specific tailored made outreach activities);

Policy relevance of the outputs

- Measures should be introduced to elaborate or transform the ESPON outputs to enhance their policy relevance;
- Procedures that involve stakeholder inputs leading to the enhancement of the policy relevance of the outputs should be expanded upon e.g. the Targeted Analyses project topic selection processes provides a good example of this;

- Stronger territorialisation of the results and a more strategic outreach approach providing targeted information to specific target groups could be employed to address the obstacles around policy relevance;
- As a suggestion, major trends highlighted by applied research projects could be territorialised by considering the dynamics in specific geographical contexts, to ensure that the results better meet the needs of differentiated Target Group members;
- A territorialised outreach strategy could follow to communicate the project results to all levels of policy makers from the relevant typology of regions presenting the benefits, opportunities, challenges represented by certain trends/policy decision etc.
- Thus, the outreach strategy should be directed primarily towards addressing the interests and needs of the specific Target Groups users, rather than focusing on presenting project results that have not been transformed or tailored.
- As part of these efforts, further policy outreach innovations could be considered, for example, policy labs focusing on highly tailored communication of the results to specific Target Group users, and demonstrations on how the results have been used in practice to strengthen policy making activities in policy relevant contexts. Interactive ways of providing output to stakeholders could be explored to enhance the relevance of ESPON outputs for policy making.

Uptake of the evidence

- Targeted outreach towards regional and local bodies is required to ensure better “buy-in” of potential key users;
- To learn of the effects and to strengthen the outreach strategy, a focused study to zoom-in on the relevant impacts in-depth across the Member States could be implemented. The study design could be from a user needs perspective and could employ behavioural research methods to identify outreach activities that best animate the Target Group to use the ESPON results in practice. This could be complemented by the development of uptake stories that set-out the mechanisms from the design and implementation of the outreach activities to the uptake and exploitation of the results in the policy-making arena;
- An enhanced use of the ECP network could help to tailor the approach to uptake since they are familiar already with the specific needs of key actors and networks on the national and regional levels and can translate the results to these specific contexts;
- Similarly, building outreach activities around existing networks and associations would help 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 and they can act as transmitters of evidence to member regions, cities or local planning bodies;

- Specific attention should be given to ESIF bodies as part of the outreach strategy given the contribution that ESPON results can make to strengthen the design of the financial instruments to address territorial policy issues;
- Means to ease the communication of the results should be considered:
 - Translated reports and outreach materials supported by inputs from the ECP is a possible solution subject to available financing;
 - Provision of tailored materials to enhance the correspondence between the ESPON results and the needs of specific segments of the Target Groups;
 - As mentioned already, innovative outreach solutions such as policy labs could be a preferable option.

Outreach

- Strengthened collaboration between the relevant stakeholders is needed to ensure the success of the outreach activities managed by the service contractor for Outreach Implementation; the work of the service contractor for outreach is very dependent on the active support of the ECP, MC members and EGTC. Considering that the evaluation has identified that tailoring the ESPON results to the needs of key target groups is critical for their uptake, we propose that it is essential that all actors around the ESPON programme work together on tailoring and targeting events, regional seminars and larger conferences. We have identified from interviews and case studies that there is a scope for improving this targeting, while some also point out that currently the targeting of events on topics of current affairs is much more elaborated compared to before. Resources should be made available by Member States to support the necessary inputs;
- To further nuance the ESPON results to the needs of specific Target Group members, feedback from local seminars should also be used for improving policy briefs and other material developed by the ESPON EGTC;
- Outreach materials and events would benefit from further tailoring to attract specific Target Group members. However, the evaluation recognises that there is a fine balance when designing the materials between attracting a broad audience and targeting specific groups that may be interested in certain types of policies or trends;
- Extensive use of satisfaction questionnaires after the events would help to obtain immediate feedback to strengthen the design of the future events (a specific focus should be given to the format, usefulness of the messages/evidence delivered for the specific audience; adequacy of the “language” used to communicate the evidence; etc.).
- A stronger focus on targeting the scientific community, and creating a bridge between academic and policy makers, could help to further stimulate uptake. While ESPON had this type of focus previously for its events, it has become less prevalent. Regular sessions on different periodical scientific conferences could be further followed up.

- Screening of the information to be communicated at ESPON events and seminars should be undertaken to select key issues, messages and findings of most relevance to the needs of those attending. This means selection and communication of the most useful projects and project results so that the outreach objectives can be better met. Seminar timetables should not be squeezed to fit all the ongoing projects; rather, space should be given to open discussions on the most relevant results and evidence to enhance their understanding, uptake and also learning around how the evidence of the applied research projects can be deepened and further territorialised etc;
- Events and seminars could be organised according to the needs and challenges of specific target group members to ensure and ease the presentation of tailored information leading stronger uptake of the results.

Appropriateness of the administrative procedures

- Use of innovative public procurement procedures such as prior market consultations and competitive dialogue could increase the scientific quality of the outputs, attract more service providers and contribute to the further simplification of the procedures;
- Use of innovative procurement procedures and the advanced publication of the procurement plan could also provide opportunities for the ECP and the Single Beneficiary to enhance the extent of scientific interest in the tender procedures. For example, discussions on policy questions to be covered by future themes could, under certain conditions, be openly debated during seminars and other dedicated events (an event could be designed to present the procurement plan and discuss the reasons for selecting the suggested applied research service requests; identification of any existing evidence and feasible methodologies could also be explored).
- Increased visibility of the (innovative) tender procedures at scientific conferences could help to raise the awareness of the scientific community to enhance their interest in submitting procedures;
- An extensive use of simplified cost options in the next programming period could further reduce the administrative burden related to the implementation of the programme;
- As stated previously, the number of project reporting deliveries can be adjusted to the length of the contract durations to reduce the reporting burdens.
- To enhance the level of partner networking, a “consortium partner finding platform” like the one currently managed by DG RTD to support its grant procedures could be developed;²⁶
- To attract scientific experts with highly relevant experience, ToR requirements could be established making it necessary for tenderers to fill key positions with persons with the necessary credentials.

Project Support Teams

- The role and functioning of the PST could be improved by:

²⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/find-partners_en.htm

- Clarifying the structure around the PST concerning mandate, tasks to be performed, relationship to the supportive functions of the EGTC, guidelines etc.
- Enhancing their contributions by involving them as early as possible in the drafting of the ToR (this should support the concrete formulation of the policy questions and the reasons behind them and should not be limited to providing final comments on the final draft ToR);
- The role of the PST should be clarified further prior to their engagement, for instance, through personal briefings, clearer information on the specific role and expectations, defining the minimum level of required participation, the level of burden to be expected from participating in a PST etc.;
- Although it is normal that public officials move positions, an enhanced level of continuity would improve the performance of the PST. The process of nominating persons to the PST could be a Member State responsibility, for example, and the Member States in charge for the PST should ensure that in instances of personnel rotation, the relevant information needed to ensure continuity is transferred to the new incoming colleague;
- A more extensive use of distance meetings (video and tele conferences) and the organisation of PST meetings back to back with other events (as far as possible) could help to reduce the burden of participation.

Performance of the EGTC and MA

- Better explanation of the ESPON set-up is required with reporting on the role and coordination between MA and EGTC;
- Elaboration on lessons learned of requesting ESPON services is needed, by asking stakeholders to report on their experiences on using ESPON services in practice.

6.3 RECOMMENDATION FOR THE FUTURE ESPON PROGRAMMES

ESPON 2020 Performance Framework and Interim Milestones

- The milestone auto decommitment target was set at a low level as indicated in the ESPON 2020 Programme documents. To better reflect the actual amount of financial expenditure at the interim period, this could be increased for future ESPON programmes;
- Review of the academic format of the ESPON outputs to support ease of access to the analyses and results could be considered;

Uptake of the evidence

- Defining an overall enhanced role and tasks for the ECP should be undertaken to magnify the impact of the outreach strategy. By consequence, the selection and nomination of the national ECP should be done according to the experience, competence and skills needed to fulfil the

identified tasks and role. It must be stressed that an enhanced role of the ECP network cannot be achieved without securing its financing;

- Considering the heterogeneity of the ECP, to ensure a level of consistency in the approach and quality of the outreach activities, a minimum standard of competencies, skills and experiences should be set.

Allocation of resources

- To strengthen the impact of the uptake of ESPON outputs, the budget for the ESPON outreach function should be reviewed to assess if it should receive greater funding for the next programming period;
- Similarly, the Targeted Analysis funding stream requires review to ensure that it can meet user demands under the next programme. The regular updating of key maps may require further resourcing.

6.4 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE 8 MAIN CHALLENGES

Challenge	Comment
Transfer of territorial evidence, knowledge and results to the policy arena (appropriateness, timeliness, clarity, relevance and quality of the evidence).	ESPON does well in providing high-quality results and relevant territorial evidence. However, quality of outputs is restricted by limited ability to <i>differentiate</i> which challenges transfer to the policy arena. Timeliness has improved through stricter ToRs, that, however, can affect research quality negatively. Understandability of <i>research</i> results is crucial for policy-makers to use territorial evidence and can still be improved. Overall, ESPON has clear added value for policy-making by providing comparative analyses on pan-European level and adding the <i>territorial</i> dimension.
Policy-relevant analyses upon demand from target stakeholders at EU and national, regional and local level.	ESPON provides territorial evidence particularly policy-relevant for stakeholders at EU and national level. Projects under Specific Objective 2 Targeted Analyses successfully address stakeholders demands. It remains difficult for ESPON to compete with regional and local data. Also, language constraints and evidence presented on non-relatable <i>geographical scales</i> , require additional translation efforts from policy-makers, both in terms of language and applicability. Regarding ESPON outputs, there seems to be scope for making the

	material more policy relevant, targeted and accessible for actors at the regional and even local levels. There is potential to make ESPON analyses <i>useable</i> and not only inspirational.
Validation of the scientific quality of results and the comparability of data in support of innovative policy actions.	The scientific quality of ESPON projects and internally published material is generally perceived to be high. However, there is concerns being raised about the dismantling of the academic project support which was previously following at least the AR project, the lesser degree of peer-to-peer discussions at the conferences and seminars (to the benefit of higher-level policy discussions and plenaries), and the shorter time and tighter reporting structures in the new programme period. Again, <i>comparative</i> analyses provided by ESPON has a clear added value. Targeted outreach activities potentially lead to uptake of this evidence. It is too early to say but actions have been taken that may support innovative policy actions.
Ensure the effective outreach of ESPON 2020 evidence to new users through coordinated efforts including the ECP Network.	The Transnational Outreach Strategy supports effective outreach through demand-driven outreach activities. However, concerns remain as to how many <i>new</i> actors are reached through seminars, publications, etc. Evidence suggests that the coordination of efforts between those responsible for outreach, the EGTC and the ECP has not been fully satisfactory. Hence there is still room for improving the outreach and make sure that <i>new</i> users are exposed to ESPON results.
Reinforce the in-house capacity in order to improve knowledge transfer and outreach and make it feasible to “fast track” territorial evidence into the policy debate.	The capacities of the EGTC have improved substantially. The inhouse capacities for producing and disseminating territorial evidence is suitable. The number of workshops, seminars, publications also shows a high level of activities and “proactiveness” in supplying actors with relevant information.
Encourage other ESI funding programmes and bodies to use territorial evidence .	So far ESPON has not been able to really cut through to the programming bodies of ESIFs and programs such as Interreg. However, ESPON is now making an effort, not least with the recent publication of a catalogue of ESPON projects and publications, encompassing all past, ongoing and initiated research with relevant content for the programming agencies across Europe.

<p>Institutional set up which significantly reduces the overall administrative burden of the ESPON 2020 Programme.</p>	<p>The administrative burden has been heavier on the EGTC with service contracts, but with more staff it is perceived to be functioning well. Projects feel that they can get help in developing and refining e.g. policy briefs. The interaction with projects seems to be working well. Role/position of the MC in relation to the EGTC, PST and MA could be made clearer.</p>
<p>Administrative procedures that promote further the interest in being involved in delivering ESPON 2020 territorial evidence.</p>	<p>Through service contracts the administrative burden has noticeably been reduced for beneficiaries. Some actors are concerned with the structures around service contracts, e.g. the number of reports that have to be submitted and the un-flexible deadlines, but, altogether the stakeholders seem to appreciate the administrative procedures and it is not something that discourages participation in the ESPON programme.</p>

Annex 1: Behavioral Additionality Indicators

A) INTRODUCTION

The Mid-Term Evaluation was requested to undertake a review of the format of the ESPON 2020 programme indicators to assess if they appropriately catch the main added value and contribution of the Programme, and to explore alternative approaches.

To address these requests, this section contains a common critique of programme input and output indicator frameworks, and suggests a method for examining project beneficiary impacts known as behavioural additionality analysis. Finally, the results of a pilot behavioural additionality survey using a small sample are analysed, with recommendations presented on how the approach could be scaled-up for the ESPON programme.

B) COMMON CRITIQUES OF PROGRAMME INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

Typically, public programmes are subject to ongoing managerial scrutiny involving officials responsible for the direct management of the programme and stakeholders that have an interest in ensuring the success of the programme.

To assist the strategic and day-to-day managerial decision making, programme indicator frameworks are normally established to provide information on programme progress against designated milestones and end of programme targets.

As such, programme indicator frameworks are typically designed to measure the extent of programme progress using input and output indicators. The main types of input and output indicators include:

- percentage measures of programme budget expenditure;
- and the number of outputs produced against the originally designated output targets.

These two types of indicators provide basic but critical information around the extent of programme implementation.

The ESPON 2020 Programme performance indicator framework follows the established approach of using these typical input and output indicators. These indicators should be retained by the Programme going forward for the reasons mentioned above.

However, it should be recognised that there is an established literature indicating that input and output indicators provide insufficient insight into the extent of programme effects. Indeed, often, programme beneficiaries experience multiple types of benefits resulting from participation in grant funded activities.

Therefore, to ensure that transparency is provided regarding the beneficial impacts generated by the investment of programme funds, it has been recommended previously that public programmes should be subject to analyses that assist in measuring the changes they generate. Thus, indicators that measure

‘impacts’ and not just the extent of inputs and outputs realised can provide a useful means of providing information to programme stakeholders who are keen to learn of the programme’s effects ‘on the ground’.

C) BEHAVIOURAL ADDITIONALITY INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

Given the limitations of measuring programme effects using input and output indicators only, behavioural additionality indicator frameworks have been suggested to provide insights into the broad positive experiences of beneficiaries resulting from their participation in grant funded projects.

Indeed, the theoretical assumption is that because of programme participation, beneficiaries are changed, usually for the better, leading to an enhanced level of organisational performance of the beneficiaries during and after completing their grant funded project.²⁷

Given the focus on measuring changes in grant beneficiaries, behavioural additionality research has been promoted by the R&D evaluation literature, and the European Commission has previously sponsored research using this approach to gauge the impact of the EU R&D Framework Programme on grant beneficiaries across multiple additionality dimensions.²⁸

Typically, behavioural additionality approaches seek to measure as many possible benefits that may be derived from project participation as possible; this includes benefits that were not considered originally as part of the programme objectives or effects.

For example, behavioural additionality indicators may focus on measuring how project participation can lead to the development of cognitive and other capabilities, therefore enabling actors to better overcome problems and failures going forward. Such indicators can include enhanced learning, capacity building, strengthened networks and strengthened strategic capabilities etc.

Within the R&D policy evaluation field, additionality indicators have been used according to a scale-based approach to measurement, to identify how ‘deep’ the changes have gone within the organisations that have benefited from the programme funding. This data can be combined with the assessment of qualitative feedback, to provide contextual explanatory insights into the behavioural changes that have occurred.

D) PILOT BEHAVIOURAL ADDITIONALITY INDICATOR SURVEY FOR THE ESPON 2020 PROGRAMME

As part of the Mid-Term Evaluation, a pilot telephone survey was tested to explore the feasibility of using the behavioural additionality indicator approach for ESPON programme going forward.

²⁷ Gok, A. & Edlar, J. (2012) The use of behavioral additionality evaluation in innovation policy making. Research Evaluation pp. 1-13.

²⁸ IDEA Consult (2009) Assessing the behavioural additionality of the EU Sixth Framework Programme. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/fp6-evidence-base/evaluation_studies_and_reports/evaluation_studies_and_reports_2009/assessing_the_behavioural_additionality_of_the_sixth_framework_programme.pdf

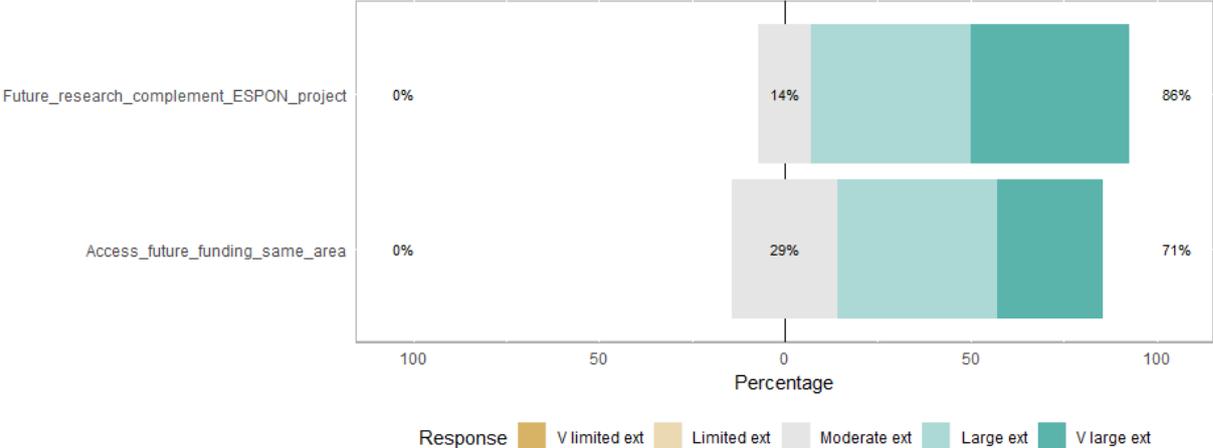
To begin, informed by the existing behavioural additionality literature, several additionality assessment topics were defined to guide the focus of the research, as follows:

1. **Project additionalities:** in the ESPON context, these were defined as additionalities that benefit the ESPON funded project area and researcher careers. For example, the project results may have received attention from donors and the researchers may be able to access future funding in similar areas as a result. Future projects may be of a larger scale or a greater complexity or cover different geographical areas or expand into new topic areas or receive support from non-EU funding streams.
2. **EU-wide networking or cooperation additionalities:** for ESPON project participants cooperative behaviour is likely to have changed for the organisations concerned e.g. a public authority could be more open to cooperating with other researchers on projects going forward and likewise academics. In addition, the project consortia may be sustainable beyond the project e.g. a consortium may wish to undertake further work together. Finally, it may be interesting for project consortia members to strengthen relations within the ESPON network, for example a public authority may develop stronger links with the ECP, MC or EGTC, or with other project consortia;
3. **Research and policy capacity additionalities:** participants in ESPON projects are likely to develop a range of research competencies and skills resulting from project participation; this could include tender writing skills, policy knowledge, and analytical skills;
4. **Project management additionalities:** project participants are likely to enhance their research project management capabilities, and quality management skills, relating to large scale multi country projects;
5. **Policy relevance additionalities:** it could be the case that academics gain an enhanced interest in tailoring their future research to the practical needs of public authorities, enhancing the ongoing policy relevance of academic research;
6. **Uptake additionalities:** after participating in a project, public authorities may see how they can effectively use ESPON products as part of their policy-making or planning activities, encouraging the ongoing uptake of ESPON outputs;
7. **Repeat service provider additionalities:** project participants may consider that ESPON fills a research funding gap considering its support of territorial research and insight. Therefore, ESPON funding may lead to the generation of a supply of service providers interested in strategically servicing ESPON on an ongoing basis.

Informed by these topic areas, a Likert scale survey questionnaire was designed and shared with 12 organisations that had participated in the Targeted Analyses projects funded under ESPON 2020. In total, 7 organisations responded to the telephone survey including one public authority (i.e. a project stakeholder) and six universities (i.e. project leaders). The survey results are indicated in the remainder of this Annex.

To begin, respondents were asked to comment of whether any project additionalities had emerged in terms of whether their future research will complement the focus of their ESPON funded project and whether they will be able to access funding in the same area of policy research.

Figure A1: Project additionalities indicator results²⁹



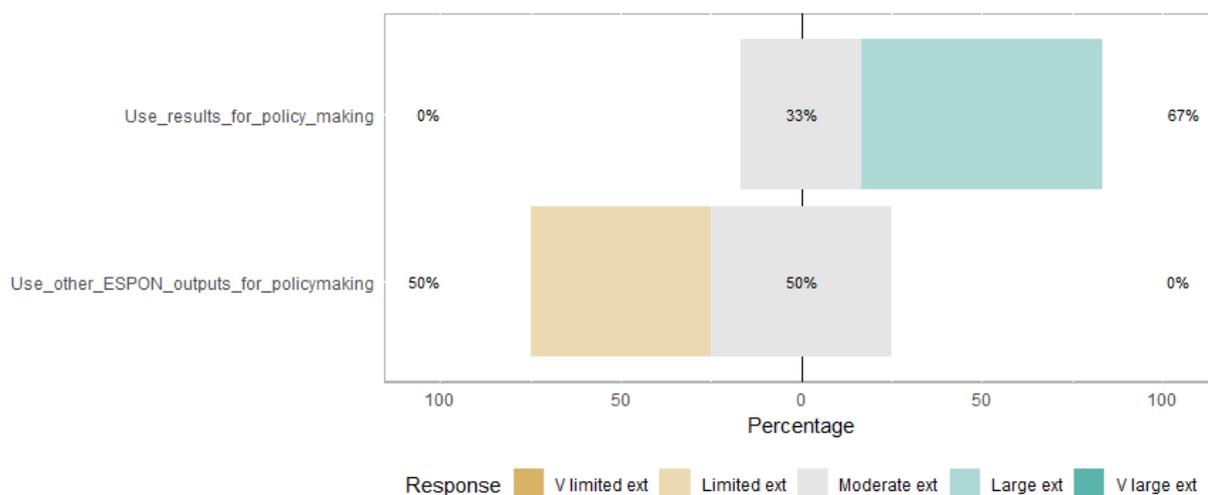
In both cases, the results suggested that by receiving ESPON project funding, the relevant research field of interest to the ESPON community would be subject to future research by the same beneficiary organisations, and the beneficiaries agreed that they would seek to access funding in the same area, therefore their previous ESPON experience would likely increase their chances of obtaining finance.

The qualitative feedback suggested that some of the organisations were aiming to further specialise in the field of research sponsored by ESPON. In some cases, the ESPON projects were a nuanced or scaled-up follow-on from previous studies, and had helped to further establish the researchers in the area, therefore increasing the relevance and feasibility of future financing. In several cases, plans were already underway to design new projects in (partially) related areas, with considerations already being made on the appropriate funding streams, whether from ESPON or otherwise.

The second assessment topic related to the issue of uptake additionalities, exploring whether the ESPON grant project results would be used by public authorities as part of their planning activities, and if the public authorities would consider using other ESPON outputs given their experience of participating in an ESPON grant funded project.

Figure A2: Uptake additionalities indicator results³⁰

- ²⁹ As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent will you be able to access further research project funding in the same or related research area?
- To what extent will your future research projects complement the research focus of your ESPON 2020 funded project?
- ³⁰ To what extent will you use the results of your ESPON funded research project as part of your planning or policy making activities?
- As a result of your experience with the Targeted Analysis project, to what extent will you use other ESPON funded research outputs as part of your planning or policy making activities?



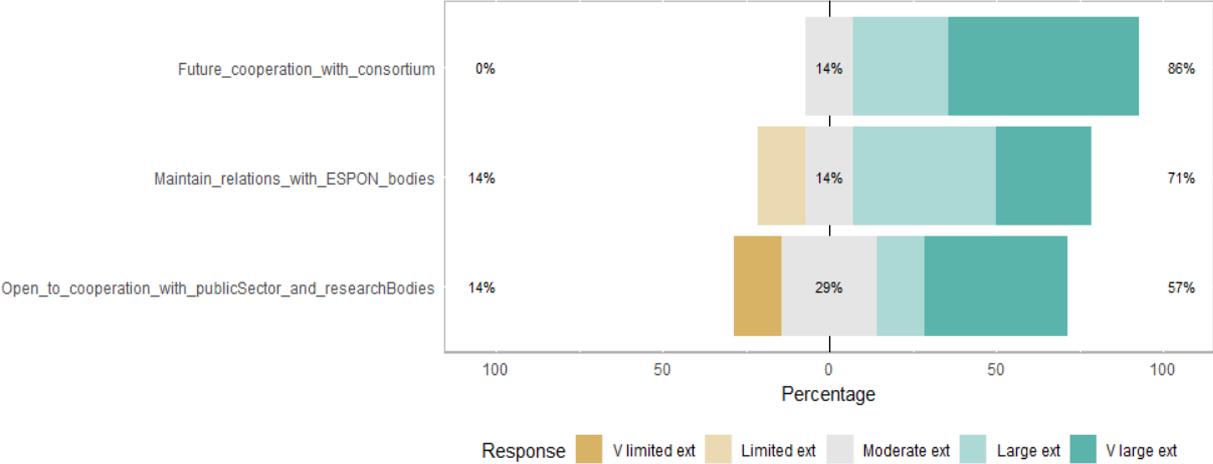
In the case of the uptake additionality questions, only three responses were received. This was because only one project stakeholder participated in the survey, and two universities were able to comment on the policy-making questions on behalf of the public authorities that they were cooperating with.

Despite the low number of responses, the general feeling is that the results will be used for policy making. The public authority surveyed mentioned that the Targeted Analysis approach of involving public authorities as project stakeholders had meant that the research products were directly applicable to their own work given that they were able to shape the direction of the project. This approach was considered as different from typical applied research projects where the studies are more university-led with the practical needs of the public authorities not considered fully. The universities suggested that there was a good chance the projects results would be used by their contacts in public authorities.

The university commenting did not know if public authorities would use other ESPON outputs, hence the more negative types of responses for the second question. The public authority surveyed mentioned that they had used the ESPON results as part of their own planning activities in the past, and would do so again if such a relevant situation arises.

Following this, respondents were asked to comment on whether any networking additionalities had occurred, for example, whether they were encouraged to cooperate with their consortium partners in the future, maintain relations with the ESPON bodies such as the PST, MA etc., or had become more open minded about cooperating with other public sector bodies and research institutes on future similar assignments.

Figure A3: Networking additionalities indicator results³¹



The responses to the network additionality questions were generally positive, and all respondents considered they would cooperate with one or more consortium partners going forward on other research projects, had become open to maintaining relations with ESPON bodies, and were open to cooperation with other public sector bodies and research bodies.

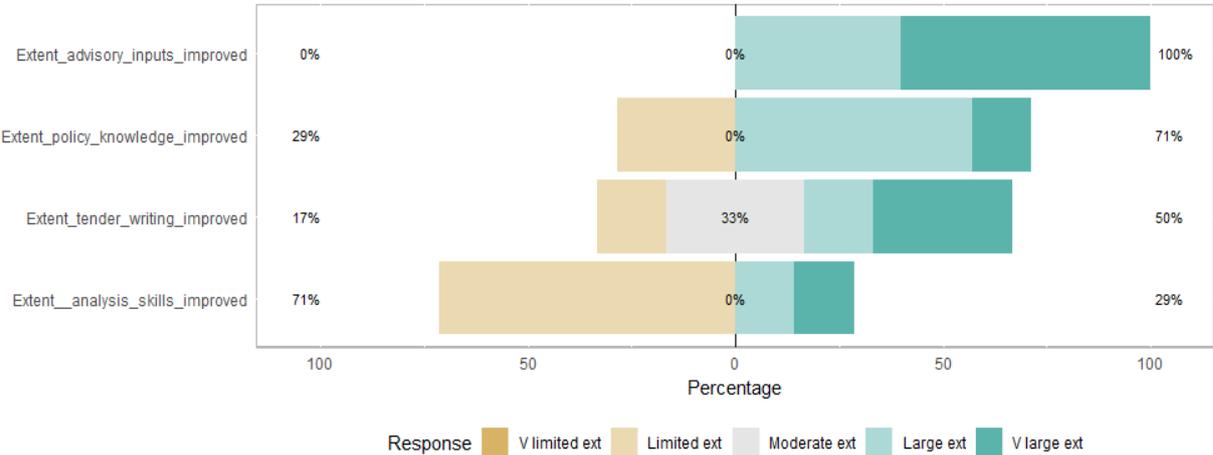
In this additionality field, a key issue considered was whether or not the ESPON grant funded project was the causal factor in this respect. Were moderate or negative responses were received, this was due to the fact that cooperating with their consortium partners or with the public sector bodies was something that beneficiaries do as part of their normal business; therefore, the ESPON funding had not changed anything in this respect.

A further issue identified was that while many were open to future cooperation with ESPON network of bodies, they did not know how to go about this exactly. One respondent mentioned that they had been invited to present a project paper at a conference therefore leading to future maintenance of relations with ESPON. Another body mentioned that perhaps a designated networking platform would help facilitate this goal. In addition, another respondent mentioned that while they do not cooperate with specific ESPON bodies such as the MC, they do network with a small number of individuals associated with the key ESPON bodies to keep track of developments.

- ³¹ As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent have you become open to the idea of cooperation with public authorities or research institutes as part of future publicly funded research projects?
- To what extent will you cooperate on future projects (research or otherwise) with the members of your project consortium?
- As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent will you maintain relations with the network of ESPON organisations other than your own project consortium e.g. the MA, EGTC, MC, PST or other project consortia?

The next series of questions related to whether any research additionalities had been developed due to the ESPON funding, such as whether any project advisory skills, policy knowledge, tender writing or analytical skills had improved.

Figure A4: Research skills additionalities indicator results³²



As a general comment, the main issue with these questions was that given that they were worded in general terms, they tended to invite uneven types of Likert scale responses. For example, even though all beneficiaries experienced benefits across all measures, in some cases, the benefit obtained would be relatively minor when considering the overall skill-set of the individual concerned. Therefore, while the academics generally commented that they were able to refine or develop their analytical skills, it tended to be in a highly nuanced but useful area, therefore on the Likert scale a high response was given by some but others provided a low response for the same type of benefit gained. More precise wording of these questions is therefore recommended to ensure that the benefits accrued by the beneficiaries are properly accounted for.

Moreover, it was mentioned that the development of skills tended to fall unevenly on the project consortium, for example, with less experienced organisations and researchers gaining more from the projects than those with developed talents. Therefore, a future survey could be designed to survey a sample of persons from each of the consortia, so that the differential impacts can be gauged appropriately.

In terms of the project advisory inputs, this seemed to be a useful skill developed by the project participants. In some cases, universities found that they had to advise on project approaches and findings that were easily understood by themselves but not to stakeholders; therefore they had to find

- ³² As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent have your tender writing skills for research project improved?
- As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent has your policy knowledge around the domain concerned improved?
- As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent have your research analytical skills improved?

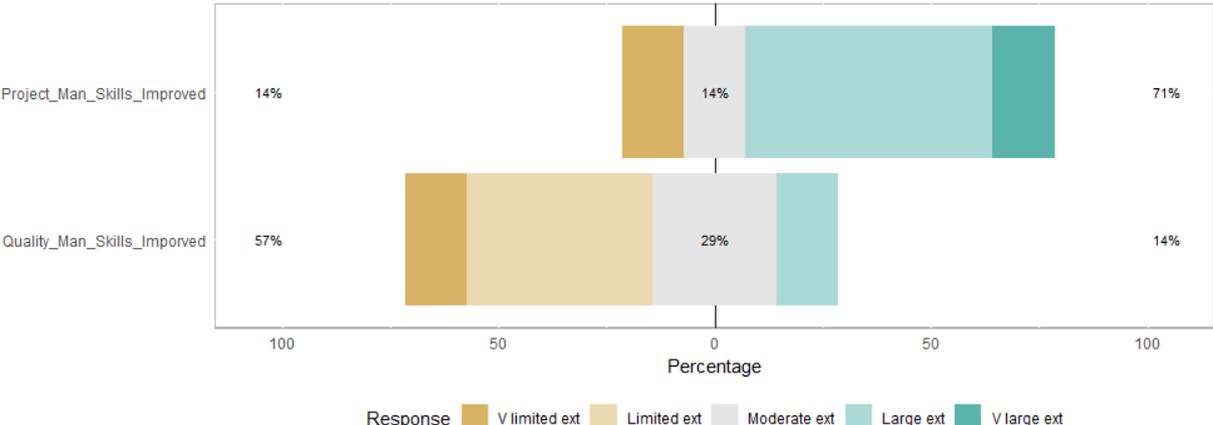
ways of improving their communication of methods and results to ensure that partners could easily engage with the project. The public authority surveyed also commented that they had to learn how to successfully engage with the research team to ensure the project was of relevance to themselves.

In most cases, the beneficiaries gained relevant policy knowledge either through their own research, or through the research of their consortium partners. However, for some, it seemed that the projects built-on previous knowledge already gained and therefore the knowledge obtained was more nuanced.

Regarding the development of tender writing skills, in some cases the experience was transformative, particular if it was the first multi-country tender the beneficiaries had worked on, but in other cases, preparing the tender was seen as relatively business-as-usual, therefore leading to a lower level of skills development.

Next, respondents were asked to comment on whether their research project management and quality management skills has developed given their recent experience of working on their ESPON funded project.

Figure A5: Project management additionalities indicator results

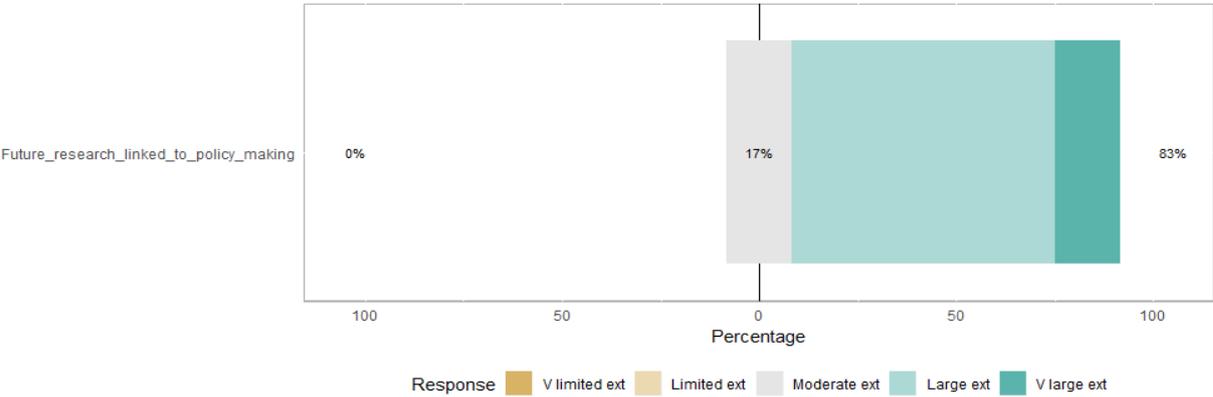


In terms of the development of project management skills, a range of responses were provided. Typically, the multi-partner, multi-country nature of the projects had exposed the respondents to some new experiences, meaning that they would be better prepared for similar assignments in the future. However, again, for some organisations, the experience was not that unique, and therefore had not led to the development of new skills.

Quality management was something that the researchers were generally accustomed to, so this measure did not receive many positive responses, although some research organisations mentioned that ensuring a consistent level of quality across the multi-country team was a challenge and something that they would approach differently in the future given their ESPON project experiences.

We also asked the respondents to comment on whether their future research would be linked to policy making needs, therefore ensuring the policy relevance of their future work.

Figure A6: Policy relevance additionalities indicator results³³



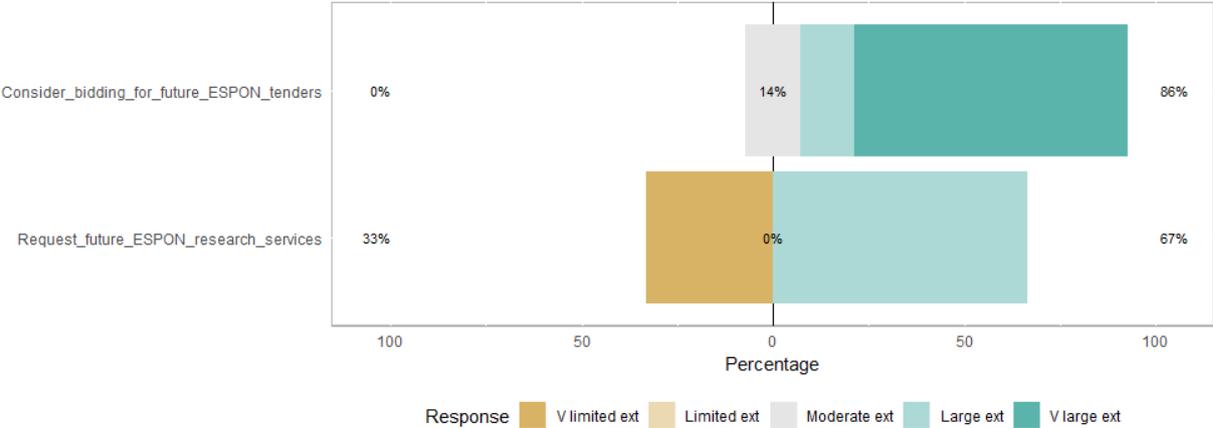
This measure was responded to positively with most researchers indicating that they had been encouraged by the ESPON funded project to design future studies of relevance to policy makers within the same or related area, therefore providing potential future benefits to the development of research products needed by public authorities.

Moreover, as an aside, the feedback from the academics suggested that their level of job satisfaction had improved as a result of participating in their ESPON funded projects. The main reason given was that they experienced their own research as being linked to the tangible activities of public authorities, and had enjoyed providing research services to the benefit of other organisations. If a future survey is launched, academic job satisfaction additionalities could be a relevant area of exploration.

The final additionality topic explored the issue of repeat service provider additionalities, examining if the beneficiaries would bid for future projects and if they would consider requesting future on-demand research projects from ESPON.

- ³³ As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent have your research project management skills improved?
- As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent have your research quality management skills improved?

Figure A6: Repeat service provider additionalities indicator results³⁴



The respondents overwhelmingly made the case that they would seek funding from ESPON in the future if available for similar research activities, suggesting that ESPON will be serviced by a research community with increasingly relevant skills and knowledge.

There were only three responses to the question of whether future research would be requested from ESPON, with one respondent indicating that they had never heard of the on-demand research, although the public authority surveyed suggested that this was something they would consider given that the Targeted Analysis project has provided them with results that they could usefully apply within their own planning activities.

E) CONCLUSIONS

Key conclusions and recommendations relating to the behavioural additionalities of the ESPON 2020 programme

Conclusions

- According to the pilot survey, ESPON project beneficiaries are experiencing a range of unintended beneficial impacts that are leading to modest to transformational improvements across a range of dimensions at individual and organisational levels;
- ESPON funding is helping to channel university research towards issues that are policy relevant to public authorities, either directly through the ESPON funded projects, or as a result of the changed research interests of the academics;

³⁴ As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent will you consider bidding for future project opportunities funded by ESPON?
 As a result of the ESPON 2020 funded project that you participated in, to what extent will you consider requesting future ESPON tailored research services?

- The questions addressed by the survey were relevant to the additionalities experienced by the beneficiaries although some more precise wording could be used for the some of the survey questions, for example, where highly nuanced skills and expertise are developed by researchers on the projects, so that the beneficial changes can be properly measured;
- Researchers on ESPON projects are experiencing enhanced levels of job satisfaction by linking their expertise to the research needs of public authorities.

Recommendation for the ESPON 2020 Programme and the Future Programmes

- The likely benefits of ESPON project participation should be communicated to tenderers and relevant members of the Target Group to help further promote the Programme

Annex 2: In-depth analysis of the survey responses

An analysis was undertaken to obtain insights that may explain the pattern of responses across the survey questions for both the target group survey and the stakeholder survey.

This analysis examined whether the differences in opinion per question were due to key characteristics such as respondent's geographical location, organisation type, and prior experience or not with ESPON 2013.

Moreover, a cluster analysis was performed using the Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) algorithm to examine whether the distributions of responses for each of the questions could be explained by the behavior of 'hidden groups' that may provide similar types of responses to each of the survey questions. It was assumed that such insight would help to clarify whether different segments of ESPON stakeholders and users exist, and characterise them in terms of their view of the performance of ESPON 2020 across multiple measures.

In addition, it was explored whether these clusters were associated with the characteristics variables such as geographical location, organisation type, and prior experience or not with ESPON 2013.

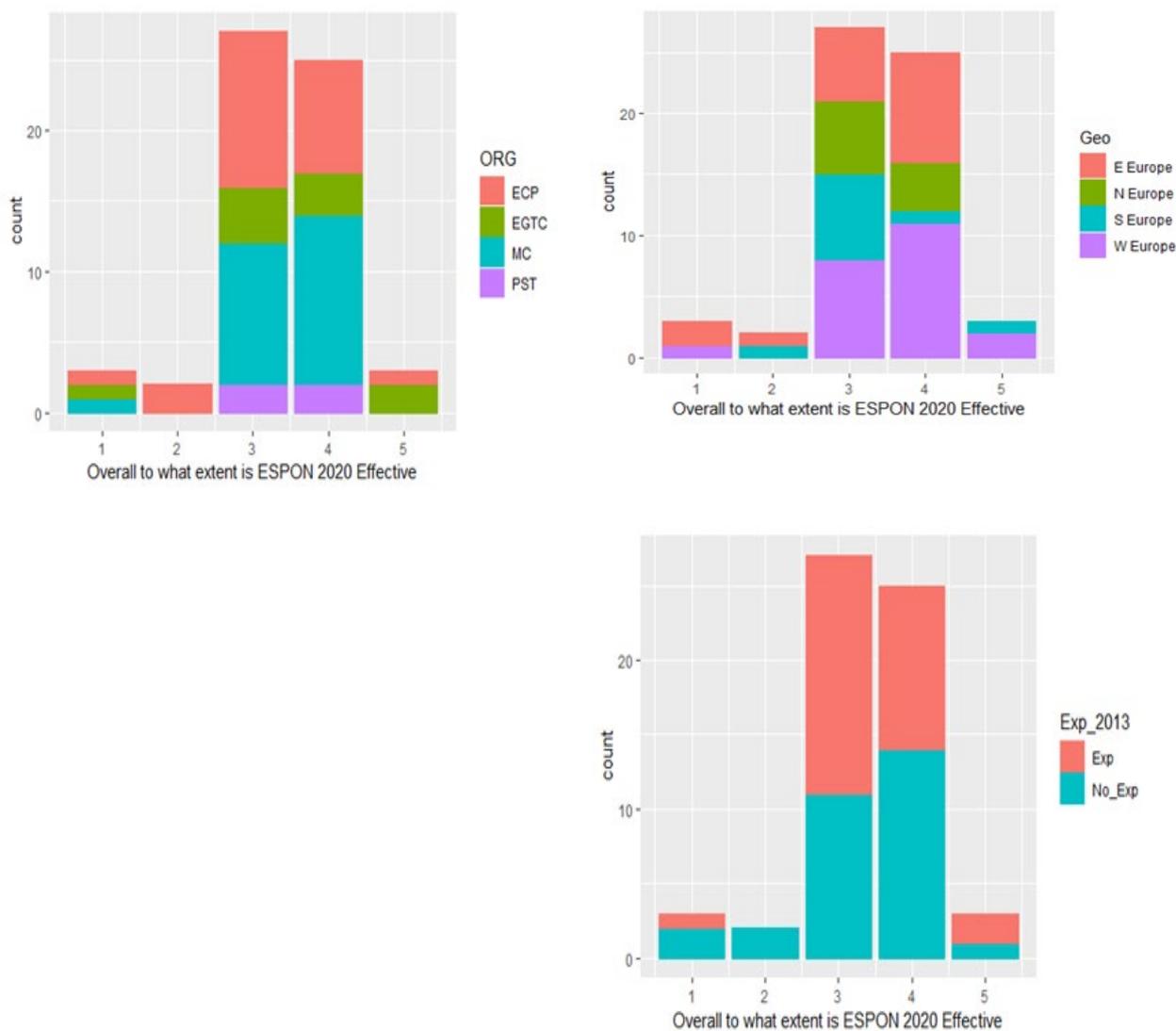
Upon identification and characterisation of the clusters, the study examined the implications of the findings for ESPON 2020 going forward.

Analysis of the SURVEY responses using characteristics variables

An analysis was performed across the survey responses to clarify if the responses per questions could be explained using the characteristics data gathered on the respondents. This included respondent's geographical location, organisation type, and prior experience or not with ESPON 2013.

The analysis was conducted using the stakeholder survey results. As an example, Figure A1 indicates the distribution of responses for the question 'Overall to what extent is ESPON 2020 effective'.

Figure A1: Stakeholder survey response to the question "Overall to what extent is ESPON 2020 effective" by organisation, geographical area, prior experience with ESPON 2013 characteristics variables.

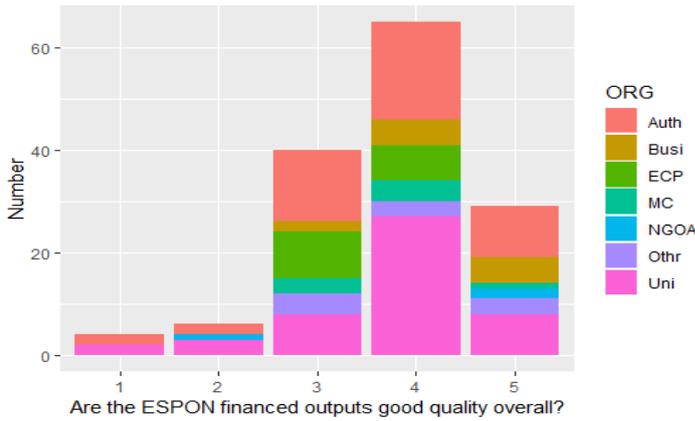


As the example of Figure A1 shows, the analysis of the stakeholder survey responses by characteristics type did not help to explain the distribution of responses, considering that persons from the same organisations, geographical regions and prior experience or not with ESPON 2013 provided a range of different responses to the measures examining the performance of ESPON 2020.

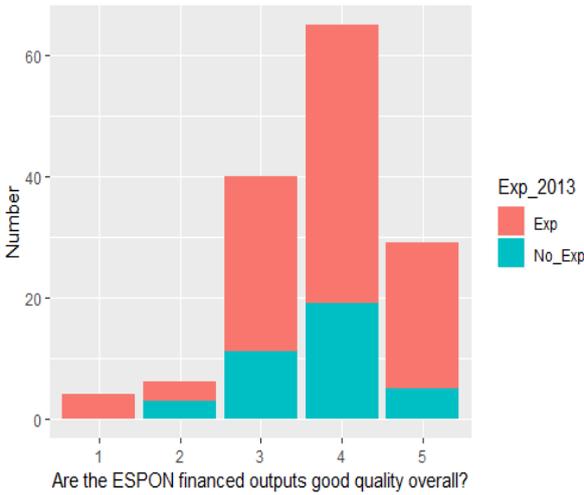
The same analysis was conducted across the target group survey questions. An example is indicated below in figure A2:

Figure A2: Target group survey response to the question “Are ESPON 2020 financed outputs good quality overall” by organisation, geographical area, prior experience with ESPON 2013 characteristics variables.

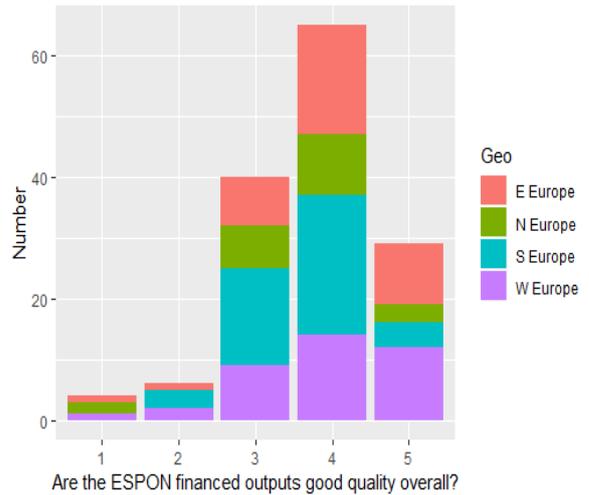
Are the ESPON financed outputs good quality overall? (Organisation subsets)



Are the ESPON financed outputs good quality overall? (Experience with ESPON 2013 subsets)



Are the ESPON financed outputs good quality overall? (Geography subsets)



In the same way as the stakeholder survey, and as the example of Figure A2 suggests, the analysis across the target group survey questions did not yield any concrete answers to explain the pattern of responses across the questions considering that persons from the same organisations, geographical regions and prior experience or not with ESPON 2020 provided different responses to the measures examining the performance of ESPON 2020.

Cluster analysis

Considering that the analysis by characteristic variables produced limited insights, a cluster analysis was performed using the Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) algorithm, to examine if types of responses per question could be explained by ‘hidden groups’ that provided similar responses across the survey questions.

The cluster analysis was conducted to examine if 2, 3, 4 or 5 clusters would produce the optimum cluster partitioning solution. To determine this, a silhouette analysis was performed, as indicated in Figures A3 and A4.³⁵

Figure A3: Stakeholder survey silhouette analysis of cluster results

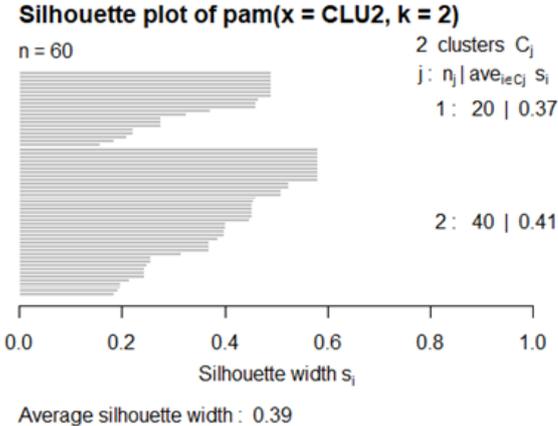
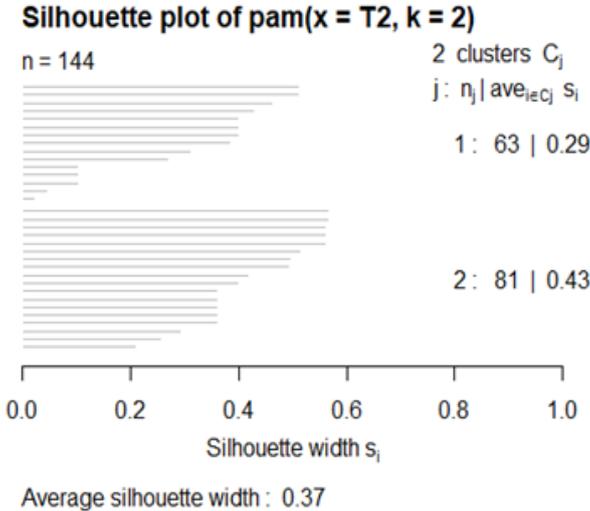


Figure A4: Target group survey silhouette analysis of cluster results



³⁵ The silhouette analysis measures how well an observation is clustered and it estimates the average distance between clusters. The silhouette plot displays a measure of how close each point in one cluster is to points in the neighboring clusters. This metric (silhouette width) ranges from -1 to 1 for each observation in your data and can be interpreted as follows: Values close to 1 suggest that the observation is well matched to the assigned cluster. Values close to 0 suggest that the observation is borderline matched between two clusters. Values close to -1 suggest that the observations may be assigned to the wrong cluster.

The analysis of the cluster solutions indicated that the 2 cluster solution was the optimal solution when compared to the 3, 4 and 5 cluster solutions for the following reasons:

- The average silhouette width for the 2 cluster solution for both of the survey data-sets was the closest to the minimum convention cut-off width of 0.4. Clusters with a width of 0.4 and above are generally considered as “stable”. This means that the cases that are allocated to the clusters follow a similar pattern of behaviour;
- The larger cluster was the one above the minimum threshold related to 40 (66%) of the stakeholders and 81 (56%) of the target group.
- The smaller cluster was just below the minimum threshold and related to 20 (33%) of the stakeholders and 63 (44%) of the target group.

Considering that a two cluster solution was optimal, and that these were close to the minimum threshold, several observations can be made:

- The two groups broadly represent individuals that follow two patterns of survey response behaviour: a larger group that is more likely to provide moderate to positive responses to the survey questions i.e. Likert scale responses of 3 to 5, and a smaller group that is more likely to provide moderate to negative answers i.e. Likert scale responses of 1 to 3;
- Considering that the two cluster solution was optimal, it meant that respondents were thinking critically to the questions, typically within the range of responses associated with each cluster. Therefore, respondents were not selecting the same response for each question but typically within a small range as described above;
- Considering that the two clusters solutions were just below the minimum threshold, it shows that respondents would sometimes deviate from the range of responses associated with their own cluster. For example, this means that for some of the questions, some of the respondents designated to cluster 1 would occasionally provide the same response as those designated to cluster 2 and vice versa. Again, this provides confirmation that the survey respondents were thinking critically to each question, and were not afraid to provide a response to an individual question that differed from their own general trend of responses to the other questions.

Analysis of the survey responses by the cluster variables

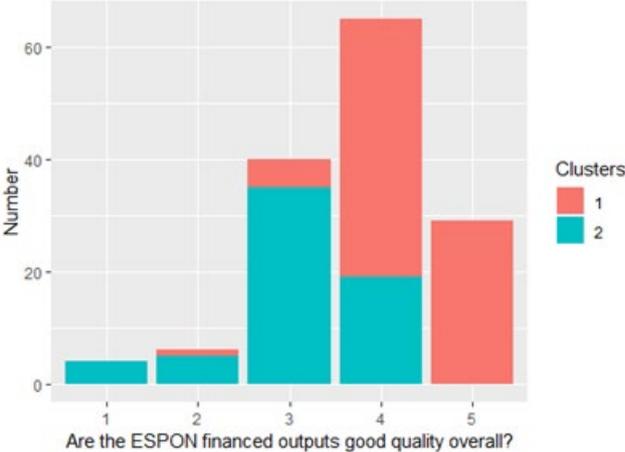
The end result of the cluster analyses was the labelling of the respondents into the two clusters. Thus, a new variable was introduced to the data-sets linking each respondent to either cluster 1 or 2.

This meant that the survey questions could be analysed by the cluster variable, as indicated in Figure A5 and A6.

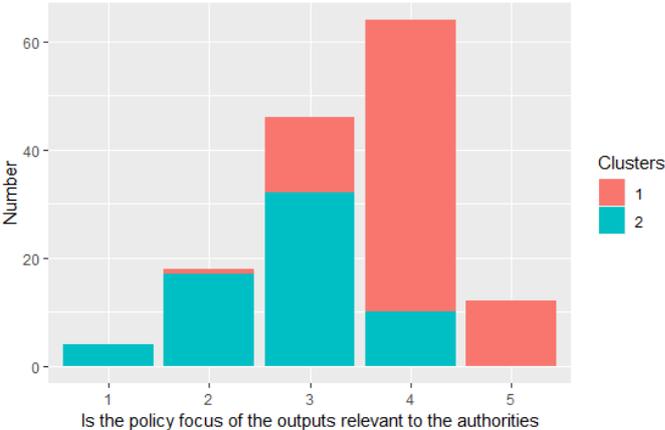
Please note that cluster 1 was renamed cluster 2 and vice versa. This was because cluster 2 according to the silhouette analysis was the larger cluster. The cluster 1 as renamed below in red also provided the moderate to positive responses to each question.

As indicated by Figures A5 and A6, the results of both surveys appear to be explained largely by the survey response behaviour of the two clusters when considering the types of answers given from question to question.

Figure A5: Target Group survey: Are the ESPON financed outputs good quality overall? (Cluster subsets)



Target Group survey: Considering the needs of public authorities, to what extent is the policy focus of the ESPON 2020 outputs relevant to the needs of policy making and/or planning activities?



Target Group survey: Considering the information needs of public authorities, to what extent are the ESPON 2020 outputs contributing to the development of relevant policy knowledge?

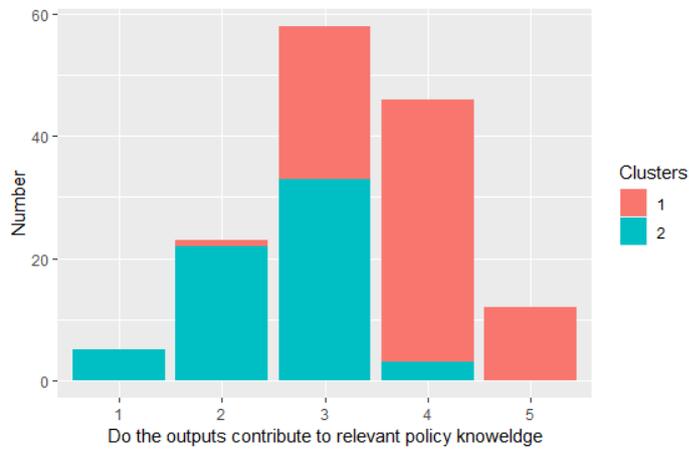
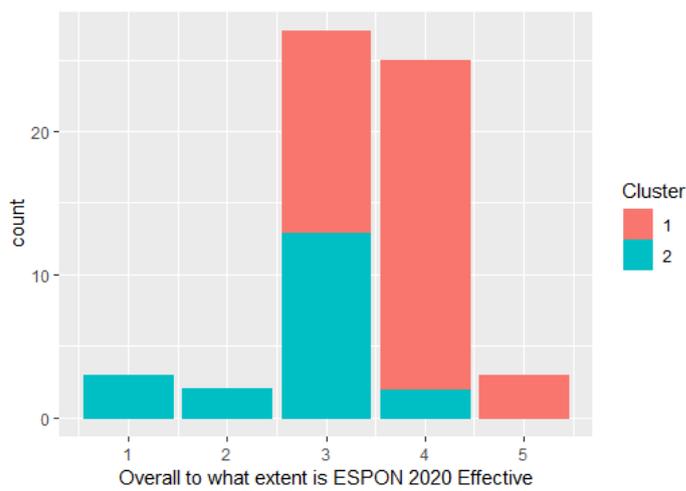
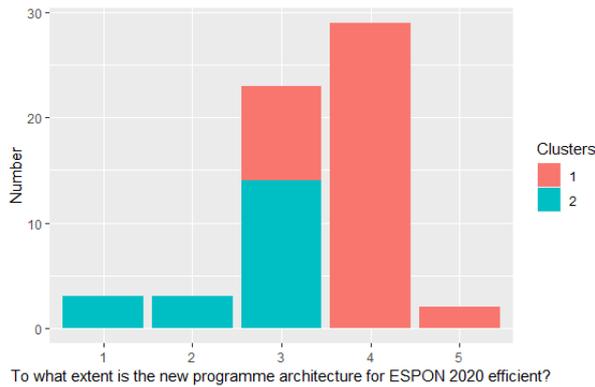


Figure A6: Stakeholder survey: To what extent is ESPON 2020 Effective (Cluster Subsets)



Stakeholder survey: To what extent is the new programme architecture for ESPON 2020 efficient (Cluster Subsets)



Stakeholder survey: To what extent is the staffing of the MA appropriate to fulfil its tasks



Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis demonstrated that the distribution of responses was not due to basic characteristic types such as geographical location, organisation type or prior experience or not with ESPON 2013.

However, for both the target group and stakeholder surveys, the cluster analysis illustrated that the pattern of responses could be explained by the behaviour of two broad groups of survey respondents; a larger group that tended to provide moderate to positive responses, and a smaller group that tended to provide moderate to negative responses.

It was not possible to determine the reasons for these patterns of behavior attributed to the two groups, although it was assumed that it was due to a complex range of factors associated with a range of personal experiences with ESPON 2020.

Moreover, given that the two cluster solution was the best fit to the data, and that the clusters were very close to the minimum silhouette distance threshold, it was demonstrated that respondents thought critically about the questions and provided different responses to each of the questions.³⁶

The results suggested that there are implications for ESPON 2020 going forward. Whereas the majority of stakeholders and target group would consider the performance of ESPON 2020 as largely positive across a range of measures, a significant minority tends to hold more critical views.

Therefore, the successful implementation of the recommendations across all dimensions is key to encourage an even more positive view of the ESPON 2020 programme to emerge across a greater proportion of the stakeholders and target group.

³⁶ For example, if a five cluster solution was the best fit, it would have meant that each group would have mostly selected the same response for each questions e.g. one of the groups would have selected '5' for each of the questions. This would have demonstrated lack of critical thinking.

Annex 3: Case study summary reports

Case studies are briefly reported in this annex.

SPIMA: Case Study

Background: The SPIMA project

The Spatial Dynamics and Strategic Planning in Metropolitan Areas (SPIMA) project is a targeted analysis project within the theme of metropolitan areas. The lead stakeholder of the project was City of Oslo and together with 10 partner stakeholders they represented 11 different European cities (which served as case studies). The lead contractor was Stichting Wageningen Research (with two partner contractors). The project budget was EUR 27 600 000, with an implementation period between November 2016 and April 2018³⁷. The main objective of the project was to develop tools and material for governance approaches for metropolitan planning/development and spatial management at a metropolitan level. Two main outputs were finalised and delivered in June 2018: a guidelines report and 11 city fact sheets.

Purpose of the case study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how the actors involved in the SPIMA project (or actors using SPIMA project results) have perceived the project process, management from ESPON and the relevance/quality of the project. Within the scope of this case study, six individuals have been interviewed. These have been selected based on their capacity as stakeholder, contractor, ESPON EGTC or due to their relevant experience of the project process or project results.

FINDINGS: THE NEED AND USE OF SPIMA

Quality of outputs

The guidelines report that was produced and finalised in June 2018 is described by the respondents as being rather academic. To make the report more accessible (especially for policy and decision makers), it was translated into 10 city fact sheets. During the project process, it became evident that the timeframe was too short for the project scope. This was most of all due to the complexity of the SPIMA project involving 11 different partners. The project therefore had to be extended with about half a year. This flexibility from EGTC was very much appreciated and important to ensure the quality and effectiveness of SPIMA. It was highlighted by one respondent that one-year projects often are too short for the research topics ESPON is addressing. Both respondents active in the SPIMA project and respondents only taking part of the SPIMA project results consider the outputs to be highly relevant, useful and of high quality. Despite the report and fact sheets being finalised not so long time ago, the project results have already been serving as an inspiration for policy development.³⁸ The increased number of staff members at the EGTC was much appreciated by all respondents. It was said to be positive to both have a project expert and a financial expert contact point at the EGTC. The EGTC contact points were said to have contributed with valuable quality checks and feedback on the SPIMA data collection and analysis process.

Policy relevance of the outputs

It is clear that the SPIMA project has corresponded very well to the specific needs of stakeholders, with all stakeholders highlighting the relevance, importance and usefulness of the objectives the project addresses. This is of course much thanks to SPIMA's nature of being a targeted analysis project led by stakeholders and stakeholder needs. The stakeholder ownership is therefore ensured. Furthermore, the SPIMA project report and presentations are appreciated and regarded as useful

³⁷ Originally, the project was only one year (until November 2017) but it later got extended with half a year.

inspiration and justifying information material. In our uptake stories (see uptake story reports in the Appendix), we can see that SPIMA results have supported policy and decision making.

Uptake of evidence³⁹

Since the SPIMA project is a targeted analysis project and the stakeholder ownership therefore is ensured, the uptake of evidence is somewhat likely to be more ensured than other types of projects. This is a view confirmed by the respondents using the SPIMA results. However, in both these cases, prior knowledge of/participation in the ESPON programme was key. Knowledge about SPIMA had been gained through project presentations at different conferences and seminars, and through communication efforts from ESPON itself. The uptake of the SPIMA evidence in the two uptake stories we have investigated are both done at a regional level, however often engaging national politicians and decision makers as well, since the both cases concern capital cities. In one of these stories, results were used from a SPIMA interim report, proving that evidence from projects can be adopted during a project process.

Outreach

According to the respondents, there has been a high interest for the SPIMA project from different stakeholders, both representing the academia and other policy makers. Whether the SPIMA has attracted new users and researchers is however difficult to say since the project was recently finalised. Most of the respondents interviewed within the scope of this case study had earlier experience of the ESPON programme. A positive aspect of the targeted analysis projects is that their core idea is to reach stakeholders, and therefore a driving force is to make the outputs as accessible and non-academic as possible. This was stressed to be a great ambition of the SPIMA project as well, which e.g. is the reason to why the city fact sheets were produced. Whether this has been a successful method was said to be a little bit too early to say, since they were recently finalised.⁴⁰ The ESPON Contact Point Network was not described as something substantially used by the respondents. Even if the SPIMA project engaged with actors in different countries, indicating a need for coordination from national levels, the ESPON Contact Point Network was not described as something substantially used. The respondents preferred using their own contact networks.

Outreach activities

The SPIMA project stakeholders participates regularly in workshops, seminars and conferences where they share the results from the project. One concern raised regarding this was this the ownership of the outputs, i.e. who owns the right of the final product. Within the new programme architecture, this is the EGTC, which was sometimes perceived a problem when e.g. stakeholders/contractors are asked by external actors to participate in dissemination activities.

FINDINGS: ARCHITECTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Involvement of the MC and the EGTC

The project stakeholders/contractors did not have that much experience of direct contact with the Monitoring Committee, but had much direct contact with the EGTC. The EGTC was said to be very competent and helpful and the management and coordination was described as excellent. The EGTC had given relevant and detailed feedback on the project. The main problem described by

³⁸ See two uptake stories on the use of the SPIMA results in the appendix.

³⁹ See two uptake stories on the use of the SPIMA results in the appendix.

⁴⁰ The city fact sheets were finalised in June 2018 and interviews for this case study were conducted during autumn 2018.

the stakeholders/contractors was rather the numerous sub-deliverables demanded (see further comments below administrative architecture).

Appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures

There is a general view coming from the SPIMA stakeholders that new administrative architecture is effective, but not always efficient. It was a common perception that the administrative architecture a set-up was effective in the sense of the SPIMA project finally fulfilling its objectives, which partly was described as thanks to continuous contact with the EGTC contact points, and ESPON's organisational structure of the project process. However, the main concern of the SPIMA project stakeholders/contractors was the numerous sub-deliverables (the due inception report, first interim report, second interim report etc). This structure made them loose the focus of what they felt was their greatest responsibility and deliverable: the final report. Since ESPON projects already are quite short (often about a yearlong), this was said to be structure that strongly hampers an efficient project implementation process and the usefulness and purpose of the interim reports were questioned. The SPIMA project stakeholders/contractors however felt that the EGTC had been flexible regarding this aspect (which they much appreciated), since EGTC accepted that the SPIMA project took one and a half year instead of only one.

Administrative burdens/ service contracts

Regarding the administrative burden, some respondents describe it as neither better or worse than before. The management side especially appreciates the concept with service contracts since it does no longer have to look into as many details during the application process, it makes a global evaluation of the tender proposal and price, and then from the moment one tender is selected the management can keep its attention to the content and quality of the implementation process. However, the management side stressed that the new architecture also meant increased controls from the management side which is regarded as heavy. Also the service providers appreciate the concept with service contracts which has reduced their administrative burden throughout the implementation process.

Increased interest and representation?

Whether the streamlined administrative procedures have been successful in promoting further academic interest/geographical representation for ESPON was not known. However, the respondents underlined that the targeted analysis feature of stakeholder ownership has increased the policy makers' interest in the ESPON programme.

Use and allocation of resources

In general, the allocation of resources was said to be fair by the respondents. It was stressed by two respondents that it would be interesting to investigate further the allocation of the financial means regarding how these are distributed geographically. In the current ESPON programme this is not looked upon with statistics. This is said to be a difference to the previous programme period where the EGTC used indicators that showed the shares of allocation based on the receiver. The respondents believed this to be interesting to reintroduce. For example in the case of SPIMA, it would be interesting to see how the funding was distributed to the sub-contractors in order to investigate how means are distributed also geographically. This type of statistical data was sad to be useful as a basis for enhanced work on increasing geographical representation among the ESPON project providers and stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS: KEY ASPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the SPIMA project seems to have been a very successful project in the sense of being highly relevant and corresponding to stakeholder needs. This is partly thanks to SPIMA's nature of being a targeted analysis project, driven by stakeholder needs. The need for the project has e.g. been demonstrated by SPIMA project results being used for policy developments in regional settings in Europe. This indicates that targeted analysis projects are a good method to ensure the stakeholder relevance of projects.

The quality of the SPIMA project outputs was furthermore regarded as high by all respondents (both representing actors involved and not involved in the project). The quality has partly been ensured by the EGTC by continuous, qualitative feedback, as well as by a flexible atmosphere with respect for the need for more time. The set-up of having two contact points at the EGTC had worked very well. However, the contact with the Monitoring Committee or the ESPON Contact Point Network was almost non-existent. This was however not necessarily seen as a problem since the contact with the EGTC worked so well.

The organisational set-up of the ESPON programme is overall regarded as good by the SPIMA respondents. However, the numerous sub-deliverables were questioned. This had been a significant burden for the stakeholders/contractors and had to some extent hindered the research from fully focusing on the final product and thus to achieve the main objectives of the project. Evidently, the sub-deliverables are useful when it comes to ensuring the quality and correct implementation process of the project and was not wished to be completely removed. In addition, one of the SPIMA interim reports were used in a policy making process in Norway, showing that these sub-deliverables also can be relevant for policy makers. As a conclusion, our findings stipulate the need to investigate the purpose and quality of the sub-deliverables, and whether this requirement can be modified in some way.

Links

SPIMA project: <https://www.espon.eu/metropolitan-areas>

COMPAS: Case Study

Background: The COMPAS project

The Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe (COMPAS) is an applied research project within the theme of spatial planning and territorial governance. The lead contractor was Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands (TU Delft) together with 24 partner contractors representing different EU Member States. The project budget was EUR 869 700 000, with an implementation period between June 2016 and May 2018. The main purpose of the project was to map and analyse what changes in territorial governance and spatial planning systems and policies that can be observed across Europe over the past 15 years. The main delivery was a report of 3000 pages, in addition to policy documents, and delivered in May 2018.

Purpose of the case study

Within applied research, there are currently 14 ongoing projects, COMPAS being one of them. The purpose of this case study is to look into detail on a specific project within applied research to better understand the contribution of ESPON-supported projects within this field. Within the scope of this case study, three individuals have been interviewed.⁴¹ These have been selected based on their capacity as part of the project support team, stakeholder and contact point from the ESPON EGTC. Since the study is based on a low number of interviewees, it is not intending to draw any significant conclusions/recommendations, but rather to describe some different perspective of a applied research project.

FINDINGS: THE NEED AND USE OF COMPAS

Quality of outputs

As already stated, the main output of the COMPAS project was a 3000 pages report, together with policy documents. According to the interviewees, it was rather challenging to find a common line of recommendations for the different, very heterogenous, Member States (and Turkey) included in the study. In addition, it was complicated to manage the project with a large project team (one country expert/covered country). Despite this, the respondents believed the outputs were of high quality and had received positive feedback from intended end-users.

Policy relevance of the outputs

Since the 1990, there had not been any publication of EU Member States' spatial planning systems and policies. This was highly problematic since the EU has expanded with several countries since then, and significant developments have been made in pan-European territorial and cohesion policies. Therefore, the project of COMPAS was much demanded for and had high policy relevance. This has been further confirmed by COMPAS output being highly demanded for (see further information below "uptake of evidence").

The Project Support Team

A body is supposed to ensure the policy relevance of the outputs is the Project Support Team (PST). The main idea of the project support team is to get the Monitoring Committee even more engaged (by having two-three of them as the PST), and to provide policy advice and ensure that accessibility of the project. The COMPAS project did not involve the project support team to a great extent due

to 1) the EGTC and monitoring committee already providing enough support and 2) the PST not being very proactive itself in engaging in the product. The PST got a bit involved at the second part of the project (in the first part it was not relevant since it was mainly about methodology – PST focus on the policy relevance). According to the PST, the low engagement was also due to the COMPAS not being in much need of additional support. Other projects had required more of their time.

Uptake of evidence/outreach

Events, such as seminars, are organised based on stakeholder needs and demands. At the time the interviews for this case study were carried out, the final product was very recently launched. Therefore, there had not been many outreach events put through yet (and therefore very limited uptake of evidence). Henceforth, the outreach activities (such seminars based on stakeholder needs) will be organised by the transnational communication project. It is likely that these events will be numerous and well attended, since there have been many demands for COMPAS outputs (e.g. to be used as basis for seminar discussions and national policy developments). The academia has also been interested and the project has e.g. received research requests from PhD students.

FINDINGS: ARCHITECTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Involvement of the MC and the EGTC

The dialogue between the lead contractors and the lead stakeholders were said to have been working very well. Especially the feedback from the EGTC has been extensive and constructive. Contrary, the communication between the project and the PST has not been working ideally as already stated. This could also partly be due to PST being a new body, which means that it took time before it found its proper structure and working methods (just as the project might not being fully understanding the purpose of the PST either). However, the PST is said to have contributed in making the MC more involved and up-to-date about the process of COMPAS, since the PST always has a point on the agenda in the MC meetings about updates of COMPAS.

Appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures/use and allocation of resources

Overall, the COMPAS project process was efficient according to the interviewees. The project faced certain challenges during the project time, much related to the scope and therefore project team being very large (with 27 experts). The project budget was limited, which was of course a challenge as well, and meant that the project leaders had to adapt accordingly. The project team would have liked to have the opportunity of applying for additional funding during the project. The flexibility and support from the EGTC were therefore much appreciated. The researchers were sometimes also bothered with the numerous deliverables but did not see this as a major concern.

CONCLUSIONS

This case study is only based on three interviews and is not intending to draw any significant conclusions. Based on our evidence, the COMPAS project seems to have been very policy relevant, clearly responding to stakeholder needs. The project management worked well, despite challenges

⁴¹ Since COMPAS was recently finalised, it has not had much outreach activities/uptake yet, which is one of the reasons to the low number of respondents. The other reason is simply due to a low number of potential respondents being available for interview.

due to a very large team with many involved experts with different standards. Especially the communication with the EGTC has also worked well, and the project team has appreciated EGTC's feedback and support. The communication with the PST has not been as successful. This could both be due to COMPAS not being in a such a need of getting policy support, or due to the PST being a new body and therefore its involvement and working methods has been unclear.

At the time of when this case study is being written, it is too early to say whether the project has led to any significant uptake or outreach. However, seen that there has been a great demand for its outputs, it is probable that it will be used.

Links

COMPAS project: <https://www.espon.eu/planning-systems>

TIA Tool: Case Study

Background: The TIA Tool project

The ESPON TIA Tool Upgrade (TIA Tool), is a project under the Specific Objective 3 of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, “Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses”. The TIA Tool is an online tool developed by the ESPON EGTC for territorial analyses and mapping. It provides territorial data for policymakers and practitioners working at EU, national and regional level.

The TIA tool project is continuous work of the ESPON ART project (last programme period) and the idea was to set up a web tool and testing it in workshops. The previous version was still too complicated and too far from user’s needs. The main purpose of this project is to upgrade and update ESPON TIA Tool including a Quick Check ensuring territorial impact assessment. The main target group is policy makers and practitioners that are working with identifying potential territorial impacts of new EU Legislations, Policies and Directives (LPDs). The project further develops a user-friendly ESPON TIA web application that can be applied specific types of regions (e.g. Urban Impact Assessment, Cross-border TIA). The project also involves trainings, workshops and reports.

The project runs between February 2017-February 2020 with one contractor, the Austrian Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Planning, AT (ÖIR) who also moderates the trainings and workshops on behalf of DG Regio and Committee of the Regions.

Purpose of the case study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how the actors involved in the TIA Tool project (or actors using TIA Tool project results) have perceived the project process, management from ESPON and the relevance/quality of the project. Within the scope of this case study, five individuals have been interviewed. These have been selected based on their capacity as stakeholder, contractor and ESPON EGTC.

FINDINGS: THE NEED AND USE OF THE TIA TOOL

Quality of outputs

The projects main output is an upgraded and updated ESPON TIA Tool, a Quick Check ensuring territorial impact assessment. The TIA Tool builds on work done in previous projects (such as Assessment of Regional and Territorial Sensitivity (ESPON ARTS) and ESPON and Territorial Impact Assessment (ESPON EATIA), i.e. has gone through an extensive process of development, amendments and improvements to make the tool more user friendly and relevant. Stakeholders are generally satisfied with the project outputs and its quality. However, there is room for improvements, e.g. in terms of data being presented in a more differentiated way: “if something is positive, it is positive throughout the EU although some regions might be negatively affected which is not be shown yet in the tool. It would be good to incorporate this differentiation and make the tool more user-friendly”.

Policy relevance of the outputs

When the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009 not only economic and social aspects had to be considered but also *territorial* aspects in terms of territorial cohesion. Consequently, political action was required, and it became necessary to test policies concerning their potential territorial impact and to find methods to do that. So, in a way, the TIA tool (as a tool and its results) is directly responding to EU policy needs by providing a tool that supports EU and regional policy-makers to assess the territorial impact of selected policies in their territories. Results from the workshops are concluded in reports which – in final and thoroughly discussed shape – are attached to the Impact Assessment of the policy proposal in question.

The tool is being applied and distributed through workshops. The workshops are organized by the ESPON EGTC on requests (linked to an ongoing impact assessment for a certain policy proposal) from DG Regio and CoR and conducted by the contractor (as moderator). As a concrete result, a report is written by the contractor together with stakeholders that often becomes a part of the ongoing impact assessment. Thus, ESPON is through the TIA tool stepping into the policy making process. Especially the maps help to support discussion and to show the policy effects and brings in the position of the regions. Furthermore, the TIA tool helps people from different parts of the commission (other DGs) to better understand potential territorial impacts of new policies/legislations/directives on e.g. cities or regions. The workshops content helps to draft policies. However, the fact that TIA Tool is using NUTS 3 data decreases policy relevance for stakeholders working at regional level.

Uptake of evidence

Even if ESPON cannot compete with regional/local data, it delivers a comparison between regional/local data on EU level. It also adds the territorial dimension to EU policies and thus supports other units (CoR) and DGs (DG Regio). “Without the tool we could not do the TIA. There would be stakeholder consultation etc. but not this mix of hard and soft data: quantitative meets qualitative. Without TIA tool, we would not have the mechanisms to combine technical with soft data”.

An example: DG Regio examines legislative proposals from e.g. DG Move or DG Environment which are more or less mature, but the Impact Assessment is not finalised (stakeholder consultation took place). Then experts from cities and regions get involved and give their view on potential obstacles in a TIA workshop. These workshops can reveal severe obstacles and influence the progress towards legislation. On the other hand, cities and regions understand the process better and see “their” needs to be taken into account.

Outreach

The project itself has no specific outreach strategy. The project provides services such as workshops, trainings and additional functionalities. The workshops are often requested by DG Regio, Committee of the Regions (main target group) but they have also received requests from Italian regions and ECP in the Netherlands and Croatia. The idea is to also involve other stakeholders and reach all EU regions (ESPON EGTC, TIA Tool). Workshops are conducted on request which is working well. The (limited) budget for these workshops has already been extended to cover the demand.

FINDINGS: ARCHITECTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Involvement of the MC and the EGTC

Two people from ESPON are managing the project from ESPON EGTCs side. The project has no PST but two representatives from DG Regio and Committee of the Regions are involved in “some kind of PST”. As there is no typical PST in this project, DG Regio and the Committee of the Region own that role in a way. DG Regio is the link between other DGs and regions/cities in the EU. DG Regio sends a request regarding a workshop concerning a specific policy proposal to ESPON who is organizing the workshop and moderator (OIR) who in turn runs the TIA tool. DG Regio is reacting upon concrete policy proposals, e.g. potential impact of green energy vehicles on cities. Experts on e.g. transport and mobility from EU cities are invited accordingly. Potential territorial impacts of policies, indicators presented in workshops and put in reports afterwards, DG Regio helps to write these reports. This works well according to people involved. As ESPON EGTC is partly participating in workshops, they know what is going on and their requests come not as a surprise. However, in the end it is always a negotiation between what stakeholders want, what ESPON wants and what is possible within the project.

Appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures

According to the contractor, using service contracts has decreased the administrative burden enormously compared to last period, which is appreciated and leaves more time to the actual work. Also, cooperation between different DGs (through DG Regio) and units (through CoR) has been simplified which benefits the outreach and uptake of the projects output. The support received from ESPON EGTC is perceived very insightful.

Use and allocation of resources

ESPON has done a fundamental job in developing the methodology. ESPON provides financial support and helps to secure the moderators for the workshops and competences. ESPON also looks into the draft reports from the workshops and sometimes they even participate. Together they discuss potential changes to be made to the TIA tool; amendments in order to make it more user-friendly. Both DG Regio and CoR would not be able to conduct *territorial* impact assessment without the TIA Tool.

CONCLUSIONS: KEY ASPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TIA Tool is considered a good and useful tool. The TIA Tool workshops, that are part of the project and arranged by ESPON to apply and promote the tool, are highly appreciated by policy-makers. Through the workshops, the ESPON TIA Tool project provides good quality and relevant input to policy-making processes. Thus, the project clearly adds a *territorial* dimension to impact assessment processes for different policies and legislations, something that would not be done otherwise.

The project’s implementation clearly benefits from a rather simple set-up with one main contractor who holds key competence on Impact Assessment and the TIA Tool, two very insightful and highly involved ESPON contact persons, a concrete description of project objectives and deliverables (tool, workshops, trainings) and the fact that it is building upon previous ESPON projects (long experience). DG Regio and the Committee of the Regions provide a link to policy- and decision-makers request targeted TIA Tool workshops. They also help to write workshop reports and develop the tool further.

The TIA Tool and workshop results are frequently requested and used by stakeholders at EU level through DG Regio and experts from different levels through the Committee of the Regions. There are several examples on how TIA Tool results had become part of impact assessment processes.

However, there is some issues regarding data. ESPON is using NUTS 3 data providing a comparative view on EU level and has difficulties competing with data available at local and regional level. It has been mentioned that the TIA Tool -at least for some policy questions- shows an overall positive or negative picture on EU level and lacks a certain degree of diversification on regional level. There is potential for making the tool more user-friendly and increase further its policy relevance.

Links

TIA Tool project: <https://www.espon.eu/tia-tool-upgrade>

Transnational Outreach Support 2016-2019: Case Study

Background: The Transnational Outreach Support 2016-2019

The Transnational Outreach Support 2016-2019 is a new effort under ESPON 2020 under Specific Objective 4 “Wider Outreach and Uptake of the Territorial Evidence”. The aim of the Transnational Outreach Strategy is to reach out to existing and new actors from different sectors at national, regional and local level from the 28 European Member States. Transnational Outreach (TNO) activities are developed by the EGTC and TNO consortium consisting of the two service providers INOVA+ and ERRIN in close cooperation with the MC and ECPs. Main activities within TNO are events, workshops, trainings, e-learning, conferences based on demands and evidence available.

Purpose of the case study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how the actors involved in the project have perceived the process, management from ESPON and the relevance/quality of the project. Within the scope of this case study, four individuals have been interviewed. These have been selected based on their capacity as project expert, project support team and service provider.

FINDINGS: THE NEED AND USE OF TNO

Quality of outputs

The quality of the activities organized within the frame of TNO depends very much on the content and quality of the project results presented at the event. In this respect it has been mentioned that the quality of project outputs depends on the Terms of References (ToR). During last programme period this was more flexible. The public procurement process and service contracts applied during the ongoing programme period has led to stricter budgets and less flexibility in the ToR which in turn might have negative impacts on quality and relevance of project outputs in the end.

Policy relevance of the outputs

The TNO is not an instrument to promote ESPON evidence among European regions. TNO activities rather respond to the real demand of regions and try to meet the needs by providing existing evidence from different ESPON projects and other sources. The Annual work plans for TNO outline upcoming activities and events for the project: conferences, seminars etc. By meeting stakeholders in advance, TNO activities can be tailored to their needs which potentially increases policy relevance of TNO events. TNO activities try to reach local and regional stakeholders throughout the European Union and increase awareness for ESPON. According to feedback from participants in 2018, 23% were not aware of ESPON before participating in one of the TNO events. Although the comparable data regarding cohesion and territorial cooperation provided by ESPON is very useful, it still depends on the actual topic/theme of the TNO event whether it is relevant for national and regional policy makers. Also scale matters, e.g. case studies conducted during ESPON projects focusing on regional/local level evidence are more relevant and applicable to “smaller” countries as ESPON results on EU scale does not provide the “real”

picture. “You need to link and need to know what is behind; we are all different in Europe”. Nevertheless, TNO activities make ESPON project results (especially AR and TA projects as they have good results) visible and relevant for cohesion policy and contribute to building capacity.

It has been mentioned, that it is difficult to attract “new” people to seminars as it is often the same people from the “ESPON family” that participates in these events. “ESPON needs to go beyond itself; involve people from outside the ESPON world and showing that results are useful”.

Uptake of evidence

According to one interviewee, whether TNO activities lead to uptake depends on the country and its absorption capacity in terms developed system and institutional capacity. It is also a matter of the ECP and their financial situation. A financial support for ECPs from ESPON has already been discussed with the MC as it for instance would improve geographical diversity in ESPON as ECP capacity increases.

Outreach

TNO activities have received overall positive feedback and have been successful in reaching local and regional decision making. However, it has been challenging to attract “new” and a satisfactory number of participants to the events. Some events have been organised back-to-back with other national events to attract more participants. It has been difficult to attract enough participants to workshops, while e-learning workshops have been successful in reaching more people more easily. The ESPON Roadshow was very successful in reaching regions. Here it is essential to consider what is relevant and important to regions and how to reach them. In Eastern countries language is still an obstacle especially on among stakeholders and policy-makers working at regional level. Here, the ECPs could help if they had a small budget for translation. There have been attempts to produce short documentation in English and in the respective local languages instead of extensive ESPON reports. Here, policy brief turned out well as are easily sent to regions including conference results that they can use for their policies.

FINDINGS: ARCHITECTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Involvement of the MC and the EGTC

The EGTC conducts needs analyses and matches needs and availability of data involving ECPs who respond on topics and policy context as they are aware of projects and when project results are available. EGTC and ECPs are in good and direct contact to make sure that all ESPON countries are covered and ensure participation from all ESPON countries. However, it has been raised that ECPs should get more involved in dissemination and more budget should be allocated for this. ECPs regional and national network could be used better in outreach activities.

The PST is involved a few times per year to update on activities and to plan next year. To reduce workload and especially increase relevance (otherwise it is too many strategies and regions in Europe), one interviewee suggested that TNO would benefit from having two PSTs (e.g. one to cover Western Central Europe and one for North an Eastern Europe). The PST as such is important as it involves the MC members who are involved in the projects. However, today there is issues when it comes to the flow of information and the role of PST is administrative rather than content-related. Communication issues have also been mentioned in terms of lacking direct communication especially with the external provider.

Appropriateness of the administrative architecture and procedures

Preparation and adoption of the annual work plans have in several cases been delayed which left less time for ECPs to add to the content, comment on events to adapt to national contexts and receive tips on how to reach national and regional actors. AWP's being finalized rather late consequently left also less time for the service provider to prepare and organize the events.

Annex 4: Uptake stories summary reports

Uptake stories are presented in a condensed way in this annex.

SPIMA: Uptake Story (1)

Background: The SPIMA project

Name: Spatial Dynamics and Strategic Planning in Metropolitan Areas (SPIMA) targeted analysis project

Theme: Metropolitan areas

Programming period: November 2016 and April 2018⁴²

Budget: 27 600 000 EUR

Main objective: To develop tools and material for governance approaches for metropolitan planning/development and spatial management at a metropolitan level.

Main stakeholders: The cities of Akershus, Brno, Brussels, Lille, Lyon, Oslo, Prague, Turin, Terrassa, Vienna, and Zurich.

Purpose of the uptake story

The purpose of this uptake story is to understand how ESPON project results, and in this case specifically SPIMA project results, have been used. This is important to understand the relevance and applicability of the ESPON projects, as well as efficient communication methods. Within the scope of this uptake story two respondents have been interviewed.

Background of the uptake story: Peer-to-peer workshop in Latvia June 2018

⁴² Originally, the project was only one year (until November 2017) but it later got extended with half a year.

On 13 to 14 June 2018, a peer-learning workshop took place in Jurmala, Latvia, with overall 50 participants. The objective of the workshop was to support the Riga Planning Region in designing Riga's future metropolitan approach, as well as to identify future research topics and partnerships for future cooperation projects on metropolitan challenges. The workshop was organized by the Spatial Planning Unit at the Riga Planning Region. Among the participants were mainly Latvian planners representing local/regional authorities, but also Latvian politicians, Non-governmental organizations and university representatives. Among the speakers were e.g. SPIMA stakeholders and ESPON EGTC representatives. The SPIMA stakeholders presented results from the project, gave feedback to Riga's plans on its metropolitan approach and chaired three different thematic group discussions based on different areas⁴³. The respondents interviewed for this uptake story are one of the organizers of the workshop (from the Riga Planning Region) and one of the participants (from the Riga City Council).

Uptake mechanisms: Knowledge about the SPIMA project and policy need

Based on an assignment to develop a Metropolitan Area Action Plan for Riga, the Riga Planning Region was in early 2018 looking for advice and inspiration from other European policy makers. The ESPON programme was during this period in contact with the Riga Planning Region, who informed about the peer-to-peer workshop set-up, as well as the SPIMA project. The Region Planning Region was familiar with the ESPON programme since before, since it had experience of submitting a project proposal for another project. But the familiarity of the ESPON programme is also based on the fact that the authority gets regular information from the ESPON programme on different activities and projects. This led to the organisation of the peer-to-peer workshop based on the SPIMA project results. The Riga City Council learned about the ESPON programme through one of the yearly conferences of the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas (METREX) where the SPIMA project was then presented. Later, the Riga City Council joined the Eurocities network where some SPIMA stakeholders also took part and disseminated the results from the project. Finally, the knowledge about the ESPON programme was already quite established in Latvia among relevant authorities and politicians according to the respondents. This was said to probably be due to the authorities participating in ESPON seminars and other dissemination activities. This, to have the understanding of the politicians, was said to make it easier to work with bottom-up projects, such as the development of the Metropolitan Area Action Plan for Riga.

Dissemination of SPIMA results: Used by whom and how after the workshop

The SPIMA results were mainly described as serving an inspirational purpose for the Latvian participants. The SPIMA report was read by some of the participants prior the workshop and was

⁴³ Namely "Metropolitan area governance" led by the City of Oslo Urban Development Department, "Regional and international competitiveness" held by the City of Vienna Planning Department and "Settlement structure – mobility – public services interaction" held by Métropole Européenne de Lille.

said to be interesting, useful and easy to understand. Especially the maps and visual communication are appreciated since they contribute to making the report concrete. Only having the report in English was not seen to be a significant hinder. However, it was stressed that it would probably be beneficial to translate the summary and recommendations/conclusions into Latvian in order to make especially politicians more interested in the report. The participation of SPIMA stakeholders during the workshop was very much appreciated by the participants. Both since the stakeholders could further explain the report and since they could provide thoughts and expertise on the Latvian context, which was not included in the SPIMA project. The day after the workshop, the Riga Planning Region went to a regional development council meeting (with politicians from local municipalities) and shared the newly learned knowledge from the SPIMA project.

The gained knowledge from the SPIMA project mainly served, and is still serving, as inspiration for the development of Riga's Metropolitan approach. The learning of the SPIMA project has also contributed to a further understanding of different European cities' strategic approach to metropolitan development. "This is exactly what we needed" said one of the respondents, stressing the need to understand the international perspective and approach. "If we are talking about international competitiveness we need to know and compare ourselves to other important cities in Europe" the respondent continued. One respondent stressed that the workshop and cross-country networking and knowledge-sharing on this particular subject would not have happened without the ESPON programme and the SPIMA project.

Added value

Apart from contributing to the development of the Metropolitan Area Action Plan for Riga, the workshop contributed to other positive results. During the planning of the workshop, the Riga Planning Region got in contact with the City of Vienna and started discussions on developing a joint targeted analysis project on a similar topic to the SPIMA project. This was further discussed in the margins of the workshop in Riga, and resulted in a submission of the project application "Economic Sprouts" to the ESPON programme (which later was approved by ESPON). Moreover, an added value of the workshop was also described as being the networking possibilities with experts.

Conclusions: uptake mechanisms and recommendations

The fact that the actors had previous knowledge about the ESPON programme was important for this uptake story to be successful. This knowledge was gained through the actors' own participation in ESPON project application processes, and thanks to other established networks such as METREX and Eurocities. In addition, active communication efforts from the ESPON

programme to relevant national stakeholders seems to have been useful, both to get governmental authorities and politicians informed about the project results. The peer-to-peer workshop in Latvia is an example of a situation where a project (SPIMA) corresponded very well to the specific needs of a national stakeholder (the Riga Planning Region), which probably is much thanks to SPIMA's nature of being a targeted analysis project led by stakeholders. Furthermore, the SPIMA project report and presentations are appreciated and regarded as useful inspiration and justifying information material for the Latvian stakeholders. The only recommendation of improvement is said to be the summary and conclusion/recommendations part of the report, which the stakeholders said would be good to have translated into national languages in order to make the SPIMA results even more accessible for national stakeholders.

Based on this uptake story, it appears to be beneficial to address ESPON projects' dissemination activities to stakeholders that have earlier submitted project applications to ESPON (regardless if they were approved), since these actors are likely to be interested in the programme. Furthermore, to use existing networks such as METREX or Eurocities for dissemination activities is also likely to reach a broad and interested audience, just as the case of this uptake story.

Links

Event and reporting documents from the workshop: <https://www.espon.eu/peer-learning-riga>

SPIMA: Uptake Story (2)

Background: The SPIMA project

Name: Spatial Dynamics and Strategic Planning in Metropolitan Areas (SPIMA) targeted analysis project

Theme: Metropolitan areas

Programming period: November 2016 and April 2018⁴⁴

Budget: 27 600 000 EUR

Main objective: To develop tools and material for governance approaches for metropolitan planning/development and spatial management at a metropolitan level.

Main stakeholders: The cities of Akershus, Brno, Brussels, Lille, Lyon, Oslo, Prague, Turin, Terrassa, Vienna, and Zurich.

Purpose of the uptake story

The purpose of this uptake story is to understand how ESPON project results, and in this case specifically SPIMA project results, have been used. This is important to understand the relevance and applicability of the ESPON projects, as well as efficient communication methods. Within the scope of this uptake story one respondent has been interviewed.

Background of the uptake story: Norwegian government report

In 2020, several regional municipalities (“fylkeskommuner”) in Norway will be consolidated, becoming fewer and larger. However, the Norwegian parliament has decided that Oslo shall remain with its current organisational boundaries. This generated a need and a political decision to investigate possibilities for enhanced cooperation across the municipalities within and around the boundaries of Oslo. The Municipal and Modernization Department (“Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet”) in Norway was given the task to investigate this (also in relation to other directives and objectives) and to produce a report. During the data collection for the report, a working group was put together with two representatives from the City of Oslo. The City

⁴⁴ Originally, the project was only one year (until November 2017) but it later got extended with half a year.

of Oslo was the lead stakeholder for the SPIMA project, and one of the representatives in the working group was at that time very engaged in the SPIMA project. This person shared views and insights from the SPIMA project in the form of presentations and discussions. This was regarded as useful inspiration and information for the working group. The final report that was produced and finalised in April 2018 and referred to certain SPIMA results and recommendations⁴⁵. A parliament proposition from May 2018 refer to this report⁴⁶.

Uptake mechanisms: Policy needs, geographical recognition and engaged individuals

The context was the key factor contributing to the uptake of the SPIMA results. In other words, the fact that there was a government decision on investigating the issue of increased collaboration for the metropolitan development of the City of Oslo. Furthermore, since one of the case studies of the report was the City of Oslo, there were certain maps and findings that were especially easy to understand. The geographical recognition is likely to have been contributing to the applicability of the SPIMA results for this particular case.

Lastly, the fact that a SPIMA project stakeholder took part in the working group for the report was said to be crucial. A part from this SPIMA stakeholder, no one of the others had much knowledge about the ESPON programme. Also, since the SPIMA project was at that time not yet finalised, this stakeholder was able to explain and disseminate the preliminary results from the interim report.

Conclusion: uptake mechanisms and recommendations

This uptake story sheds light on a situation where ESPON project results have been used in a policy development process, used as a reference in a government report, a report then referred to in a parliament proposition. In this particular case, SPIMA project results have played a role in assisting Norwegian policy and decision makers in building and/or substantiating their arguments. The key uptake mechanism was that one of the SPIMA project participants was also a part of one of the working groups giving input to the government report. This meant that this person easily could share insights and knowledge from the project. Furthermore, since Oslo was one of the case study cities in the SPIMA project, the results of the project were clearly useful

⁴⁵ The name of the report is "Utredning av hovedstadsråd, som grunnlaget for Stortingsproposisjonen" and is referring to SPIMA on page 27, 28, 53 and 63. The report can be accessed here (in Norwegian): https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a22297fda6054476bc8796a0c9dde21a/h2422b_utredning_atp_hovedstadsområdet.pdf

⁴⁶ The name of the proposition is "Stortingsproposisjon for kommunesektoren 2019", and is referring to the report on page 30 (chapter 7.5). Can be accessed here (in Norwegian): <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ba5ad522520f4c11adeb4419e3101790/no/pdfs/prp201720180088000dddpdfs.pdf>

for Norway. This enables us to draw the unsurprising conclusions that key uptake mechanisms are geographical relevance/recognition and engaged individuals.

One especially interesting aspect of this uptake story is that the uptake is based on the preliminary results of the SPIMA project from one of the interim reports. This is interesting since it contradicts with certain perceptions about the ESPON projects' sub-deliverables not being necessary. It also raises the concern about the quality/applicability of the interim reports. Evidently, as in this case, the SPIMA interim report results were useful and applicable, and therefore used. Since one of the SPIMA project participants was part of the Norwegian project and therefore consulted, this person was also in a position to ensure that the SPIMA interim results were applicable. However, most situations where ESPON results are used are likely, and preferably, to be in settings where project participants are not present/consulted. Based on our case study interviews, many project owners feel rushed to produce the sub-deliverables and therefore the content of these types of reports is said to often be very preliminary and unprocessed. This demonstrates the importance of either ensuring that the sub-deliverables are of high quality and only used if that is the purpose, or the need to investigate further the purpose of demanding and publicly publishing sub-deliverables. This is especially important in the cases of targeted analysis projects since these originates from stakeholder needs, and stakeholders therefore might be especially eager to implement and use the project results.

Links

Government report: "Utredning av hovedstadsråd, som grunnlaget for Stortingsproposisjonen". Is referring to SPIMA on page 27, 28, 53 and 63. The report can be accessed here (in Norwegian): https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a22297fda6054476bc8796a0c9dde21a/h2422b_utredning_atp_hovedstadsomradet.pdf

Name of the parliament proposition: "Stortingsproposisjon for kommunesektoren 2019". Is referring to the above mentioned report on page 30 (chapter 7.5.). Can be accessed here (in Norwegian): <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ba5ad522520f4c11adeb4419e3101790/no/pdfs/prp201720180088000dddpdfs.pdf>

“Joint settlements”-methodology in Slovenian National Spatial Planning Strategy: Uptake Story

Purpose of the uptake story

The purpose of this uptake story is to understand how ESPON project results have been taken up and used in policy-making. It is important to understand the relevance and applicability of the ESPON projects, as well as efficient communication methods. Within the scope of this uptake story one respondent has been interviewed.

Background of the uptake story:

Slovenia is about to renew its Spatial Development Strategy from 2004. The Spatial Development Strategy is the basic strategic spatial development document and an integrated planning document which implements the concept of sustainable spatial development. The Strategy reflects the diversity of the national territory and considers the European spatial development processes, which Slovenia, as an EU member state, is part of.

The ESPON TOWN project - Small and Medium-Sized Towns was financed under the ESPON 2013 programme and ran between February 2012 – December 2014 with a budget of € 649,804.00. The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (BE) was the lead partner.

The aim of the ESPON TOWN project was to learn more about European small and medium sized towns (SMSTs), as they are hardly considered in EU policy but a part of everyday life of European citizens and firms. The project designed and implemented a multi-method, multi-level research framework to study European town experience drawing on both qualitative and quantitative evidence. The exercise included case studies from Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK.

The project was based on the hypothesis that this size of urban settlements has an important role within the wider regional and functional context; hence, towns can indeed make an important contribution to supporting EU strategic policies such as the EU 2020 strategy and for

the achievement of territorial cohesion. The ESPON TOWN project shed light on the territorial role of SMSTs and argues for tailored policy development for towns across Europe. The project assumes that such towns - embedded in their functional and regional contexts - have their own specific 'urban' (territorial) capital and related territorial potentials as well as capacity to "punch above their weight" if the right policy and governance frameworks are in place.

Uptake mechanisms: ESPON evidence provided on local level

The ESPON TOWN project provided both relevant methodology and a case study from Slovenia. This was highly interesting to the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning in Slovenia who leads the process of writing the new Spatial Development Strategy. The Ministry hosts the ESPON Contact Point and appoints the Monitoring Committee member. Consequently, people working at the Ministry are very knowledgeable about ESPON projects as well as ESPON evidence provided while they are involved in national policy-making processes and aware of emerging challenges and needs. Thus, they could match the need for inspiration in policy-making and the knowledge about existing ESPON projects results, in this case Slovenian case study in ESPON TOWN project, in house.

Conclusions: uptake mechanisms and recommendations

The methodology being used in ESPON TOWN was particularly considered interesting and "beyond traditional thinking" and thus inspirational for writing the strategy. The fact that ESPON evidence was derived from a Slovenia case and presented at local level made it highly applicable and usable for the work with the development of the strategy. The fact that the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning in Slovenia is a comparable small unit with knowledgeable, communicative and open-minded employees was surely beneficial to the actual uptake of ESPON evidence.

Links

Link to Spatial Development Strategy (2004) http://www.mop.gov.si/fileadmin/mop.gov.si/pageuploads/zakonodaja/en/sprs_eng.pdf

Link to ESPON TOWN project

<https://www.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2013/applied-research/town-%E2%80%93-small-and-medium-sized-towns>

Link to case study report

https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/TOWN_Case_Study_Report_-_Slovenia.pdf

Integrated Territorial Development in V4+2: Uptake Story

Purpose of the uptake story

The purpose of this uptake story is to understand how ESPON project results have been used. It is important to understand the relevance and applicability of the ESPON projects, as well as efficient communication methods. Within the scope of this uptake story two respondents have been interviewed.

Background of the uptake story: Common Spatial Development Strategy

The V4+2 countries are a cooperation of six countries – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – (V4), Bulgaria and Romania – (hence +2). In 2010 the V4+2 published a Common Spatial Development document which outlines: development poles and axes, transport networks (railways, roads, water transport), technical infrastructure (networks and electrical energy installations, gas transmission network, crude oil transmission network), socioeconomic spatial analysis (common demographic and social features, common economic features, spatial structure of the V4+2 countries), environmental conditions (physical-geographical characteristics, geological characteristics, water, climatic conditions, flora and fauna, land use, nature and landscape protection), spatial development barriers and possibilities of their elimination and common territorial perspectives and priorities of the V4+2 countries.

In 2014 the strategy was elaborated including economic and social challenges, development poles and axes, environmental condition with a focus on spatial development. The Common Spatial Development Strategy (2014) for the V4+2 countries was developed to offer background information for an update of the six national spatial development documents for the V4+2 group. The strategy was evaluated which showed that challenges are still existing and consultation between countries is as important. Consequently, V4+2 countries asked ESPON for help and on 7 March 2018 a conference was organised as part of the ESPON Transnational Outreach to bring together V4+2 common challenges when it comes to integrated territorial development and ESPON research and recommendations.

Uptake mechanisms: V4+2 identified challenges and ESPON Transnational Outreach

The V4+2 countries do have many common challenges related to integrated territorial development. ESPON research addresses these challenges and provides many relevant case studies regarding for example the socio-economic conditions of these countries or the provision of services of general interest, digital and transport accessibility (e.g. ESPON PROFECY). It also offers concrete best practices and decision-oriented recommendations to policymakers that pertain to place-based development strategies, governance and cooperation, territorial cohesion and specific thematic issues (ESPON COMPAS).

Furthermore, as the cooperation between V4+2 is a good example of transnational cooperation it was a perfect occasion to set up a Transnational Outreach event. Also, the Hungarian ECP and MC member is sharing room with people working with V4+2. They have regular consultations and considered this to become a part of the annual work plan within the Transnational Outreach.

Conclusions: uptake mechanisms and recommendations

For the future spatial development work of the V4+2, the conference was a crucial moment to exchange ideas. V4+2 were happy about the external view that ESPON provided. Although there was some applicability issues concerning the scale that data was presented on (could have been more zooming to regions and more targeted to V4+2 countries), the conference facilitated the exchange of ideas and provided relevant ESPON evidence from project results. Again, personal contact between people working with the V4+2 and ESPON MC/ECP was crucial for this uptake story.

Links

Common Spatial Development Strategy (2014): <http://www.v4plus2.eu/en/>

Integrated Territorial Development in V4+2 conference: <https://www.espon.eu/budapest>

Integrated Territorial Development in V4+2: new challenges, new ideas, new responses
<https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/Integrated%20Territorial%20Development%20in%20V4%2B2.pdf>



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