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ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme

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Table of acronyms

AA	Audit Authority
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DATER	Department for Spatial Planning and Development, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of Luxembourg
EC	European Commission
ECP	ESPON Contact Points
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
e-MS	Electronic Monitoring System
GIE LERAS	Economic Interest Grouping “Luxembourg European Research and Administration Support”
IT	Information Technologies
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MCS	Management and Control System
MS	Member State
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
PS	Partner State
TA	Technical Assistance
TA2030	Territorial Agenda 2030
TAP	Thematic Action Plan
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 JOINT PROGRAMME STRATEGY: MAIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

1.1 Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)

Not required for the ESPON programme.

1.2 Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other forms of support, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

Reference: Article 17(3)(b), Article 17(9)(b)

Max 50 000 characters

Understanding the challenges, drivers and trends shaping the European territory as well as their implications for the territorial development is still a necessity as it was in 2002 when the first ESPON Programme was set up. The territorial cohesion of Europe is today a more difficult objective to achieve in the current context characterised by an increasing number of challenges. Disparities and inequalities, both between people and places, requiring extraordinary coordinating efforts to build resilient territories and face profound and unprecedented crises and have to be addressed in a context characterised by environmental changes, economic transition and technological transformation, increasing the complexity of policy decision-making.

1.2.1 Main joint challenges

The State of the European territory report (ESPON, 2019) highlighted that **Europe is becoming increasingly fragmented** in terms of socio-economic development, landscape, culture and politics. In particular, the disparities' increase is more pronounced between regions, municipalities and neighbourhoods than between countries, requiring territorial and functional approaches and particularly a more targeted support for EU citizens in places left behind, as concentration of socio-economic challenges can spill over into governance related challenges.

This fragmentation is revealing critical trends that are affecting European territories and citizens:

- Increase in regional disparities and polarisation between people and places spills over into political instability (places 'left behind');
- Persisting divides (north-south, east-west urban-rural);
- Interdependencies in effect of increasing flows at all scales, spill overs and externalities of development, linked to technologies and networks that subvert distances and create new geographies;
- Economic, social and cultural polarisation jeopardising integration and interdependence of regions, including the neighbourhood dimension, when relevant.

The challenges to be addressed by ESPON outline a dynamic, evolutionary situation, with either positive or negative consequences for territorial development. The proposed set of challenges identify specific

drivers behind each issue and bear specific consequences that are reflected in the major territorial trends (See also figure 1).

- **Challenge 1: Environmental changes** driven by: climate change, deterioration of ecosystems and depletion of resources – which result in: geographically diversified patterns of biodiversity losses, land degradation and desertification, stresses on fresh water supplies and food production, and health risks.
- **Challenge 2: Social disparities** driven by: ageing, depopulation, in- and out-migration – which result in: contrasted territorial access to quality public services, labour market and housing, and emerging social exclusion, segregation and marginalisation areas.
- **Challenge 3: Economic transition** driven by: smart specialisation, innovation – which results in: (1) unequal territorial trajectories towards knowledge and circular economy depending on the quality of education, research performance, capacity for diffusion of innovation and knowledge, and (2) varied ability to build economic resilience against uncertainties related to global competitive pressures.
- **Challenge 4: Technological transformation** driven by: digitalisation, automatisisation and robotisation – which results in: territorially uneven progress towards digital economy and networked society depending on absorption capacity for structural changes.
- **Challenge 5: Multi-level governance** driven by: growing decision-making complexity with many stakeholders and coinciding mandates - which results in: different capabilities to shift from hierarchical, administrative structures of the territorial governance to a functional governance adopting place-based, participatory and networking approaches.

Figure 1. [ESPON 2030 territorial trend - cause/drivers -territorial challenges - outcomes](#)

1.2.2 Joint investment needs

Not relevant for the ESPON Programme.

1.2.3 Lessons learnt from past experience

Since its creation in 2002, the ESPON Programme has been contributing to policy-making by analysing territorial trends and producing data and knowledge to the benefits of policy-makers all over Europe at all levels.

First, the mission of the **ESPON 2006 Programme** starting in 2002 was to contribute to policy making through revealing and understanding spatial trends suggesting for the adjustment of policies at all governmental levels and towards a better sectoral co-ordination. The programme was mainly financing applied research projects with a strong territorialised approach. The thematic projects aimed to analyse territorial trends and deliver a better understanding of the European territory and territorial development.

This approach was continued and further developed by the **ESPON 2013 Programme**, which aimed at increasingly expanding the European-wide evidence to potentially benefit policy makers all over Europe at all levels. The idea behind the ESPON 2013 strategy was that policy makers dealing with development of regions and larger territories need, for the design of their policies, to be supported by evidence and comparable information on the regions as well as on long-term evolutions and perspectives. Furthermore,

the ESPON 2013 Programme, was linked to the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategy and provided evidences on the territorial potentials for improving regional competitiveness and territorial cohesion.

The formulation of the mission of the **ESPON 2020 Programme** further evolved and was broadened to support the reinforcement of the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and other sectoral policies and programmes under European Structural Investment (ESI) funds as well as national and regional territorial development policies and Macro Regional Strategies and Sea Basin Strategies.

A collaborative process among ESPON practitioners and users (public consultation and brainstorming workshops carried out in 2019 and 2020.) allowed collecting input about the **strengths in which ESPON 2030 should build on and the weaknesses to restrain.**

The positive aspects that ESPON should reinforce and further develop are the following:

- Building up policy narratives for policy-makers is one of ESPON specialities due to our closeness with users;
- Quick answer to policy demand;
- Cooperation with and between EC, MS, universities and other European networks;
- Wide range of communication and outreach activities to address a larger audience;
- Targeted analyses connect scientists with the policy side and bring them into a European perspective;
- Broad range/diversity of topics that allow for EU-wide comparison;
- Promotion of territorial development as a research field;
- Development of innovative methodologies (TIA, climate change, Financial Instruments assessment);
- Support of linkages between several instruments in the EU (example: ESPON and Interact on migration);
- Policy challenges at territorial level are becoming more and more complex: ESPON helps make them understandable.

The shortcomings and areas of further development of ESPON are identified as follows:

- Over-emphasis on indicators and monitoring;
- Lack of engagement of stakeholders except for the targeted analyses;
- Not sufficiently targeted outreach/networking;
- Lack of involvement of researchers in outreach;
- Reduced use of the ECP network;
- Low level of use of some specific tools (real needs);
- The added value of the research is not assessed/considered enough;
- Not enough activation of support networks by ESPON such as European and national networks of regional and local authorities, or territorial researchers;
- Some content remains too generic, no sufficient tailoring;
- Lack of consistent quality;
- Not enough exchange and collaboration with and between researchers;
- Weak policy recommendations/policy advice coming from applied research projects;
- The territorial dimension is not always consequently reflected in ESPON Evidence production

In addition, there is a **growing need for more tailoring of research work with policy needs and processes, as well as an increasing demand of further connection between academia and decision makers:**

- Policy-makers tend to prefer focused, direct and ready-to-use support to policy processes (scenarios, targeted studies, data, maps and visualisation outputs).
- Policy-makers express a clear need for outreach activities involving interaction, concrete support and mutual learning: Peer-to-peer activities, Boot camps, Active awareness raising, Workshops, conferences, etc.
- Researchers give in comparison to policy makers a higher priority to the production of outreach material (publication, position papers, policy prototyping) and express less interest in direct support to policy-makers (e.g. accompanying measures or boot-camps).
- Stakeholders demands more exchange between research and policy with more involvement of the policy-making side as well as a broadened and strengthened participation of academia.

1.2.4 Complementarity and synergies with Cohesion Policy and other territorial strategies

The primary mission of ESPON is to deliver evidence, data and advice to policies.

The evidence and knowledge produced by ESPON, among others, aim to support the development and analysis of territorial trends and strategies at different scales, including the transnational scale such as macro-regional strategies, sea-basin strategies as well as any type of functional approach such as cross-border or across administrative borders urban/metropolitan strategies. The outputs and the knowledge base developed by ESPON constitute a relevant source of information for such strategies at the EU, national and regional level.

In particular, ESPON research and activities are highly relevant for the Cohesion Policy programming, in particular to contribute to its effectiveness (ETC Regulation, recital 10), the European Green Deal, and Just Transition and Recovery and the Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA2030) process. ESPON shall keep supporting these processes through policy briefs, territorial evidence reports, territorial monitoring tools and other dedicated studies, both arranged on demand of respective ESPON member countries and the relevant intergovernmental networks. A part of the ESPON deliverables will feed the process of Cohesion Policy and implementing the Territorial Agenda 2030. ESPON will also support macro-regional strategies, sea-basin strategies, as done in the past, with data and monitoring tools and responding to ad-hoc support requests.

1.2.5 ESPON's added value and specific approach – the territorial dimension is at the core

Since 2002, the ESPON programme organises and finances applied research, place-based analyses and data collection to support the formulation of territorial development policies in Europe with evidence, systematic data, maps, policy advice and pan-European comparative analysis. ESPON assists regions, cities and national governments to improve the quality of their decision-making by supporting the development, implementation and monitoring of their policies and strategies. ESPON analyses have also supported and will continue to support cross-border, interregional and transnational areas (including IPA and ENI countries) as well integrated territorial approached such ITI and CLLD.

ESPON's role is to provide analytical evidence for the identified territorial challenges and their outcomes, and to recommend coordinated policy approaches to tackle them.

Also, ESPON is embedded in **Cohesion Policy** and shall contribute to its main goals and its effectiveness (ETC Regulation, recital 10), while also supporting the implementation of the EU **Territorial Agenda 2030** with a particular focus on Territorial Cohesion. As figure 2 shows, the territorial cohesion aspect of EU

sector policies are also addressed. In the same way, ESPON shall contribute to national, regional and local policy development. The **Green Deal** and the **recovery strategy from the COVID crisis** broaden the framework for the future ESPON programme through the support mentioned above; however, a sharper focus of ESPON activities shall be achieved.

Figure 2. ESPON's support to territorial policy action from the EU to the local/regional level

Given the main territorial challenges at stake and the policy framework of territorial cohesion set by EU Member States, the ESPON 2030 Programme shall fulfil the following mission as described in figure 3:

“ESPON provides territorial evidence to support stakeholders at all levels in achieving green transition to climate-neutral economies while ensuring at the same time just living conditions for all people in all places”.

The **GREEN transition to climate-neutral economies** and the **JUST living conditions and opportunities for all people in all places** shall be addressed by ESPON through a **TERRITORIAL functional and place-base perspective**.

Figure 3. ESPON's mission statement: Evidence towards Green, Just and Territorial

ESPON intends to support policy makers at all levels by providing territorial evidence and knowledge for policy responses. The focus being on **strengthening the recovery and resilience of EU territories** from the crises by achieving a **green transition to climate-neutral economies** while ensuring at the same time **just living conditions for all people in all places**.

1.2.5.1 The thematic focus of evidence production

The territorial, cross-sectoral and functional perspective is the cornerstone of ESPON's evidence and knowledge. This supports public stakeholders to find appropriate and coordinated policy responses across sectors and governmental levels to the advantage of European citizens.

In this context, the ESPON programme shall focus on the two key topics that gather most of the issues and challenges to cohesion and the harmonious development of European territories:

- Green transition to climate-neutral economies;
- Just living conditions for all places and people.

GREEN transition to climate-neutral economies

The transition towards a low-carbon economy or climate-neutral economy has become one of the main challenges of European regions and cities in the past decades.

Climate change is affecting all European places, but in a differentiated manner depending on the natural characteristics of the territories and their readiness to deal with environmental risks. Territorial vulnerability to climate change is mainly influenced by:

- Exposure to natural disasters or natural hazard-related risks;
- Land use and/or potential of green infrastructure networks; and
- Level of socio-economic development required for investment in mitigation and adaptation measures, and in particular for the circular business models.

The transition to greener economies implies a number of transformation that goes from business models as well as consumption habits, to energy production and use as well as carbon emissions mitigation. At all levels of governments, stakeholders have to adapt to climate change and address the environmental threat to mitigate natural risks, preserve socio-economic development and improve quality of life for all citizens.

In the current context of covid-19 health crisis, many European politicians, business leaders, MEPs and environmental activists European leaders are calling for a “**green recovery**”¹ that will enshrine the fight against climate change as the core of the economic recovery strategy. They urge to use green transition as post-crisis economic recovery programmes rather than aim for a return to business as usual. The transition to a climate-neutral economy, the protection of biodiversity and the transformation of agri-food systems have the potential to rapidly deliver jobs, growth and improve the way of life of all citizens worldwide, and to contribute to building more resilient societies.

During the 2021-2027 programming period, Cohesion Policy will strongly support green transitions of economies towards **carbon neutrality**. This aims to have a net zero carbon footprint, and refers to achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal (often through carbon compensation) or simply eliminating carbon emissions altogether.

In addition, fostering circular economy implies more analysis on current industrial models, use of natural resources and production of waste, combination of green and smart strategies, as well as the redefinition of growth and the focusing on positive society-wide benefits. Climate change may also lead to new development opportunities, such as within agriculture, green economy and renewable energy production. The analysis of the diverse territorial impacts of climate change should can help to better identify the inequalities between territories to fight climate change and to build resilience towards environmental risks. Besides, disparities between the different territories in their respective readiness to green transition but also in the access to clean air, water and soil, natural resources, biodiversity, energy supply, can correlate with and reinforce **social inequalities between people**.

Not least, as highlighted by ESPON research and by the Territorial Agenda, the drivers of a greener and climate-neutral economy reveal complex interactions and interdependencies between economic systems (e.g. circular economy) energy systems, mobility systems and food systems in the context of climate change. Therefore, they call for **more territorial coordination of policies**, with multi-level governance systems especially on climate, energy, water management, agriculture, housing, tourism and transport.

JUST living conditions for all people in all places

Europe’s territory is becoming more unequal, social inequalities are increasing, and more people and places feel “left behind”. Territorial and societal fragmentation are increasing in Europe. Progressively, economic and social disparities are more pronounced between regions, municipalities and neighbourhoods than between countries. Territorial cohesion must embed all aspects of a fair and sustainable development considering the given environmental, social, economic and financial conditions.

Territorial cohesion aims to ensure spatial justice for all places and citizens in Europe, which consists in the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and opportunities to use them².

¹ “Green Recovery: Reboot & Reboost our economies for a sustainable future”, Call for mobilisation, 14 April 2020.

² The city and spatial justice, Edward W. Soja, 2009.

Spatial justice involves both harmonious levels of development between European territories but also equal opportunities for people in terms of access to social protection, healthcare, employment and services.

In particular, democratic expression in the past years in Europe, and in other developed countries, called for **more justice and fairness between people and equal opportunities for all places and citizens**. This discontent was geographically focused, possibly linked to a concentration of socio economic challenges, and could spill over into political instability in the future.

Populations around Europe are urging government to counteract the growing inequalities and foster better working and living conditions across the continent. The fight against territorial disparities in Europe, in particular through Cohesion Policy, entails access to basic services, an inclusive labour market, regeneration of deprived urban and rural areas, and effective measures to combat poverty.

As mentioned in the State of the European territory report (ESPON, 2019), the European Pillar of Social Rights remains a priority for the EU, which highlight in particular the importance of the principle of fairness in welfare and in the labour market³. Fair living conditions for all implies that people can meet their basic human needs such as food and shelter but also access to jobs and to essential social services, such as healthcare, education and training.

Presently, Europe is struggling to provide **fair living conditions** in all territories, in particular due to:

- An increased exposure of places to globalisation: consequences of the current health crisis and the global economic crisis;
- Territorially diverse demographic and social challenges, segregation of vulnerable groups;
- Significant intra-European migration and immigration from third countries bring specific challenges and opportunities;
- Challenges of EU integration and the growing interdependences of regions.

In addition, for strong policy actions to continue to be widely accepted, such as green transition initiatives, they more than ever have to respond to the social needs and concerns of citizens to secure a fair and just transition.

From a territorial perspective, all levels of governments have to deal with increasing interdependencies and flows at all scales such as spillovers and externalities of development, labour flows and human movement, and environmental risks, linked to networks that subvert distances and create new functional geographies. These new types of functional geographies demand new forms of cooperation among the territories. However, the existence of a mismatch between the impacts of economic and societal developments and the limits of the decision-making power of the existing administrative units, which can only act within defined and rigid administrative borders, negatively affects the efficiency and legitimacy of political institutions and demands **more territorial cooperation at all scales and within all sectors**.

On the basis of the territorial challenges identified and a needs assessment process carried out during the summer 2020 via a public consultation, the Joint Working Group (JWG) has identified **7 potential themes** that could be at the core of the ESPON 2030 activities under so-called Thematic Action Plans (TAP). A TAP is a strategic programming document on a specific theme to be implemented by the Single Beneficiary. The TAP defines work packages of evidence production and knowledge development activities, which are

³ Sibiu Declaration of the informal EU27 leaders' meeting in May 2019.

responding to the needs of the specifically identified target groups under this TAP and which can support different stages of policy processes (see for further explanation of the approach section 2.1.2).

The list of potential themes below shall be revised and amended in the course of the implementation of the Programme based on the on-going assessment of needs. These 7 themes are closely linked to the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 objectives and to the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities and demonstrate the strategic approach chosen to respond to the challenges identified:

- Living, working and travelling across borders
- Governance of new geographies
- Smart connectivity
- Resilient places to crises
- European territories in global interactions
- Perspective for all people and places
- Climate neutral territories

Indicative TAP themes	Cohesion Policy 2021-2027	Territorial Agenda 2030
Living, working and travelling across borders	Social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights Competitive and smarter Europe (promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity) Connected Europe (enhancing mobility) Europe closer to citizens (sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives)	A Just Europe (Functional regions, Integration beyond borders) A Green Europe (Sustainable connections)
Governance of new geographies	Europe closer to citizens (sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives) Greener, low-carbon Europe (risk prevention and management) Connected Europe (enhancing mobility)	A Just Europe (Balanced Europe, Functional regions) A Green Europe (Circular economy, Sustainable connections)
Smart connectivity	Connected Europe (enhancing mobility) Greener, low-carbon Europe (clean and fair energy transition); Competitive and smarter Europe (promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity)	A Green Europe (Sustainable connections)
Resilient places to crises	Competitive and smarter Europe (promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity) Greener, low-carbon Europe (clean and fair energy transition, circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management); Social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; Connected Europe (enhancing mobility) Europe closer to citizens (sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives)	A Just Europe (Balanced Europe) A Green Europe (Healthy environment, Circular economy, Sustainable connections)
European territories in global interactions	Competitive and smarter Europe (promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity) Social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; Greener, low-carbon Europe (circular economy);	A Just Europe (Balanced Europe) A Green Europe (Circular economy, Sustainable connections)

Perspective for all people and places	Social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; Europe closer to citizens (sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives) Greener, low-carbon Europe (clean and fair energy transition, circular economy)	A Just Europe (Balanced Europe, Functional regions) A Green Europe (Healthy environment, Circular economy)
Climate neutral territories	Competitive and smarter Europe (promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity) Greener, low-carbon Europe (clean and fair energy transition, circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management);	A Just Europe (Balanced Europe) A Green Europe (Healthy environment, Circular economy)

The above list is indicative and aims to guide the implementation throughout the programming period.

In order to timely launch activities of the programme, and based on the outcome of the consultation, a set of four themes of this list was marked as priority following the consultation for the beginning of the programming period.

1. Resilience to crises

This theme gathered most interest among ESPON countries since it tackles current key challenges in a comprehensive and cross-cutting manner. The activities could provide evidence on territorial strengths and sensitivity of European territories to face multiple types of crises (environmental, economic, social, sanitary or digital), informing territorial recovery strategies and promoting the involvement of local civil societies to strengthen territorial resilience. Such input would aim at making sure that all places make the most of their development potential, in particular those disproportionately affected by crises.

2. Climate neutral territories

Climate change has become a recognised challenge at the global level and is being addressed by the EU as a top priority with high urgency. Climate change is affecting all European places, but in a differentiated manner depending on the natural characteristics of the territories and their readiness to deal with environmental risks. ESPON will look into possibilities to transform climate change related challenges into opportunities in such a way that all European territories are encouraged and stimulated to transition towards climate neutrality by 2050. This will be done by providing new insights and possible pathways for all types of territories to decrease carbon emissions, increase carbon sinks, create, enhance and manage green infrastructure (GI), support the energy transition, green digital transition and a shift towards a green and circular economy. There will be a special focus on territories with additional challenges, such as economic development, accessibility or social disparities, and show them how a climate neutral approach can address these

3. Perspective for all people and places

Europe's territory has become more unequal, social disparities are increasing, and more people and places feel "left behind". Policy-makers need input to understand this increasing territorial and societal fragmentation in Europe. ESPON research could address the ability of all places to secure sustainable territorial development beyond a sole economic growth, and focus in particular on accessibility to employment, education and services of general interest for people at all territorial levels. This input could inform EU and national policies on the impact of public

investments to address social upwards convergence and promote policies that pay attention to the diversity of places in Europe, along with their development potential and challenges.

4. Governance of new geographies

Growing interdependencies between territories and citizens is a major trend affecting Europe. Flows are increasing at all scales with spillovers and externalities of development, linked to technologies and networks that subvert distances and create new geographies divergent from administrative borders. ESPON could address the interdependencies of places and focuses on the territories in need of integrated management approaches in effect of identified divides, risks, functional interactions or conflicts and development perspectives. The evidence and knowledge input could promote participatory approaches and community empowerment in developing territorial strategies for policy programming with functional perspective responsive to the faced inequalities, imbalances, hazards and impacts.

1.2.5.2 Make evidence available for use – knowledge production for stakeholders

As explained in section 1, ESPON's role is to provide analytical evidence for the identified territorial challenges and their outcomes, and to recommend coordinated policy approaches to tackle them. The territorial evidence is the essence produced, collected and processed by the ESPON 2030 programme to provide better knowledge on territorial development to policy stakeholders.

ESPON should however pay also specific attention to the delivery mechanisms of the evidence produced as a necessary component by adopting a role of “knowledge developer” in addition to the role “evidence producer” that ESPON can contribute to an increased effectiveness of Cohesion Policy.

In order to achieve its strategic objective – the promotion of the analysis of development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion (ETC Regulation Article 3(3)(d)) – and contribute to the Interreg-specific objectives (enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities to manage specific territories and implement territorial strategy) the production of evidence is not enough. The promotion of the evidence means not only to produce evidence but also to support that the evidence is understood and users of the evidence are able to use it. The later means that knowledge and skills have as well to be address and improved. Only in this way, the promotion of evidence can positively impact the policy processes.

In its role of “knowledge developer” ESPON should address specifically **acquisition mechanisms of the territorial evidence produced**, therefore carefully selecting and adapting the delivery mechanisms to the very different selected target groups.

For these reasons, ESPON will focus on two specific components:

- 1 The production of evidence on the base of expressed needs;
- 2 The reach/injection of research evidence into policy actions as knowledge development.

1. The production of evidence on the base of expressed needs, which can takes different forms:

- Descriptive data (such as data on economic, demographic and social conditions);
- Analytical findings (research that identifies factors associated with specific conditions or that can demonstrate causal relationships);
- Evaluative type of evidence (looking directly at the effectiveness of existing policies and programmes);

- Policy analytical forecasts (analysis of alternative future policies attempts to foresee/shape the future and which is often coupled with evidence-based advice).

The **evidence production can translate in the following types of activities:**

- Europe-wide thematic activities:
 - studies similar to current applied research projects, including pan-European collaborative actions with multilateral organisations and/or including involvement of national/regional stakeholders (for case studies);
 - position papers, policy briefs, thematic papers;
 - territorial and public policies scenarios on specific themes; pan-European comparative analyses and surveys (at various territorial levels);
- Demand-driven thematic activities for TAP themes:
 - fast-track targeted analyses (short-length and/or with reduced territorial focus); targeted analyses (traditional and foresight-driven);
 - enhanced targeted analyses including further developed European territorial evidence and transferability assessment;
 - case studies, both spin-off and on-demand; territorial reports (TAP-related at various territorial levels : country, local, FUAs...)
- Cross-thematic activities:
 - Cross-cutting studies and scenarios;
 - territorial foresight reports (public policies oriented); territorial observation reports and atlases;
 - territorial impact assessments or other new methodologies (e.g. modelling, evaluation, policy analysis); territorial reports (comprehensive at EU/national levels);
 - supportive actions to TA2030 implementation (e.g. performance monitoring framework)

2. The reach/injection of research evidence into policy actions as knowledge development. The knowledge development activities will aim to better link the evidence production to the policy cycle by:

- Pushing evidence from the side of producers or purveyors of evidence and knowledge into the policy process respectively towards the users. These measures aim at delivering the messages of the evidence production to the different stakeholders, also (but not only) responding to specific demands (e.g. standard outreach activities; publications, dissemination events; position papers; et.
- Pulling evidence (asking for particular evidence and knowledge) users for particular policy processes to receive knowledge. These measures aim at attracting the interest of the stakeholder (in this case also scientists) by directly involving them in activities and debates. One of the outcome of the implementation of these activities is to raise awareness on the usefulness of ESPON evidence and encourage stakeholders in expressing their needs (for evidence and for “push” types of measures such as policy prototyping; territorial science boot camps; peer-to-peer workshops; digital community of practitioners..
- “Accompanying” measures. Under this type of measures, stakeholders are accompanied in their process of understanding and use ESPON evidence, according to their requests impact assessments; task force supports to policy processes; etc.

The **knowledge development can translate in the following types of activities:**

- Knowledge transfer services implemented by the ESPON EGTC via physical, hybrid and digital formats:
 - European and transnational events (such as seminars, conferences or other dissemination events);
 - Training sessions and skills raising workshops (such as territorial science boot camps, policy prototyping);
 - Mutual learning and networking activities (e.g. digital community of practitioners, exchange platforms, thematic working groups, peer-to-peer workshops, peer reviews and dialogue meetings between researchers and policy-makers, national territorial observatories events);
 - Ad hoc support to policy makers (e.g. impact assessments; task force to support to policy processes).
- Knowledge transfer services implemented by the ESPON Contact Points:
 - All types of national stakeholder events;

All the above mentioned activities will actively support the exchange between evidence producers (or purveyor and group of users in policy process by integrating them in joint activities.

The use of Simplified Cost Options described in Appendix 1 will ensure an indicative balance between Evidence Production and Knowledge Development of 80% and 20% of the total external expertise budget of the Single Operation. Horizontal measures consist of Evidence Production only whereas TAPs shall be composed by a mix of Evidence Production and Knowledge Development.

The combination of these two components is leading to a so called “knowledge-to-action cycle” which provides guidance on the mechanisms necessary to translate and transfer knowledge between the knowledge producers and the users, and in particular:

- The steps which need to be taken to manage knowledge transfer processes (problem identification, local adoption, assessing barriers, tailoring the intervention, monitoring use, evaluation outcomes, sustaining use, and recurrent review of problems);
- A knowledge funnel which contains the actual translation of research evidence from first generation (primary research) to second generation (review of existing research) to third generation knowledge that translate evidence into forms which is actionable for key stakeholders.

With this approach ESPON intends to address two specific barriers to knowledge use:

- The way the knowledge is presented, delivered and communicated, by adapting it and tailoring it to the specific users and communicating in the most appropriated and language form; and
- The specific skills needed or further developed by the target groups to understand/use/apply evidence as well as to communicate evidence (in the case of scientists/researchers) with regards to complete the knowledge-to-action cycle.

ESPON, in this context, would assume the role of a communicator broker between three different types of actors (policy maker, policy enablers and scientists), provide training, guidance, support to the dialogue, facilitate the access to the evidence, and raise awareness.

1.2.5.3 Ongoing needs management

The monitoring and management of the needs for territorial evidence and knowledge are key to ensure useful ESPON outputs that can contribute to policy design, policy monitoring and evaluation. For this

reasons, the ESPON 2030 programme will shift from a more cyclic needs assessment at certain points of the year towards an ongoing and comprehensive needs management. The needs for evidence and knowledge shall be constantly gathered and regularly assessed. In order to signal this major shift in identify needs, the term of “needs assessment” is replaced by “Ongoing Needs Management”.

The ongoing needs management shall comprise a series of actions identifying the needs of the different stakeholders. The ongoing needs management will be targeted to cover both, the needs for evidence and knowledge activities and in that way will shape the TAPs and the specific activities included in the TAPs, as well as the horizontal measures. In addition, feedback and needs at the overall Programme level regarding the strategic orientation are gathered:

- To identify territorial challenges and, respectively, themes not yet addressed by any of the already decided TAPs and that could be tackled by future TAPs;
- To precise the evidence gaps that could be completed by ESPON;
- To identify the eventual need for new horizontal measures

The means used to involve different actors into the ongoing needs management will vary and shall be tailor-made in order to ensure that they are adapted to the needs and expectations of the given target group and the type of involvement researched.

1.2.6 Complementarities and synergies with other actors and programmes

Taking into account that ESPON is not and will not be the only actor dealing with territorial knowledge and evidence, it is important to identify the specific role of ESPON in the landscape of applied research on territorial development subjects, and explore complementarities. In both its evidence and knowledge type of activities, ESPON will take into account the evidence developed by the other actors and enhanced the cooperation with them, also finalised to the implemented of joint research activities (for instance with OECD, JRC; Eurostat, Horizon Europe, just to name some examples, which work on themes such as climate, green, digital, circular, mobility, energy, health, disasters).

In relation to the other ETC Interregional programmes, ESPON recognised that they represent key partners with whom a more institutionalised and regular cooperation should be installed, not only to avoid duplication and/or overlapping of activities but to seek for complementarities that could reinforce the intervention logic of the different Cohesion Policy programmes.

In particular, regular coordination at the moment of elaborating the annual work plans, also involving the respective Monitoring Committees of the different programmes, should be established will Interact so that for ESPON to consider the evidence needs from other ETC programme and plan the necessary knowledge activities that will fit the Interact activities for the same year. Regular exchange and coordination should be also established with URBACT, as ESPON could provide to the programme evidence related to Urban territorial trends and opportunities at EU level to support the URBACT knowledge hubs, evidence that would complement the more in-depth bottom-up knowledge coming from the implementation of the URBACT networks.

In addition, ESPON shall seek complementarities with mainstream Cohesion Policy programmes, other territorial instruments such as the Just Transition Fund, as well as the European Urban Initiative (EUI), Macro-regional strategies and Sea-basin strategies. In particular, ESPON is ready to support the Knowledge Sharing Platform of the EUI by interconnecting ESPON Evidence production and Knowledge

Development to the EUI web-portal so that ESPON activities could directly feed into the activities of EUI, e.g. capitalisation policy labs or identification of call topics of future Innovative Actions.

Conditions have also been built to ensure coordination and complementarities with the INTERREG Europe Programme in particular with the activities implemented by this programme around the “policy learning platforms” which ESPON could support with the relevant analytical evidence, while the platform could constitute a valuable source of best practice and case studies for ESPON.

Finally, ESPON evidence and knowledge produced/developed shall also be systematised and organised per country, transnational areas and types of territories in such a way to make it available for the relevant actors at national level. The evidence and knowledge will be then more easily accessible and ready to use when the discussion about the Cohesion Policy programming period post-2027 will start.

1.3 Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: Article 17(4)(c)

Table 1.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection [Max 2 000 characters per objective]
<i>Interreg-specific objective 1 (ISO1): “A better cooperation governance”</i>	<i>6. Other actions to support better cooperation governance</i>	1	According to the ETC thematic concentration, ESPON refers only to the Interreg objective “A better cooperation governance”. ESPON will continue to target primarily public decision-makers and policy-makers and therefore will contribute to a better governance. Furthermore, ESPON supports all interested public stakeholders involved in territorial development policies. Thus ESPON should not only contribute to improve the governance of public bodies involved in territorial cooperation initiatives but also refer to a broader concept that include each and every form of territorial governance implemented by the relevant actors in a “cooperative” way (vertical and horizontal cooperation between the different administrative levels and across the different sectors). In that context, ESPON’s mandate is to analyse of development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion (ETC Regulation Article 3(3)(d)). This underlines that the central role of ESPON remains to produce evidence dedicated to territorial cohesion and territorial development processes. The evidence can take a variety of

			formats that goes from research to data production and policy analysis. Moreover, the future ESPON programme will consider the production of evidence in a strategic way to bring effectively the evidence to target groups, to help them to use it, develop their knowledge and ultimately reinforce the quality and effectiveness of territorial policies. The activities carried out in the framework of the ESPON 2030 programme will be organised according to two complementary building blocks. On the one hand, the approach to produce evidence will gather several dimensions in order to better frame and target the research work. On the other hand, in order for stakeholders to use and make the evidence produced their own, a variety of knowledge development activities will be carried out taking into account diverse needs and backgrounds.
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2 PRIORITIES

2.1 Title of the priority

Reference: Article 17(4)(d)

Max 300 characters

Support territorial transitions by the promotion of evidence towards a climate-neutral, just and territorially balanced Europe

☐ This is a priority pursuant to a transfer under Article 17(3)

2.1.1 Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

(selection of the specific objective from a drop down menu, no text)

Specific Objective #6 “Other actions to support better cooperation governance” (mandatory for ESPON) Articles 14(4), 15(2) and (5) of the ETC Regulation

2.1.2 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(i), Article 17(9)(c)(ii)

Max 7000 characters

As developed in section 1.2.5. ESPON’s added value and innovative approach builds on the two pillars evidence production and knowledge development which finds itself in the title for the priority:

“Support territorial transitions by the promotion of evidence towards a climate-neutral, just and territorially balanced Europe.”

The term “promotion” as indicated in the regulation signals the knowledge development dimension for the stakeholders.

Consequently, this **strategic approach for the implementation of the programme** is characterised by different steps:

- 1) An ongoing needs management which offers the base for the decision to be taken by the Monitoring Committee on the themes for “Thematic Action Plans” which join a number of connected topics and territorial challenges.
- 2) The development of “Thematic Action Plans” (TAPs) to match the needs of the different actors, and presents which activities will be carried out, both in terms of “evidence production” and “knowledge development”. In that sense, a kind of intervention logic for each theme will be defined and proposed for approval by the MC.

A Thematic Action Plan (TAP) is a strategic programming document for a specific theme to be implemented by the Single Beneficiary. The TAP defines work packages of evidence production and knowledge development activities, which are responding to the needs of the specifically identified target groups under this TAP and which can support different stages of policy processes.

A **Thematic Action Plan (TAP)**, which (depending on the thematic actions covered) will encompass the following dimension:

i. The specific **evidence needs** (in terms of evidence type of activities)

The evidence needs for each selected specific theme will be covered by implementing single or multiple “evidence” type of activities. This decision will depend on the specific policy needs to be address, the already existing evidence (both accumulated by ESPON and retrieved from external sources of information on territorial evidence) and the profile of the stakeholders for whom the evidence is produced for.

Evidence activities will have to be calibrated and adjusted considering the already existing evidence produced by other actors as long as it is based on veritable sources, operates on replicable methodologies and is available to serve ESPON target groups and stakeholders.

ii. The different “knowledge development needs” activities that will have to follow once the evidence is available and that will be tailored (each of them) to the specific actors and needs specifically identified.

Indicative and open list of themes for the TAPs

As already indicated, on the basis of the territorial challenges identified and a needs assessment process carried out during the summer 2020 via a public consultation, the Joint Working Group (JWG) has identified **7 potential TAP themes**, closely linked to the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 objectives and to the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities. This indicative and open list of themes may be revised and amended in the course of the implementation of the Programme based on the on-going assessment of needs;

- Living, working and travelling across borders
- Governance of new geographies
- Smart connectivity
- Resilient places to crises
- European territories in global interactions
- Perspective for all people and places
- Climate neutral territories

The list is indicative and aims to guide the implementation throughout the programming period.

The identified themes aim at addressing the complexity represented by the combination of more than one of the territorial challenges and will be further developed in a dialogue between the Monitoring Committee and the Single Beneficiary. Moreover, dialogues will also be open and involve scientists and stakeholders with the aim of identifying specific needs, and ensuring that the state of the art of the available research around the selected topic is considered so to avoid doubling existing research work and ensure added value to ESPON evidence.

The first specific activities to be included in each Thematic Action Plan will be identified after this dialogue phase.

The approach via Thematic Action Plan will not exclude certain specific cross-cutting work streams (listed below) which will be captured by so-called “Horizontal measures” that contribute to increasing the added-value of ESPON work such as:

1. **Cross cutting studies and territorial foresight exercises bringing together evidence from TAPs or useful to inform new TAPs** such as scenarios, etc.;
2. **Cross-cutting publications to support specific policy needs** such as the Atlas and the Reports on the Territorial State of the EU;
3. **Consolidation of Evidence and Knowledge for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of TA 2030.**

The Single Beneficiary will propose specific horizontal measures in the Operation Proposal.

Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference Article 17(9)(c)(i)

Max 7000 characters

The Priority Axis 1 of ESPON 2030 programme will be implemented by the ESPON EGTC, which is therefore designated as Single Beneficiary of the Programme. The entire Priority Axis 1 of the Programme will be implemented by one Single Operation assigned to the Single Beneficiary.

The implementation of Priority Axis 1 will be governed by the Operation Specifications established and agreed by the ESPON MC and provided by the ESPON MA to the Single Beneficiary as basis for drafting an Operation Proposal. The Operation Proposal will detail the strategic approach of the Single Beneficiary to achieve the set output and results objectives. Evidence and Knowledge development activities will be decided and implemented via “Thematic Action Plans” (which will include as well the activities implemented by the ESPON Contact Points). Thematic Actions plan will be decided by the Monitoring Committee on the basis of a proposal from the ESPON EGTC.

The implementation of the Single Operation, from a financial point of view will be achieved by an extensive use of SCOs. The use of SCOs in the programme and the way they have been defined, ensures a balance between evidence and knowledge production. **Knowledge development activities** are financed within the Single Operation with **a flat rate of 25% of the real costs of Evidence Production**. Staff costs are defined as a flat rate of 38% the total expenditure for evidence and knowledge development (both included under the external expertise budget line) and for travel and administration costs the off-the-shelves flat rates will be used.

The ESPON contact point, nominated by each respective Member State, will support the ESPON EGTC to implement the Knowledge Development strand.

In particular, the ECPs will have a strategic role to support the EGTC in reaching the regional and local target groups and mobilise the national research resources. This strategic role given to the ECP responds to an important recommendation of the ESPON 2020 mid-term evaluation: 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). The ECPs are key in this tailoring, diversification and adaptation of the outputs according to the specific needs of the different national, regional and local levels, for their knowledge and proximity to the local actors.

The main activities in which ECPs will be involved aim to:

- Raise awareness of the ESPON Programme at national, regional and local levels;
- Support the overall participatory strategy for the ESPON country in close cooperation with the MC member and the EGTC, including interaction among regional/local stakeholders and researchers and the ESPON EGTC;
- Create and animate national ESPON communities, involving current and potentially new stakeholders, interested service providers and researchers;
- Support country-specific outreach for ESPON evidence ensuring the latter's usefulness at local and regional levels.

2.1.3 Indicators

Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(ii), Article 17(9)(c)(iii)

Table 2. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1	Specific Objective #6 "Other actions to support better cooperation governance"	OI01	Number of activities of territorial evidence production	Number	18	105
1	Specific Objective #6 "Other actions to support better cooperation governance"	OI02	Number of activities of knowledge development	Number	20	150
1	Specific Objective #6 "Other actions to support better cooperation governance"	OI01	Number of persons participating in the ESPON knowledge development activities	Number	0	3500

Table 3. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	Specific Objective #6 “Other actions to support better cooperation governance”	RI01	Persons with increased capacity due to their participation to ESPON activities	Percentage out of number of participants	0	2022	75%	Rapid digital surveys	Data will be collected ongoing by the Single Beneficiary via rapid digital surveys
1	Specific Objective #6 “Other actions to support better cooperation governance”	RI02	Participants indicating a potential use of ESPON knowledge in their organisations	Percentage out of number of participants	0	2022	50%	Rapid digital surveys	Data will be collected ongoing by the Single Beneficiary via rapid digital surveys

2.1.4 The main target groups

Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(iii), Article 17(9)(c)(iv)

Max 7000 characters

The ESPON 2030 programme's activities aim to support stakeholders at all levels in achieving green transition to climate-neutral economies while ensuring at the same time just living conditions for all people in all places.

The main target groups have been identified by looking at the actors involved in the different phases of the policy processes, those which evidence needs have to be identified and to whom ESPON evidence is produced and delivered to improve knowledge on territorial development for the sake of better policies.

The ESPON Programme is primarily targeted to the three following groups which can be all active at different stages of the policy cycle:

- Policy-makers (in the narrow sense, such as politicians and decision-makers);
- Policy-“enablers” (in the sense of public employees, such as policy officers and thematic experts in public administrations and other type of public organisations in the field of territorial development);
- Scientists and researchers.

In relation to the policy makers, ESPON intends to address policy-makers at all administrative levels, EU national, regional and local level. They will however addressed in a different ways and with different strategies.

The representatives in the Monitoring Committee will be the reference group to address evidence and knowledge needs expressed at the national political level.

Like in the past, there will be an open dialogue and coordination with EU institutions, not only with the DG REGIO (a stakeholder of the programme) and the European Commission in general, but also with the European Parliament, EIB; Eurostat. Among the EU institution, the European Committee of the Regions holds a specific role and will play an important role in supporting ESPON for the identification of key evidence needs related specifically to local and regional territorial development and cohesion, but also as privileged partner for the implementation of the “knowledge development” activities by facilitating the access to elected policy makers at local and regional level. As in the past, specific coordination will be set up with the countries holding the presidency of the EU.

In the same way, transnational, national, regional and local stakeholders (policy makers and enablers) in all Member and Partner States will be specifically targeted.

Assuming that many territorial strategies are supported and implemented by a multi-level governance for EU-to local level, this type of constellations will also be specifically addressed.

Specific needs assessments will be implemented to gather the bottom-up needs coming from this specific target groups.

Scientists and researchers will be a specific target groups of the ESPON programme not only because they are the main actors that will be involved in the production of the evidence but also because they play a key role in relation to the knowledge development for the delivery of politically communicable messages.

The challenge for ESPON is, not only to address the needs of these three target groups, but also to design, animate and **fill in the interfaces** between them. Indeed, in addition to deliver knowledge, ESPON should also facilitate the up-taking process and also acting on the interfaces between the different actors.

As figure 4 points out, in practical terms, this means ESPON has to identify and to deliver on:

- **Evidence and knowledge needs** for the three type of actors at different points of the policy cycle;
- **The skills needs** to be able produce and, more important, to use the knowledge; and
- **To fill in and support the interface between these three basic groups** of actors.

Policy makers need for examples skills such as engaging citizens, understanding the policy context of evidence applications.

Policy enablers need skills such as to frame policy questions, develop research and data literacy, using evidence on different policy contexts

Researchers and scientist benefit from skills such as “language” and communication, story-telling, communicable messages for policy makers

For the different actors identified it is useful to discuss and investigate towards which respective skills ESPON activities should be directed. Indeed, the future knowledge development activities will aim at developing the skills of ESPON target groups so that they can use the evidence produced. OECD research pointed out that public actors need certain skills to be able to understand and use evidence in policymaking. In fact, literature shows that, to serve policy processes with research outputs, ESPON cannot limit itself to the provision of evidence because it is not enough for target groups to take-up and use this evidence.

On the basis of the OECD core skills for public sector innovation, the following matching of skills is identified for each target group.

Figure 4. Main skills needed by ESPON target groups to make the best use of evidence

As figure 5 points out ESPON should develop activities directed to manage and orientate the knowledge transfer process, tailoring the interventions, sustain the use of knowledge, adapting the knowledge to the specific needs and local specificities. ESPON could assume the role of a communicator broker between the three different types of actors, providing training, guidance, support to the dialogue, facilitate the access to the evidence, raise awareness.

Figure 5. A model for ESPON activities to build interface between actors

2.1.5 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Not applicable to the ESPON programme..

2.1.6 Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable to the ESPON programme.

2.1.7 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(vi), Article 17(9)(c)(v)

Table 4. Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF		170	Total amount of the priority

Table 5. Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF		01	Total amount of the priority

Table 6. Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ERDF		33	

3 FINANCING PLAN

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(i), Article 17(5)(a)(i)-(ivd)

Table 7.

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)	6.456.574	6.585.706	6.717.419	6.851.768	6.988.803	7.128.579	7.271.151	48.000.000
ERDF programmed under Article 17(3) (Investments for Jobs and Growth goal)								
IPA III CBC4								
Neighbourhood CBC5								
IPA III6								
NDICI7								
OCTP Greenland8								
OCTP9								
Interreg Funds10								
Total								

⁴ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁵ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁶ Interreg B and C

⁷ Interreg B and C

⁸ Interreg B and C

⁹ Interreg C and D

¹⁰ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(ii), Article 17(5)(a)

Table 8.

PO No or TA	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total or public)	EU contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co- financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
						National public (c)	National private (d)			
	Priority 1	ERDF ⁷	total	48.000.000		12.000.000		60.000.000	80%	
		IPA III CBC ¹¹								
		Neighbourhood CBC ¹²								
		IPA III ¹³								
		NDICI ¹⁴								
		OCTP Greenland ¹⁵								
		OCTP ¹⁶								
		Interreg Funds ¹⁷								
	Priority 2	(funds as above)								
	Total	All funds								
		ERDF								
		IPA III CBC								
		Neighbourhood CBC								
		IPA III								
		NDICI								
		OCTP Greenland								
		OCTP								
		Interreg Funds								
	Total	All funds								

⁷ When ERDF resources correspond to amounts programmed in accordance with Article 17(3), it shall be specified.

¹¹ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

¹² Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

¹³ Interreg B and C

¹⁴ Interreg B and C

¹⁵ Interreg B and C

¹⁶ Interreg C and D

¹⁷ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C

4 ACTION TAKEN TO INVOLVE THE RELEVANT PROGRAMME PARTNERS IN THE PREPARATION OF THE INTERREG PROGRAMME AND THE ROLE OF THOSE PROGRAMME PARTNERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Reference: Article 17(4)(h)

Max 10 000 characters

ESPON aims to serve the needs of policy-makers and researchers and puts a high emphasis on involving them at every step of the programming and implementing process of the ESPON 2030 Programme.

4.1 Partnership approach for the programming

The preparation of the ESPON 2030 Programme started in 2018 and was based on a collaborative process lead by the ESPON Managing Authority involving:

- The Joint Working Group composed of representatives of all Member and Partner States, as well as the European Commission and the ESPON EGTC, Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Programme;
- Target groups and the broader public through a public consultation on the strategic orientation of the programme.

4.1.1 Joint Working Group

The countries participating in the ESPON programme formed a Joint Working Group (JWG) to prepare a proposal covering the coming funding period 2021-2027. The JWG has been meeting on a quarterly basis starting in September 2018.

The JWG aimed to create an open and transparent dialogue between the participating Member and Partner States at each stage of the discussion in order to come up with a common solid understanding and definition of the ESPON 2030 Programme.

4.1.2 Public consultation on the strategic orientation of the programme

A public consultation was conducted online from June to August 2020 and aimed at collecting views on what ESPON should focus on, in particular:

- The emerging territorial challenges ahead;
- The specific territorial evidence needed in order to tackle them; and
- The specific support in terms of knowledge development that is most useful to be provided by ESPON in the future.

Targeted respondents were policy-makers and practitioners from all administrative levels, researchers, academia, students and citizens, with particular interest for those who think that “territory matters” and that a place-based and territorial approach leads to a better understanding of the challenges ahead.

The outcome was very satisfactory both in terms of quantity and quality of the inputs provided. As figure 6 shows, 603 responses were received covering all Member and Partner States with several respondents per country. 8 respondents came from Serbia, Kosovo, Turkey, Andorra, EU institution, Brazil.

Figure 6: Geographical distribution of respondents to the ESPON 2030 public consultation

As figure 7 points out, the participation of the different types of respondents was rather balanced with 56% of policy-makers and 44% of researchers.

Figure 7: Type of respondents to the ESPON 2030 public consultation

The ESPON MA, under the mandate of the JWG, carefully considered the results of the public consultation to draft the programme proposal.

4.2 Partnership approach for the implementation

4.2.1 Consultation of stakeholders as part of strategic programming

To better serve policy-makers, on-going or upcoming policy processes/priorities need to be regularly assessed. In that context, the ESPON 2030 strategic programming approach framework foresees an annual decision-making process to launch or further complete Thematic Action Plans (TAPs).

The “**ongoing needs management**” represents a major shift for the identification of the needs for evidence and knowledge and will serve three main objective, gathering feedback and needs on:

- Individual and already decided/approved TAPs;
- Needs for horizontal measures;
- The strategic orientation at programme level.

The ongoing needs management will involve actors in different roles regarding the three mentioned objectives: the MC, the ECPs, the ESPON EGTC and researchers using different means (e.g. public consultation, focus group, open platform for posting and exchange, survey, etc.).

In relation to the **consultation on specific TAPs**, the TAP themes will be further developed in a dialogue between the MC and the ESPON EGTC.

In order to shape each TAP theme towards a TAP proposal to the MC, the right mix of evidence and knowledge activities shall be identified in a specific consultation processes involving policy-makers and researchers.

The **objectives** of the TAP(s) consultation process are:

- To raise the awareness of policy makers, practitioners and scientists about the specific thematic work-streams ESPON will be opening to support policymaking;
- To engage in an exchange with policy makers at all levels on the general policy needs that could be addressed and in which way;
- To engage in an exchange with scientists on the state-of-the art of the existing territorial research in the related fields of each TAP and to collect a wide range of proposals for programme research activities to ensure the relevance and added value of ESPON evidence production;

- To create a platform for exchange between policy makers/practitioners and scientists to ensure a common understanding of the frame of the policy questions, of the policy context of evidence application and appropriate stocktaking of existing evidence and research methodologies;
- To support the ESPON EGTC and the MC in shaping the TAP scope and content by identifying the specific activities to be implemented under the broader TAP theme.

The consultation is launched on the basis of a **TAP consultation document** (online content presenting the general scope of the TAP, the process itself and providing guidance on how to participate).

The consultation on the TAP shall be organized as a process rather than as one single event and will include several steps:

- 1) Kick-off information day widely promoted and open to all interested potential contributors from policy and science sides;
- 2) Online interactive feedbacks during a specific time-frame¹⁸ ;
- 3) A series of specific focus groups to deepen the discussion on certain elements/aspects.

In conclusion, the partnership approach is embedded in the strategic programming of the TAPs as it ensures ongoing involvement and consultation of policy stakeholders and researchers during the entire implementation of the programme.

4.2.2 Partnership approach for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring of the TAPs will ensure the participation of stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, ensuring that needs raised by member countries are properly identified and that the main policy questions raised by stakeholders are coherently and meaningfully addressed.

The monitoring is based on a regular reporting presented by the EGTC to the MC for discussion. In order to ensure the **participation of all MC members in the monitoring** of the TAPs implementation, the process will be organised in two ways:

- by an info note;
- by **periodical discussions** approximately once per year per TAP.

The scientific steering of a TAP should involve scientists, as individual or group of experts in **advisory panels**. This steering will be optional and proposed either by the EGTC or requested by the MC at the start or during the implementation of the TAP. If the request comes from the MC, the costs will be covered by the Technical Assistance of the programme.

A specific **optional monitoring of certain individual activities** of TAPs and horizontal measures shall be implemented only in cases where the MC or the ESPON EGTC see a particular strategic benefit. In case of a request for an advisory panel by the MC, the costs will be borne by the Technical Assistance. The advisory panels can involve MC members/practitioners and scientists, depending on the needs.

¹⁸ Should an interactive online feedback platform should not be possible to implement for technical reasons for the first TAPs an online survey will be set up to allow written feedbacks during a specific time-frame.

Figure 8 provides an overview on the different types of optional advisory panels.

Figure 8: Policy and scientific steering at Programme, TAPs and individual activities level.

ESPON activities are responding to policy needs, jointly identified by the MC members and are not necessarily linked to geographical considerations. Yet, demands can vary regarding certain subjects between countries. However, ESPON should compile country-specific information regularly from its studies, and initiate interactive policy learning activities, identifying good practices and policy initiatives at national and regional level with the help of the Member States and the national contact points.

A close monitoring of the geographical balance will be ensured to strive for a balanced allocation of activities and use of resources across countries, and a balanced participation of actors.

The balanced geographical distribution of activities has to be seen across all activities and in the view of specific national needs for policy processes, specific deliveries for the countries, case studies, participation in targeted analysis or localisation of events regarding evidence and knowledge.

The principle of balanced geographical allocation cannot directly refer to the participation of researchers in the public procurement procedures of the ESPON EGTC which are focused on the quality of the service. This has always been the basic principle for ESPON contracting, and is the only way for regulatory reasons. In conclusion, what counts for the geographical balance of the ESPON is the overall service delivered in the countries participating in ESPON. Beyond that, ESPON recognizes the importance of a more inclusive participation of research institutes from all participating countries, which positively affects the research done as well as the awareness about ESPON in the different countries. In that view, geographical balance is a long term goal over the whole programming period. The EGTC will be asked to implement remedial actions such as awareness raising measures in case the monitoring indicates a clear lack of balance.

5 APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY FOR THE INTERREG PROGRAMME (OBJECTIVES, TARGET AUDIENCES, COMMUNICATION CHANNELS, INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH, WHERE APPROPRIATE, PLANNED BUDGET AND RELEVANT INDICATORS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION)

Reference: Article 17(4)(i)

Max 4500 characters

The communication strategy of ESPON 2030 refers to how to communicate towards target groups to support the programme objectives. It is coordinated with the knowledge development, capitalisation and outreach activities of the Single Beneficiary in charge of implementing Priority 1 of programme.

Approved at its first meeting and regularly monitored by the MC, its implementation, including any revision, will be carried out in close partnership with the MC, which will support a simple dissemination of information on communication activities, when necessary.

5.1 Objectives

The communication strategy aims to improve the uptake of ESPON evidence by increasing the visibility and the accessibility of the ESPON knowledge as well as by developing the absolute number of “ESPON users” among the main target groups and all potential audiences, hence to increase the ESPON user base and the uptake of ESPON content.

The communication objectives derive from the overall goals of the Programme:

- Make the Programme knowledge base more easily accessible to target groups and other bodies interested including possible “multipliers” and the wider public;
- Raise awareness about ESPON added value and show the achievements of the Programme;
- Further develop the community of ESPON users while engaging with target groups to deliver tailored support and ensure the effective use of ESPON outputs;
- Inform potential service providers about funding and work opportunities ESPON offers.

5.2 Activities

The MA will carry through the following key communication and visibility activities:

- Programme launching activities at country and European levels
- Bi-annual information activities presenting the main achievements of the ESPON 2030 Programme
- Annual information activity via direct mailing to target groups and the wider public
- Final event in 2028 winding up the communication activities during the 7 years of the ESPON 2030 Programme
- ESPON MA webpage with information on:
 - The Programme goals, budget and management;
 - Any consultation process undertaken, including surveys on achievements and stakeholders feedback;
 - Evaluation;
 - List of operations and beneficiaries;

- The MA will display the Union emblem at its premises in Luxembourg.

The Single Beneficiary via the knowledge development strand will support the communication strategy at programme level by disseminating ESPON research findings and the territorial evidence produced.

A holistic approach on all communication channels available will be implemented as to increase programme's visibility and promotion of ESPON evidence to a broader audience.

5.3 Audiences

The communication activities will target the groups mentioned in section 2.1.4, in particular:

- European policymakers, in particular in the field of Cohesion Policy as well as other sectoral/thematic policies and programmes, particularly those currently not fully articulating their territorial approach;
- National policymakers responsible for territorial cohesion, ETC programmes, macro-regional strategies and Cohesion Policy implementation at national level, as well as other relevant fields;
- Authorities implementing ESIF programmes;
- Regional and local policymakers/practitioners responsible for territorial development and planning and/or involved in cooperation across borders in larger territories;
- Academia including students, researchers (public and private sector);
- Organisations promoting regional/urban interests at national, EU or international level;
- Organisations from the private sector and wider European audiences;
- Journalists at local, regional, national and European level.

5.4 Monitoring

The ESPON MA will inform the ESPON MC once a year about the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy and the planned activities for the following year.

Financial resources for the communication strategy will be made available as part of the programme's budget for horizontal measures and as part of technical assistance, in accordance with the principle of proportionality. The total budget foreseen is EUR 1.240.419.

The following indicators will monitor the implementation of the communication strategy:

- Number of seminars (with a target of 16 seminars during the programming period)
- Number of annual information activity in the form of direct mailing to the target groups of the programme, to beneficiaries, "multipliers" and the wider public (with a target of 8 direct mailing)
- Programme website (with a target of 1 Programme/Single Operation website)

6 INDICATION OF SUPPORT TO SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS, INCLUDING SMALL PROJECTS WITHIN SMALL PROJECT FUNDS PROVISIONS

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

Max 7000 characters

Not applicable to the ESPON programme.

7 IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS

7.1 Programme authorities

Reference: Article 17(7)(a)

Table 9.

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning Department of Spatial Planning	Thiemo W. Eser	Thiemo.Eser@mat.etat.lu
National authority (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Audit authority	Inspection Générale des Finances	Laurent Sanavia	audit-eu@igf.etat.lu
Group of auditors representatives	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning Department of Spatial Planning	Thiemo W. Eser	Thiemo.Eser@mat.etat.lu

7.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: Article 17(7)(b)

Max 3500 characters

Due to the size and the organisational structure of the ESPON 2030 Programme with only one Single Operation and in order to keep the administrative and financial burden as low as possible, the ESPON MA shall assume the function and tasks of the Joint Secretariat relevant for the implementation of the programme and shall assist the ESPON MC and the Certifying Authority in carrying out its tasks.

On-going information and assistance to the Single Beneficiary shall also be provided in order to support a sound and correct implementation of the Single Operation.

Limited staff necessary to support the ESPON MA will be contracted via the GIE LERAS and the work space will be available at the location of the ESPON MA for a smooth functioning of the secretarial function with the MA.

7.3 Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: Article 17(7)(c)

Max 10 500 characters

Appointment of liabilities

The situation regarding the ESPON 2030 Programme and the establishment of a Single Beneficiary is particular as only two entities will receive subsidies so the cases of liability can be rather clearly allocated. On one hand, the Single Beneficiary under the Grant Agreement will receive the all funding allocated under the Priority 1. On the other, as stated in Article 30(5)(b) CPR, the reimbursement of Technical Assistance to the MA is made, by applying the percentages set out in Article 26(2)(c) ETC Regulation (8% for Interreg C programmes including ESPON) to the eligible expenditure included in each payment application. Therefore, by the application of this simplified method of flat-rate payment, the eligibility of expenditure of Technical Assistance will not be subject to controls or audits.

In case of occurrence of ineligible expenditure or irregularities with financial impacts in the use of funding by the Single Beneficiary the financial liability shall be borne by the Single Beneficiary. In case the Single Beneficiary is not able to cover these costs, the members of the Single Beneficiary are liable. In order to support the members of the Single Beneficiary regarding a financial burden resulting from their unlimited liability in relation to the implementation of the ERDF-funding allocated under the Grant Agreement, a dedicated liability mechanism will be set up (hereinafter referred to as Liability Mechanism).

The Liability Mechanism shall guarantee the financing of all ineligible cost that eventually occurs during the implementation of the Single Operation. The Liability Mechanism shall be financed by all States participating in the ESPON 2030 Programme up to a maximum of 2% of the ineligible costs in relation to the total ERDF of the budget to be assigned to the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2030 Programme. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, as the State where the ESPON EGTC is located, shall cover all ineligible expenditure beyond the threshold of 2% of the ERDF allocated by the Grant Agreement, which may occur during the implementation of the ESPON operation.

The purpose, size of financing and practical operation of the Liability Mechanism is described in a specific "Reference Document on the Liability Mechanism" which shall be an Annex to the Agreement between Luxembourg and the Member and Partner States on the ESPON 2020 programme. By the definition of the chain of liabilities, any potentially occurring recovery of irregular expenditure from the Single Beneficiary to the ESPON MA is ensured.

Reduction and recovery of payments from the Single Beneficiary

The ESPON Managing Authority (MA) shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Single Operation. The ESPON MA shall also recover funds from the Single Beneficiary in case of a termination of the Grant Agreement in full or in part based on the conditions defined in the Grant Agreement. In principle, if the Single Beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment, the Member State where the Single Beneficiary is located, i.e. Luxembourg where the ESPON EGTC is

registered, shall reimburse the ESPON MA based on Article 50(2) ETC regulation. Details on the procedure will be included in the description of the management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 63(9) CPR.

The ESPON MA shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States as laid down in Article 50 ETC regulation.

8 USE OF UNIT COSTS, LUMP SUMS, FLAT RATES AND FINANCING NOT LINKED TO COSTS

Reference: Articles 88 and 89 CPR

Table 10. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 88 and 89	YES	NO
From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 88 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)	☒	☐
From the adoption programme will make use of financing not linked to costs according to Article 89 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)	☐	☒

APPENDICES

Map 1: Map of the programme area

Not applicable to the ESPON programme.

Appendix 0: Figures of the Programme document

See separate file 1.a: No figures can be inserted in the Programme document itself, and therefore are replaced by hyperlinks and in addition for the sake of readability as Appendix to the Programme document.

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission (Article 88 CPR)

See separate files 1.b and 1.c:

- 1.b SCO_description_flat rate of Staff costs
- 1.c SCO_description_flat rate of Knowledge development

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

Not relevant for the ESPON programme.

Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable

Not applicable to the ESPON programme.