

ESPON post 2013

Ex ante evaluation

Draft evaluation report

30 December 2013

V. 03

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Introduction

This is the Draft evaluation report of the Espon post 2013 Programme. The Draft evaluation report is issued together the final Concept Paper and the Final Report on Strategic Documents.

In order to take into account the new updating of ESIF Regulations, finally approved in December 2013 (Reg (EU) no. 1299/2013; Reg (EU) no. 1301/2013; Reg (EU) no. 1303/2013), the draft evaluation report and the Final Report on Strategic Documents that that were due on 8 November 2013 were postponed to 30 December 2013.

As indicated in the terms of reference and in the Concept Paper, the Draft evaluation report focuses on both the external and internal coherence of the Programme and in particular refers to:

- Section 1: evaluability assessment; aims at establishing whether the Programme is ready to be evaluated, and specifies where the evaluation exercise stands and what might hamper its full development;
- Section 2: contains a brief outline of the Programme as emerges from the Operational Programme and Operation Specifications issued in November 2013;
- Section 3: Assessment of the external coherence and added value of the Programme;
- Section 4: deals with the Internal coherence and consistency of the Programme,
- Section 5: refers to the management system provided for the ESPON post 2013 strategy,
- Section 6: outlines the requirements of the performance framework stemming from the new Regulations,
- Section 7 refers to the clarity and relevance of ESPON post 2013 performance indicators
- Section 8 summarises the assessment and provides recommendations for improvement of the Programme.

It is worth noting that at this stage the analyses undertaken were carried out on the basis of provisional drafts of the Operational Programme and the Operation Specifications. A full list of the documents screened for this report is provided in Annex 3: ESPON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED SO FAR and Annex 4: List of strategic reference documents.

A final draft of the Report will be drawn up once the draft final version of the Espon post 2013 Operational Programme and Operation Specification is finalized, in accordance with the deadlines agreed upon with the MA/CU.

In accordance with the interactive nature of the ex ante exercise, Annex 2 provides a summary of the recommendations supplied in the previous evaluation report (June 2013) and how they have been considered in the programme documentation.

The methodological approach applied in ESPON post 2013 ex ante evaluation is theory driven. This in broad terms means searching for and rendering explicit the key causal claims related to the new programme and expected results, in order to pinpoint possible weaknesses and room for improvement.

The methodological approach is fully described in the final Concept paper delivered by IRS. The sources included both desk-based analysis and interviews with stakeholders. The material taken into account deals with: draft and final EU Regulations and overarching strategic documents, guidance documents concerning the role and goals of the evaluation; Evaluations of the ESPON 2006 and 2013 programmes; draft material related to the ESPON post 2013 Programme (OP, OS, issue papers, JWG minutes. See ANNEX 3: ESPON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED SO FAR).

Moreover, a set of 14 semi-structured interviews was undertaken with various stakeholders during September/October 2013 (See ANNEX 5. LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONTACTED). The interviews material helped evaluators to obtain a rounder view of the external pressures and challenges that the programme is likely to face in the coming years. The results of interviews are commented in the Final Report on Strategic Documents.

1 Evaluability assessment

1.1 Availability of the information needed to carry out the ex ante evaluation

The programme evaluability assessment aims at establishing whether the Programme is ready to be evaluated and what barriers there might be to its effective and useful evaluation, and at providing a picture of where the evaluation exercise stands at present. The following table presents, for each of the main components of the ex- ante evaluation exercise (grouped under “assessment of the external coherence and added value of the programme” and “assessment of the internal coherence and consistency of the programme”), some brief considerations on their evaluability at present and specifies where the evaluation exercise stands and what might hamper its full development.

	What ?	Notes
Assessment of the external coherence and added value of the programme	a) Coherence of the priorities and corresponding programme objectives with the reference documents	<p>Assessment possible.</p> <p>The progress made in drafting the Operational Programme, together with the recently approved ESIF Regulations, allowed the evaluator to assess the programme’s external coherence. The analysis undertaken by the evaluator uses the most recent version of the OP (Nov.2013), which includes a reviewed set of specific objectives for the ESPON post 2013 programme. It should be noted that the analysis was undertaken before a completed version of the OP was produced, which means that the assessment will need revising once the OP is finalised.</p>
	b) Relevance of the ESPON strategy in addressing problems and needs identified in previous evaluations of the ESPON programme	<p>Assessment possible.</p> <p>The assessment takes into account the findings of the evaluations carried out on ESPON 2006 and 2013 and the elements of the ESPON post 2013 strategy as included in the OP – third version of November 2013.</p> <p>The latest version of the OP includes a SWOT analysis based on the needs and challenges for programme renewal and upgrade identified for ESPON by MS/PS and the EC. The ex-ante evaluation exercise has provided input to the SWOT analysis by presenting a SWOT-like summary of the main issues identified in past evaluations and of the ways the ESPON post 2013 OP is to address them.</p>
	c) Respect of the partnership principle	<p>Assessment possible.</p> <p>The assessment takes into account the section of the CPR (Art. 5) dedicated to this aspect and the draft materials of the EC preparing the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP), which will be finalized in a delegated act by the Commission.</p> <p>The latest OP version (November 2013) includes a revised section dedicated to the strategy for the involvement of partners, providing an account of the participatory process put in place before and during the OP elaboration.</p>

Assessment of the internal coherence and consistency of the programme	d) The coherence and soundness of the strategy	<p>Assessment possible.</p> <p>Assessment of the coherence of the ESPON post 2013 strategy was carried out on the latest version of the operational programme (November 2013) which, although yet to be finalised and therefore still potentially subject to changes and/or adjustments, allows for identification of the main causal packages and elements put in place to address the focal challenges for the ESPON post 2013 OP.</p> <p>Starting by verifying the logic of change of the Programme, the analysis assesses its soundness through discussion of the ‘causal packages’ on which the strategy is based. This means verifying whether the linkages between focal challenges and expected results are fully addressed with the right actions and policy tools to achieve the goals.</p>
	e) Consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources	<p>Assessment not possible yet.</p> <p>Initial indication of the total budget allocated to the ESPON post 2013 programme, of the way the programme authorities plan to allocate resources between the two priority axes, the breakdown of national contributions and the different models of co-financing at the programme level were presented at the last JWG meeting in Vilnius (2-3/12/2013). However, in order for the evaluator to carry out a full assessment of the programme budget it will be necessary to have a detailed breakdown of the total amount allocated to each priority axis and programme objective.</p>
	f) The soundness of the proposed management system	<p>Partial assessment possible</p> <p>The revision of the management system is one of the ESPON post-2013 OP issues that has come under most discussion. However, there is no full agreement on the revised ESPON management system. For the evaluation exercise to be carried out, it is necessary for the information on the management system to be updated in accordance with the provisions of the newly approved Cohesion Policy regulations (December 2013).</p>
	g) The relevance and clarity of proposed programme indicators, quantified baseline and target values	<p>Partial assessment possible</p> <p>The MA/CU drew up a memorandum (November 2013) addressed to the JWG which provides some preliminary indications on programme outputs and results indicators to be considered for the ESPON post-2013 performance framework. However, a full and final list of indicators has yet to be drawn up, and until then the ex-ante evaluation exercise cannot be carried out.</p>

1.2 Horizontal principles

According to article 8(7) of Regulation 1299/2013, each cooperation programme shall, where appropriate and subject to the relevant Members States' duly justified assessment of their relevance to the content and objectives of the programme, include a description of:

- a) **environmental protection**, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and risk management¹;
- b) **equal opportunities** and the prevention of discriminations based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation²;
- c) **equality between men and women** and “the arrangements to ensure the integration of gender perspective at programme and operation level”³.

Certain cooperation programmes are exempted from the application of the first two points of the Regulation ((letters *a*) and *b*)) of article 8(7). Among these programmes, the Regulation refers to the interregional, which promote the “analysis of development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion, including territorial aspects of economic and social cohesion, and harmonious development of Union territory through studies, data collection and other measures”⁴. This is the case of ESPON.

The article foresees, however, a different application for point c). In this case, the text of the Regulation allows MS - following an assessment of its relevance to the content of the programme – to decide whether to include or not a section regarding the promotion of equality between men and women.

The evaluator suggests, therefore, the JWG to start a discussion on the relevance and appropriateness of adding new elements concerning the contribution of ESPON to the issue of equality between men and women.

In case the decision is positive, the evaluator will provide specific advice in order to support the programme authorities in pursuing this objective.

¹ See point *a* of article 8.7 of Reg. 1299/2013;

² See point *b* of article 8.7 of Reg. 1299/2013;

³ See point *c* of article 8.7 of Reg. 1299/2013;

⁴ See point *d* of article 2.3 of Reg. 1299/2013;

1.3 Steps completed toward finalization of the ESPON post-2013 Programme

During the JWG meeting held on 2-3 December 2013 the following steps and timing of programme development and definition were discussed. The final version of the OP will be ready by March 2014, as well as the final pre-agreement, the draft agreement on the OP, the final EGTC statute and convention, the final draft operation specification and the first draft grant agreement. Submission of the OP to the EC is expected for April 2014: the Agreement on the OP is to be signed by May 2014 and the EGTC Statute and Convention by June 2014, thus concluding the ESPON post-2013 programming phase. This means planning submission of the ESPON post 2013 Programme six months before the deadline established by the CPR for the ETC Programmes (REG(EU)1303/2013 (27)).

The European Commission has extended the deadline for submission of ETC programmes to September 2014. The schedule set out in the following table has been drawn up to complete the ESPON post 2013 Programme by April 2014, about six months in advance of the European deadline. This is a particularly happy choice as it will give ESPON the opportunity to make up for lost time in the preparation of further stages preliminary to entering upon the implementation stage itself, including: effective constitution of the EGTC structure and definition of the Multiannual Work Programme by the Single Beneficiary

Table 1 Indicative timetable for finalization of the Programme

month	2013					2014						
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
EU budget (MFF)												
• EP vote		•										
• MFF			•									
• ESPON budget				•								
EC Regulations												
• Decision				•								
• Implementing act							•					
Joint Working Group meetings												
• Meetings	•			•			•			•	•	
• Written Procedure					•			•	•			
Reporting to MC, NTCCP, DG and Ministers												
	•			•			•					
Consultation								•	•			
Ex ante evaluation												
• First draft on strategic analysis of reference documents	•											
• Draft evaluation report							•*					
• Draft Final Report									•			
• Final Evaluation Report											•	

	2013												2014				
month	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5					
Operational programme for ESPON post 2013																	
• Narrative and issue papers	•																
• Draft OP				•													
• Draft Final OP							•										
• Final OP											•						
• Submission to EC												•					
Pre-agreement and Agreement on OP																	
• First sketch on agreement	•																
• Draft pre-agreement				•													
• Final pre-agreement and draft agreement							•										
• Signed pre-agreement and Final Agreement											•						
• Signed Agreement												•					
EGTC statute and convention																	
• First draft	•																
• Final draft				•													
• Final							•										
• Signed																	•
Operation Specification																	
• First draft				•													
• Final							•										
•												•					
Grant Agreement																	
• First draft							•										
• Final											•						

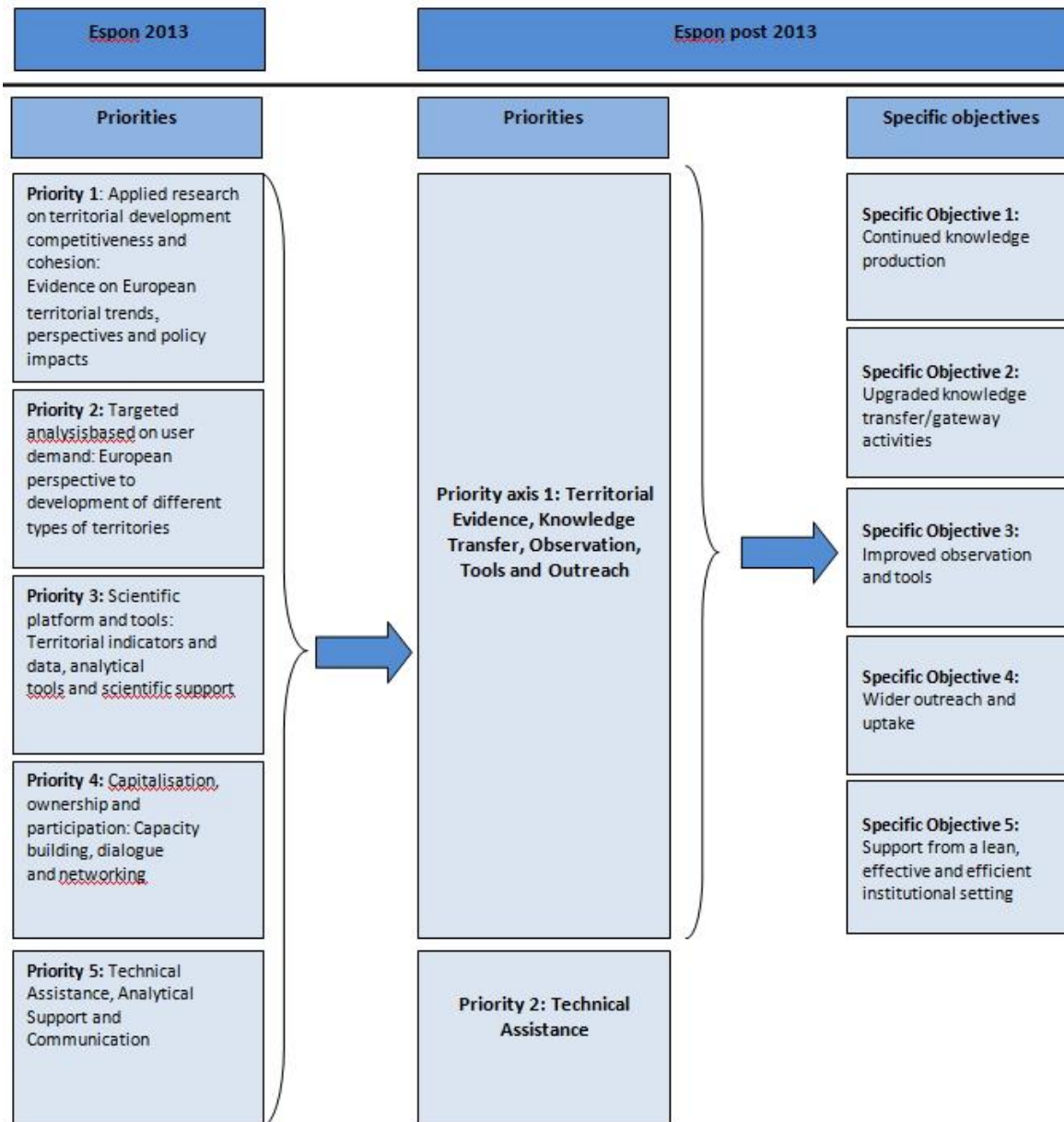
*Deadline postponed on request of the Client.

2 Outline of the ESPON post 2013 programme

The ESPON post 2013 Programme has radically revised the Programme architecture (Figure 1) by reducing the number of the Axes of the Programme from 5 to 2. According to the OP – third version of November 2013 – the two Axes of the ESPON post 2013 Programme are:

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

Figure 1 The ESPON post-2013 strategy compared to the EspoN 2013 strategy



Axis 1 is the 'big basket' for all ESPON activities while Axis 2 is dedicated solely to technical assistance. Moreover, Axis 1 is characterised by four Specific Objectives on which the future programme will be based. The fifth major objective of the strategy is *leaner, effective and efficient implementation provisions and proficient programme assistance*. This objective refers to renewed organizational arrangements that were carried out mainly through the development of an EGTC as a Single Beneficiary of the Programme.

The main novelty of the ESPON post 2013 OP, which the whole programme centres around, lies in the creation of a new institutional framework for management of the OP, based on a single beneficiary which will carry through the content-related actions in a single operation. This change has been introduced in order to address the limitations of the current management system, and above all the heavy administrative burden imposed on team partners, the national authorities and indeed the Programme authorities⁵.

The figure in Annex 1 outlines the organization of the ESPON post 2013 Programme so far drawn up in the Operational Programme and the Operational Specifications (third version, November 2013).

The strategy of the ESPON post 2013 Programme is described in three batches of documents: the draft Operational Programme (OP) draft Operational Specifications (OS), and a series of Issue Papers presented by the MA/CU to the JWG members. Discussion of the issue papers is expected to generate input for the final drafting of the ESPON post 2013 OP and OS, which are to be drafted according to the ETC template.

These documents were drawn up on the basis of:

- A review of the needs for pan-European territorial knowledge emerging from the most important European policy processes, including the EU 2020 Strategy, the EU Cohesion Policy 2014, the Territorial Agenda 2020, and other territorially relevant sector policies
- A review of the priorities and demands deriving from EU Cohesion Policy 2014-20, with the main focus on the result-oriented intervention logic; the promotion of a place-based approach, and of the ETC goal in particular,
- Discussion of the role of the ESPON Programme in enhancing the territorial dimension of the EU strategy and its added value. This has been done with specific regard to the target groups for ESPON's activity, including the policy-makers, authorities and administrative levels to which ESPON's activity could be of support,

⁵ ADE, Evaluation of the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme, Final Report, March 2013.

- The findings of previous Programme evaluations,
- The results of a stakeholders' survey implemented under the Polish presidency in terms of the expectations and goals for an ESPON Programme,
- An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses emerging from the evaluations of the ESPON Programmes 2006 and 2013,
- The debate and opinions issued during the meetings with DGs and JWG members.

The results of the analyses undertaken provided a wealth of material on the needs, problems and opportunities for ESPON post 2013. Through lively discussions, they contributed to the definition of the future ESPON mission.

Since the lack of territorial evidence continues to be identified as a focal problem and a barrier to enhancing the territorial dimension of EU cohesion policy and related sector policies, the main goal and purpose of the ESPON Programme has not substantially changed. In other words, *the ESPON mission has been confirmed*, as is clearly shown by the 'conclusions and principles' on the future of ESPON issued by the MS Ministries in May 2011.

However, the Programme 2014-20 needs improvements and fine-tuning of the strategy in order to:

- respond to needs and contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to economic, social and territorial cohesion,
- meet the needs expressed for renewal, reorientation and innovation, and contribute with territorial evidence to the enhancement of institutional capacity and efficient public administration.
- address the weaknesses highlighted with the previous evaluations.

The ESPON post 2013 mission is as follows: ***“ESPON shall continue the consolidation of a European Territorial Observatory Network and continue improving the provision and policy use of pan European comparable systematic and reliable territorial evidence”*** (OP version 3, 19 November 2013).

A great deal of attention was dedicated to the unpacking of the ESPON post 2013 strategy, including the possible added value of the programme. The following section is dedicated to added value.

3 Assessment of the external coherence and added value of the programme

3.1 Assessment of the external coherence

This part of the analysis was conducted in depth in the Final Report on Strategic Reference Documents. The report assessed the degree of coherence existing between the ESPON post 2013 programme logic and objectives, and the aims and objectives identified in the Strategic Reference Documents. With regard to the external context, ESPON post 2013 was found to generate strong and widespread support effects. Several projects sponsored during ESPON 2013 began to address directly and study the territorial dynamics related to the key themes identified in the Europe 2020 strategy and the TA 2020. The new programme was therefore found to be in a favourable position to build on a substantial body of knowledge. However, the extent to which the Observatory will support specific flagship initiatives contained in the EU 2020 Strategy, or the Territorial Priorities identified in TA2020, cannot as yet be assessed. The capacity of the Observatory to generate evidence in relation to, for example, Territorial Priority 1 (promoting polycentric and balanced territorial development) will in fact be largely dependent upon the themes selected for research, and the mix of actions and packages of projects that will be agreed upon as part of the Annual and Multi-Annual work programmes.

The evaluators found the ESPON post 2013 programme coherent with the provisions contained in the draft CPR, the ERDF and ETC draft fund-specific Regulations, as well as the draft Regulations regarding the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. The overarching message emerging from the ESIF Regulations is that the Funds' main task lies in contributing to delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This said, the headline objective for cohesion policy has not changed and continues to be the levelling of regional disparities. The implicit assumption is that policies aiming at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth will in turn result in fuller convergence.

The ESPON post 2013 programme mission and objectives were found to be well aligned with the tasks proposed for ETC programmes. The ESPON post 2013 programme will in fact be implemented under the interregional cooperation strand. Art. 2(3d) of Regulation 1299/2013 indicates that the ERDF should be used to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting *inter alia*: “the analysis of development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion and harmonious development of the European territory through studies, data collection and other measures”. As the Observatory is not expected to provide direct support to achievement of the EU 2020 goals, but rather will focus on the generation of territorial knowledge and related tools for analysis, the analysis classified the programme support effects as being mainly ‘indirect’.

The OP anchored the ESPON post 2013 activities within the context of Investment Priority 11, which focuses on ‘enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration by strengthening of institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services’. At the same time, in order to continue to support policy-makers and MAs, ESPON will produce relevant evidence and data in relation to all of the 11 Thematic Objectives identified in the CPR. The evaluators found this aspect of the programme to be coherent with the requirements contained in the ESIF Regulations.

ESPON post 2013 was encouraged to generate knowledge of more direct relevance to policy-makers. Hence the external coherence analysis also took into consideration the extent to which the programme is able to define targeted audiences, identify their needs and make sure that these are linked to tailored actions. In this context, the evaluators found that, in comparison with previous programmes, significant improvements had been made, particularly with regard to the new actions provided for under Specific Objectives 1 and 2. Using information from the OP and OS (v.3), Table 3 contained in Section 5 of the Final Report on Strategic Reference Documents provides an overview of how the programme Specific Objectives are articulated in actions, and how the actions relate to the targeted audiences identified. The expectation is that more work on this crucial aspect of the programme will be done as part of Multiannual and Annual Work Programme.

Finally, it should be noted that the appraisal of the external coherence of the programme was undertaken ahead of knowing how financial resources will be allocated to Specific Objectives, and from there on to specific bundles of actions. Hence, at this stage it was not possible to address issues regarding ‘weighting’ and the importance the programme attached to Specific Objectives and individual actions.

3.2 Assessment of the ESPON post 2013 Added value: the relevance of the strategy and respect of the partnership principle

The ESPON post 2013 added value can be seen in terms of the degree to which the ESPON post 2013 strategy is:

1. **Compliant with the requirements of the partnership principle**, as stated in the CPR, art. 5 and in the draft material of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP) (art. 5.3 CPR). For the ESPON Programme this means designing a strategy to involve the major stakeholders at the various different levels (local, regional, national) and of various types (private and public);
2. **Coherent with the main focal challenges to be faced**, i.e.:
 - the emerging issues, priorities and needs for upgrade, pressed for by a changing Europe;

- the weaknesses that emerged in the previous programmes, in order to achieve better results with appropriate solutions.

The degree to which ESPON contributes to the two aspects addressed above is the added value of the Programme and helps in verifying:

- The **relevance of the strategy**: whether the priorities of the Espon post 2013 strategy cover the most important issues to be addressed and whether the strategy definition process has taken into account the opinions and contributions of the more relevant stakeholders.

The added value analysis should, however, be read together with the assessment of the Programme's internal logic (see above, Section 4). This means reconstructing the "logic of change" underlying the Programme as drafted so far and assessing the degree to which the Programme provides for the right actions and policy tools to achieve the expected results. This helps verify:

- The **logic of the Programme**: how priorities and expected results are linked together, which (possible) elements are lacking and how to fill the gaps;
- the **soundness of the Programme**: the degree to which the Programme provides for the right actions and policy elements to achieve the expected results.

3.3 Respect of the partnership principle

Art. 5 of the CPR (Reg. (EU) 1303/2013) states that partners (regional and local authorities; urban and other public authorities; economic and social partners; and bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality and non-discrimination, art. 5.1) shall be involved "throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including through participation in the monitoring committees for programmes" (art. 5.2).

The CPR moreover empowers the Commission (art. 5.3) to adopt a delegated act in accordance with art. 149 of the CPR to provide for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership, which shall set out the main principles, procedures and good practices in order to pursue the implementation of partnerships. The preliminary directions for the drafting of the Code of Conduct state:

"for the ERDF and Cohesion Fund, partnerships will include regional and local authorities, in particular cities carrying out integrated sustainable urban development schemes as part of the integrated territorial investments, along with economic and social partners,

representatives of NGOs having developed an expertise for cross-cutting issues, and for the relevant sectors where the funds are active and representatives of universities and research institutions, chambers of commerce and business organizations.”⁶

The assessment of the respect of partnership principle in the ESPON post 2013 strategy yields results suggesting improvement in this respect.

The drafting process of the ESPON post 2013 OP mainly involved **the EU and national policy-makers in charge of development strategies and policies:**

- Preparation of the ESPON post 2013 Programme started towards the end of 2010. 31 countries participated in the ESPON post 2013 drafting process, including the 27 MSs⁷, the State of Croatia as acceding country, and four partner countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland). During the process, various other countries (such as Serbia and Turkey) and institutions (such as the Committee of the Regions) asked to participate, either as partners or observers.
- Three meetings held respectively on November 2011, October 2012, November 2013 involved the group of Directors General responsible for Territorial development and planning in the EU Member States. The DGs were supported by the Group of National Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP), acting as a preparatory group for the meetings.

This preference can be seen as evidencing the priority ESPON attributes to the Members States' information needs.

However, both evaluations of previous ESPON programmes and ESPON post 2013 official documents underline the need for ESPON to extend its target groups to different types of actors at all levels (not only policy-makers and academics, but also practitioners, social and private actors; actors not only at the EU and national level, but above all at the regional and local level) and to attend to their requirements in terms of territorial knowledge needed.

In order to fill this gap, the latest OP version (November 2013) included both clarification of the target groups to be addressed by the Programme, and a specific section dedicated to the strategy for the involvement of partners describing the participatory process put in place before and during the OP elaboration.

⁶ European Commission, Commission staff working document. The partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership (SWD(2012) 106 final), page 9,

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/strategic_framework/swd_2012_106_en.pdf

⁷ Spain did not in fact take part in the ESPON programming process.

In particular, two open consultations are planned at the beginning of 2014; additionally, specific campaigns targeting the categories of partners identified will be organised. This is a step forward towards broader participation in the design of the Programme.

According to the CPR, it is however necessary to involve partners and stakeholders throughout the programme's entire life cycle, not only in the drafting phase. The evaluation criteria of the Single Operation (pp-25-26 OP third version) could be enriched with reference to alignment with the CPR art. 5 and the principles of the partnership Code of Conduct.

On the other hand, different forms of involvement of partners (mainly institutional and at the European level) are provided for in the strategy; see, for example, the Framework for actions upon request; and the involvement of regional and local authorities through the ESPON Contact point network. These provisions could be briefly mentioned in the Section of the OP dealing with partnerships.

Table 2 ESPON potential stakeholders and stakeholders involved in the EspoN post 2013 OP drafting

Type of stakeholders		Stakeholders involved in the drafting of the ESPON post 2013 OP
Key target group	European-level policy makers in the field of Cohesion Policy as well as other policy fields; national policy makers responsible for territorial cohesion, ETC programmes, macro regional strategies, cohesion policy preparation and implementation; authorities implementing ESIF programmes and preparing periodical reporting;	Partially involved (in particular, national stakeholders and European Institutions) in definition of the Programme
Secondary target group	Organizations promoting different regional/urban interests at EU level, practitioners, policy officers and planners at regional and local level, university academics and the wider audience.	Not involved yet; two open consultations planned

3.4 Relevance of the strategy

The ESPON strategy identifies a list of key elements as needs for renewal, reorientation and upgrade of the Programme (OP version 3, pp. 4-5). **These points are consistent with the set of messages emerging from previous evaluations** as already noted in Chapter 3 of the Final Report on Strategic Reference Documents and summarized in the table that follows. Table 3 below clearly shows that **all the main lessons deriving from the past are included in the new ESPON post 2013 strategy**.

Table 3 Strengths and lessons from the past, focal challenges of the ESPON post 2013 Programme

Strengths of the ESPON programme (so far) (evaluation reports, OP version 3, Nov. 2013, other CU/MA materials)	Lessons for ESPON post 2013, drawn from the past (evaluation reports)	Focal challenges identified for the ESPON post 2013 strategy (OP version 3, Nov. 2013)
<p>Main results achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESPON delivered a large variety of pan-European knowledge and filled a genuine gap in order to inform territorial policy, not usually covered in the academic literature - High quality research - Creation of tools for policy making such as the ESPON database - Further strengthened, stabilized and open network around ESPON including researchers and experts as well as stakeholders from targeted analyses - Providing evidence input to other programmes as well as in the cooperation with pan-European ETC programmes, Eurostat and EIB - Progress made within ESPON 2013 with the commencement of an European Territorial Monitoring system 	<p>Need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - achieve a closer research focus with regard to Applied Research projects - More generally, devise programme actions that support policy-making and policy development more directly - Reduce the administrative burden of the programme for all parties involved, including external contractors, the MA and the CU - Modify the ESPON governance system, including changes to the way the CU, MA, MC and the ECPs are structured or operate <p><i>Moreover:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the technical capabilities of CU (see ESPON, 2011; 61, 62; EC Study, Exec. Sum.), - Increase the visibility of the Programme and its results, - Address the language barrier (English communication) for the regional and local levels - Address the lack of scientific recognition of the ESPON research - More quality in place of deliverables too dense, lengthy and not easy to take in for non-academic audiences 	<p>Focal issues to be addressed by the Programme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) substantially improving the transfer of evidence, knowledge and results to the policy arena, ensuring appropriateness, timeliness, clarity, relevance and quality of the evidence, b) Offering prompt policy-relevant analyses upon demand from a defined number of key stakeholders at the EU and national level. c) Stronger validation of the scientific quality of results and the comparability of data, d) Ensuring outreach of ESPON evidence to new users with a coordinated strategy including the ESPON Contact Point Network, e) Reinforcing the scientific and communicative capacity to match the delivery of improved knowledge transfer and outreach, f) Encouraging other ESI funded programmes and bodies to use territorial evidence, g) Building an institutional set up which significantly reduces the overall administrative burden of the programme for Member and Partner States' administrations and for beneficiaries, h) Applying administrative procedures including the use of service contracts that, thanks to a low level of administrative requirements, will promote further academic interest in ESPON territorial evidence.

In addition to the above-mentioned eight focal challenges identified by ESPON post 2013, mention must be made of the investment priority selected by the ESPON post 2013 Programme: **enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration.**

Referring to thematic concentration, Art. 6.2 of Reg. 1299/2013 states that “*All of the thematic objectives set out in the first paragraph of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303 /2013 may be selected for interregional cooperation referred to in point (3)(a) of Article 2 of this Regulation.*” Accordingly, the ESPON post 2013 Programme states that the “*content of all the 11 optional thematic objectives are in principle relevant in terms of territorial evidence in support of ESIF programmes, and hence for ESPON actions.*” (OP third version, p.8.)

According to Reg (EU) no. 1299/2013, art. 7, under the interregional cooperation the ERDF may support the investment priority of: “enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration” through “*strengthening the evidence base in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy and the achievement of the thematic objectives through the analysis of development trends pursuant to point (3)(d) of Article 2*” (art.7.1 (c) (iii)).

Due to its relevance, the contribution to institutional capacity is to be considered as one of the overarching (final) goals of the ESPON post 2013 strategy. This element will be included in the reconstruction of the ESPON logic of change in the next section.

Assessment of the relevance of the strategy is generally positive, insofar as all the main recommendations of the past have been included in the ESPON post 2013 strategy and translated into appropriate focal challenges to be faced. The soundness of the strategy (how the Programme plans to address the abovementioned challenges) is discussed later on, in section 4.3.

However, it should be noted that the assessment on the relevance of the post 2013 Programme has been carried out **before the levels of priority of the strategy and financial allocations are assigned** (see Section 4.4). When agreed upon, the financial allocation to the different streams of intervention should show equilibrium with respect to the main focal challenges of the strategy and to the different levels of priority assigned to them.

Moreover, it is worth noting that **complementarity with other instruments could be reinforced.** The strategy places emphasis on closer connection with the other ESIF Programmes (point f of the focal challenges), and reference is made to the need for coordination with other European institutions such as EUROSTAT, EEA, JRC, EIB. However, the Programme fails to specify how ESPON will relate to **a major Programme such as Horizon 2020.** On this point the CPR makes specific reference: “*In order to optimise the added value from investments funded wholly or in part through the budget of the Union in the field of research and*

innovation, synergies should be sought in particular between the operation of the ESI Funds and Horizon 2020 (CPR, point (30)).

As already noted in the Final Report on Strategic Documents, it remains to be seen whether the new Ops of the other pan-European ETC programmes (i.e. INTERACT, URBACT, and INTERREG IVC) eventually include detailed references to the complementary activities to be jointly undertaken, as in the previous programming period.

3.4.1 Overview of the main opinions of the ESPON national representatives

The present section aims at analyzing the salient points raised by the representatives of the MS/PS in the various phases of OP elaboration⁸ in order to understand the main issues around which discussion revolved and the different opinions raised. In particular, the points on the ESPON agenda which seem to lie at the heart of the discussion and on which differences of opinions raised particular concern are the role ESPON should play within the European context, definition of the relations between the MC and the EGTC and the programme's new internal set-up.

The national representatives express generally positive opinions on the results achieved by ESPON over the last 10 years in establishing a better and stronger basis for transnational analyses and comparisons of European territories and regions and a transnational European environment for research on territorial issues. However, certain elements have been singled out.

ESPON within the European context

First of all, with regard to the positioning of ESPON within the framework of other EU instruments and in order to contribute to more territorially-informed policies, it was underlined by several national representatives at the JWG meetings that, in terms of EU Cohesion Policy, ESPON should provide more extensive and useful knowledge and information to show a territory's specific positioning on the thematic priorities set by the policy and to see how a thematic priority interacts with a given territory.

Moreover, several national representatives underlined the importance of developing stronger links between the ESPON agenda and Europe 2020 and creating a process of regular production of knowledge on topics linked to the strategy.

It was also noted that the EC had, in the past, made very little use of ESPON results for its own studies and it would, therefore, be a great challenge for the new programme to reverse this negative trend through the development of new links with the EC and an increased and strengthened communication strategy. In line with this observation, it was also claimed that it is

⁸ The analysis is mainly based on the minutes of the 10-11/06/2013, 9-10/09/2013 and 2-3/12/2013 JWG meetings of the 22/10-5/11/2013 written procedure and on the JWG members' comments to the draft narrative (28/02/2013);

necessary to move forward and increase the use of ESPON knowledge by other ETC programmes as support in providing new and improved services and products.

Suggestions for better ESPON products

- ESPON products are generally considered useful tools for territorial development, but in the future they will be able to mediate more between science and policy for an increased and improved use of ESPON results.
- In order for ESPON knowledge to be more useful and accessible to policy makers, it also needs to be delivered more quickly and to be easier to understand. Frequently the need has arisen for considerable resources and expertise to translate ESPON evidence into more accessible documents.
- Policy-makers underline the importance of increasing the number of publications in major scientific journals.
- ESPON data and focus should be on specific territorial issues which address the specificities of Member states, therefore avoiding generalizations.
- ESPON should provide more territorial data and evidence on various scales and pay greater attention to communication issues such as translation of results and data into different languages according to the territorial needs.

3.4.2 Checking the SWOT analysis

The latest version of the OP (November 2013) includes a first draft of the SWOT analysis. The new SWOT takes up the advice provided by the Evaluator, and grounds the analysis on the needs and challenges for programme renewal and upgrade identified for ESPON by MS/PS and the EC. The SWOT summarizes the main issues identified in past evaluations and the ways the ESPON post 2013 OP will address them.

For further improvement of the SWOT, the Evaluator suggests maintaining the division into issues (which may to some extent be reorganized) and considering:

- the strengths of the new strategy: which are the main choices or policy tools to address the issue/focal challenges identified,
- the weaknesses of the past held to have been overcome thanks to the new strategy,
- the opportunities, i.e. how the new strategy will contribute to more effective and efficient programme delivery,
- the threats, i.e. the main critical factors of the strategy to be taken into account (to be prepared to tackle them).

If developed thus, the SWOT has the potential to be used as an overarching framework for the entire ESPON post 2013 strategy, its focal challenges and the critical factors to be taken into account. Some pointers for completion of the SWOT could be drawn from the information included in Table 5.

4 The internal coherence and consistency of the programme

4.1 The structure of the ESPON post 2013 Programme

The ESPON post 2013 strategy makes an important choice by drastically reducing the number of Axes of the Programme from 5 to 2.

Priority Axis 1, which represents the core of the Programme, consists of five Specific Objectives: **Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach**". Priority **axis 2 "Technical Assistance"** includes only one specific objective: "Leaner, effective and efficient implementation provisions and proficient assistance".

The Specific objectives address different streams of intervention in order to promote data collection, research, actions upon request and diffusion of information on territorial data. **This articulation is very similar to that followed in Espon 2013 and accordingly the streams of intervention appear consistent.**

Several actions are described for each Priority Axis; in total, the OP identifies 35 types of actions (17 falling under priority axis 1, 18 under priority axis 2). See Annex 1 for an outline of the Programme organization.

The actions falling under Priority Axis 1 will be implemented by the single beneficiary, the ESPON EGTC, with a Single Operation. Priority axis 2, which concerns the programme technical assistance, will be implemented by the Managing Authority, which will provide support for the renewed organizational setting, based on the EGTC.

The structure presented in the third version of the OP improves on the coherence and clarity of the Programme.

- First of all, and as suggested by the evaluator in the previous draft evaluation report, the levels of the strategy have been simplified, making the strategy itself simpler (the level of 'strands' has been deleted; the reference to 'operations' has been replaced with 'actions'; the number of Axis 2 objectives has reduced to one).
- The specific objective "Support from a lean, effective and efficient institutional setting" has been included under both priority axis 1 and 2, given its cross-cutting nature with reference to the other objectives which will be implemented by the single beneficiary and the relevance for the Technical Assistance.

- The description of the Specific Objectives has been improved and more fully detailed, including also the results expected to be achieved and the target groups to be involved,
- Types of actions and expected outputs have been drafted in the OS, point 19.

To improve the clarity and completeness of the programme yet further, the evaluator suggests:

- Eliminating some remaining inconsistencies in the terminology adopted (i.e. between activities and actions; output and results) and between the OP and the OS (some of these are evidenced in the Annex 2).
- To some extent reorganizing the description of Specific Objectives following an internal template describing:
 - Problems addressed,
 - Target groups,
 - (Types of) actions and supporting policy tools (for instance, where the PST are provided for),
 - (Types of) outputs,
 - Expected results.
- Grouping the types of actions envisaged in the Axis 2 Technical Assistance (such types could be: management and coordination, communication, evaluation).

4.2 Verifying the logic of change of the Programme

The two Axes and the various elements and policy tools⁹ provided in the strategy are designed to address the focal challenges (see Table 3 Strengths and lessons from the past, focal challenges of the ESPON post 2013 Programme).

We refer to these elements as a whole as the "ESPON post 2013 strategy".

In order to understand if ESPON post 2013 strategy is sound (i.e. assess the capacity to achieve the goals), we make use of the methodological approach of the Contribution Analysis (CA). This entails reconstructing the Programme's underlying logic of change, in order to verify how the strategy is likely to achieve the expected results. This basically means:

- pinpointing **the main focal challenges of the strategy and the expected results** and placing them in a sequence (see Figure 2 above), also identifying some intermediate elements that are not explicitly mentioned in the strategy;
- **verifying the linkages between the focal challenges, the ESPON policy tools (as included in the OP and the OS), and the expected changes** (see Table 5,

⁹ We refer to policy tools as all the elements of the programme aiming to achieve general or specific goals; a common definition of policy tools is "the instruments through which governments seek to influence citizen behaviour and achieve policy purposes" (Schneider, Ingram (1990): Behavioral assumptions of policy tools, Journal of Policy, vol. 52, n.2 (1990) pp-510-529.

p.30). This enables both identification of any ‘missing links’ in the strategy and discussion of the risks arising if links are found to be missing.

Figure 2 The logic chain of the ESPON post 2013 Programme

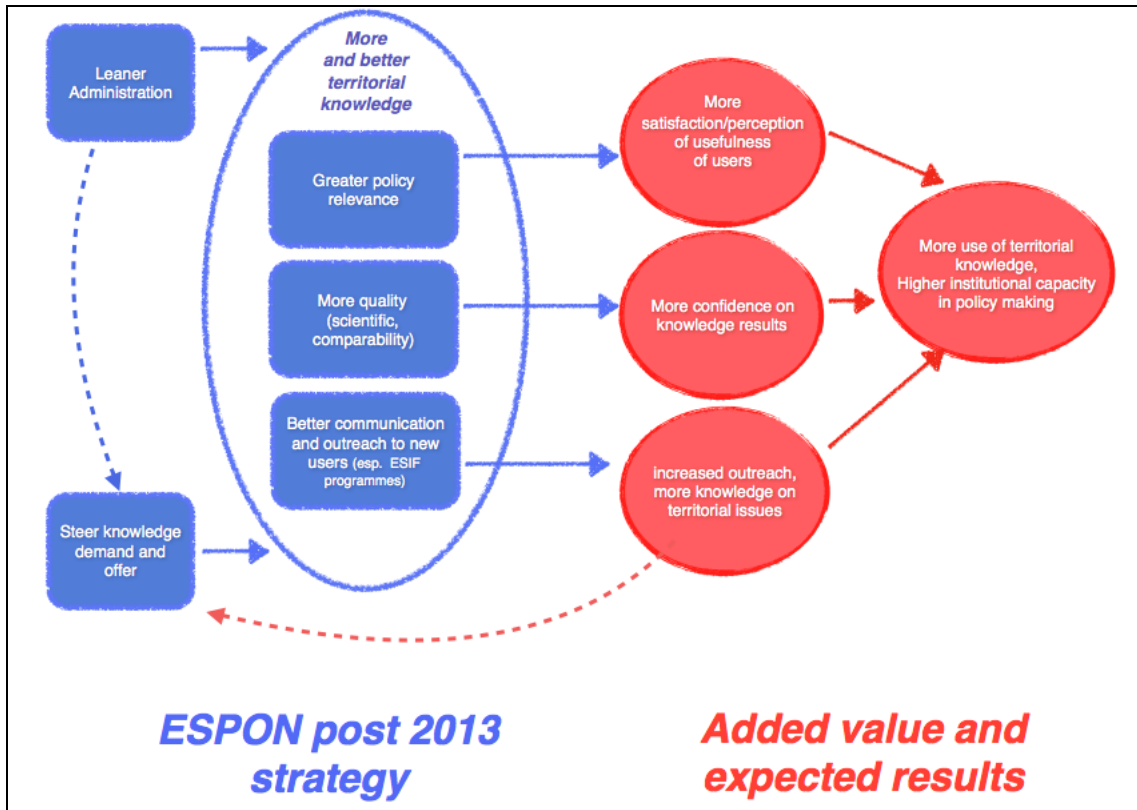


Figure 2 reorganizes the main ESPON focal challenges listed when discussing the relevance of the strategy (see Section 3.4), splitting them into two parts: elements of the strategy and expected results. The main elements of novelty in the post 2013 strategy are shown in blue on the left, while some of the main final and intermediate results are in red on the right¹⁰.

¹⁰ This figure partially revises the draft logic chain proposed by IRS in the internal document “Draft paper on ESPON post 2013 performance indicators”, which the MA/CU commented on in the note “Development of Indicators for ESPON”, version 26 November 2013. The Draft paper indicated among the expected results an increase in demand for ESPON products as an element fostering the ESPON output. Given the limited resources of the Programme, the MA/CU deemed problematic the loop between (increasing) demand and (more) output to deliver. However, the MA/CU agrees on the fact that the type and quantity of demand will influence the accuracy and selectiveness of identification of the themes for applied research actions and for the actions implemented “on demand”. The evaluator agrees with this observation. This leads to considering the activity of monitoring the demand for ESPON as a “supportive element” in the process of selecting and targeting the ESPON production, in order to achieve more and better territorial knowledge. This element is now included in the figure, in the blue rectangle in the lower left part of the figure.

The three red bubbles on the right side of the figure (more satisfaction, confidence and knowledge of territorial issues) are intermediate results not-explicitly mentioned in the OP; however, they may be considered necessary to promote among the stakeholders an effective use of territorial knowledge and institutional capacity in policy making (the overarching goals of the Programme). The underlying hypotheses are the following:

- Satisfaction of users regarding ESPON products promotes the use of the information acquired; satisfaction regards both the product content and the delivery process;
- Awareness of the available territorial information and products enhances the use made of knowledge by the target groups;
- Higher quality enhances satisfaction with and confidence in the products.

In effect, if the ESPON strategy is not able to realize outputs that satisfy the users, it is hard to believe that users will make use of territorial knowledge in their activities.

It is worth noting that these intermediate results depend not only on the quality of the ESPON strategy but also on the participation/willingness/interest of the Programme target groups; however, without the participation/willingness/interest of target groups the final goal will obviously be hard to achieve.

These aspects should, then, be considered as intermediate results of the ESPON post 2013 strategy and included among the Programme's indicators (as general types, to be adapted to the characteristics of the specific objectives) in order to control the degree to which the target groups are satisfied/confident/aware of ESPON products and territorial aspects.

The final result of the ESPON post 2013 Programme is described in Figure 1 in the red bubble "more use of territorial knowledge; increased institutional capacity in policy making". This sums up a vast range of results proposed in the OP for each Specific Objective, listed in the table below:

Table 4 Expected results for each specific objective (source: the OP, third version)

Specific Ob.1:	Specific Ob.2:	Specific Ob.3:	Specific Ob.4:	Specific Ob.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deeper and updated insight into a multitude of territorial dynamics, ▪ Better understanding of medium- and long-term territorial potentials and challenges ▪ Useful prelegislative assessments of EC policy proposals, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extended use of European territorial evidence in policy development ▪ Better integration of the territorial dimension in ESIF programme implementation and in the generation of programmes as from 2020 ▪ Stronger presence of European territorial evidence and facts in the European policy debate ▪ Improved uptake of results of research and analyses in relevant policy processes, in particular at European and intergovernmental levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuous information at the European level on territorial dynamics related to policy orientations decided. ▪ Improved territorial monitoring at the macro-regional level and of transnational territories based on the European Monitoring System and customised to the macro region or transnational territory in question. ▪ Stronger uptake of a territorial dimension at all levels with particular progress in macro regions and transnational territories. ▪ An improved toolbox for territorial analyses offering better support analyses initiated at the national, regional and local level as well as by other ESIF programmes. ▪ Increased and improved uptake of ESPON data, indicators and maps in policy processes and documents following explanations given. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An efficient outreach strategy that can support a high level of knowledge brokerage and uptake of ESPON results. ▪ Higher level of outreach to a large group of potential users of European territorial evidence. ▪ More presence of territorial evidence and arguments in policy debates at European, transnational and national levels. ▪ Better uptake based on comprehensible communication to clearly defined target groups. ▪ Strong support by the ESPON Contact Point Network in reaching policy makers, practitioners, stakeholders, researchers, experts and citizens, and building capacity at the transnational, national regional and local level. 	<p><i>No results included at the moment</i></p>

It is worth noting that **no result is described for the Specific Objective 5 Leaner Administration** (included both in Axis 1 and Axis 2 of the Programme). This very important stream of action should be considered as a transversal objective that operates in support to the overall ESPON post 2013 strategy. Because the overall strategy is based on a revision of the management system, carried out to make it leaner than in the past, achievement of the goals under the Specific Objective 5 is a “milestone” for the entire Programme. In this respect

inclusion of results (and related indicators) for this objective should be carefully considered in the OP-OS.

In particular, the results of the Specific objective 5 could refer to:

- The capacity to renew the management system (the set-up of an EGTC),
- The simplification for Espon providers, as an excessive burden was indicated among the main weaknesses of the past programming period.

This section has dealt with verification of the ESPON post 2013 “logic of change” and filling the gaps and missing links of the strategy. In the following section we verify whether the strategy is based on elements appropriate to its implementation.

4.3 Soundness of the strategy

This section is dedicated to scrutiny of the ESPON strategy and verification as to whether the linkages between focal challenges and expected results are based on appropriate policy tools (as defined above: see footnote 9) and ESPON strategy elements. This exercise is useful in order to verify whether some elements of the strategy are lacking or weak, and the possible threats to be faced as a consequence.

It is worth noting that, at present, some parts of the ESPON post 2013 strategy are defined in general terms. The new ESPON strategy implies that the MC, through the OP and the OS, establishes the minimum requirements for the application procedure to be followed by the Single beneficiary (the EGTC). The application procedure requires the EGTC to submit an Operation Proposal, which includes a Multiannual work programme and an annual work programme. The Operation Proposal will contain a strategy developed at a finer grain in order to achieve the goals defined in the OP and the OS.

Table 5 below is based on the main elements of the strategy already included in the OP and OS. **The table shows that all the focal challenges identified for ESPON post 2013 have been addressed, with no single issue left outstanding.** Particular attention is dedicated to the re-focus of the strategy on policy makers, and the establishment of an EGTC as a way to promote a leaner administration.

Even though, as previously said, the strategy takes into account all the main relevant issues that have emerged from the past, **not all of them are addressed with policy tools defined at the same level of detail.**

On the evidence of the table, discussion can take in some critical factors and possible threats to pay attention to:

- **the length of time necessary for the building up of the EGTC** – crucial to the very possibility of achieving the goal of a leaner administration; the risk is of delay in the ESPON procedures and consequent risk for financial implementation; another risk is further loss of interest shown by researchers and experts in offering services;
- **how quality is addressed.** The policy relevance and the scientific quality of the ESPON products are addressed, but how to ensure scientific quality is an issue only briefly considered (the strategy is left to the further detailing of the Operation Proposal). It is, however, a point to be carefully considered as confidence in ESPON results relies on it. Probably the OP-OS should provide further indications to the EGTC **as to which types of actions would require a stronger scientific quality than others.**
- **support of the PSTs.** The PSTs aim at ensuring greater policy relevance for ESPON research findings and more structured support from the MC to the knowledge production process. The resources required by the PSTs should be carefully considered, in order **to identify the quantum of actions that the PSTs can reasonably support.** Another possibility is to define the criteria qualifying the researches for PST support. The risk is that, as in the past, a considerable amount of the knowledge produced will receive only limited feedback from the MC;
- **The outreach strategy, with reference mainly to the regional and local target groups, relies on the role and activities of the ECP Network.** This will lead to a greater involvement of the MSs in dissemination in their own territories. This part of the strategy is left both to details of the Operation Proposal and to the self-organisation of the national ECPs by the MSs. The risk of limited functioning of the ECP Network is a ripple effect on the involvement of sub-national policy-makers.

More in general, the strategy could be further specified in order to check if all the target groups are addressed in appropriate and complete terms; otherwise, to reinforce the operational strategy with more closely targeted activities and appropriate mechanisms to achieve the expected results. The third version of the OP classified two main groups of stakeholders:

- 1) **A key target group**, composed by European-level policy-makers in the field of Cohesion Policy as well as other policy fields; national policy-makers responsible for territorial cohesion, ETC programmes, macro regional strategies, cohesion policy preparation and implementation; authorities implementing ESIF programmes and preparing periodical reporting;
- 2) **A secondary target group**, composed by: organizations promoting different regional/urban interests at the EU level, practitioners, policy officers and planners at the regional and local level, university academics, the wider audience.

It could prove useful to cross these two tiers of target groups with the main dimensions of expected changes. In effect, these changes could be better achieved if the specific characteristics of the main beneficiaries are correctly taken into account. Different incentives to *participate* in the ESPON Programme are needed for policy-makers, on the one hand, and academics or private providers on the other.

Complete identification of the addressed target groups is necessary in order to define appropriate output and result indicators.

Table 5 Checking the ESPON post 2013 strategy

Focal challenges of ESPON post 2013 strategy	Elements (policy tools) of the ESPON post 2013 strategy	Weaknesses addressed	Expected results/opportunities	Critical factors and/or threats for the success of the strategy
<i>Leaner Administration</i>				
<i>New management</i>	- Management through an EGTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing the administrative burden of the programme for all parties involved, including external contractors, the MA and the CU - Modifying the ESPON governance system, including changes to the way the CU, MA, MC and the ECPs are structured or operate - Increasing the technical capabilities of CU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides for a leaner management thanks to a single operation-single beneficiary strategy; the EGTC will limit financial control from 32 countries to 1 - The CU will enjoy more freedom in acting as a knowledge broker - More interest of researchers and experts in offering services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rapid building up of the EGTC is critical for timely achievement of results - Appropriate staffing of the EGTC is necessary to guarantee sound management of the system - Steering and control by the MC is to be ensured
<i>New procedures</i>	- Switch to use of public procurement and service contracts		- Better definition of expected products and easier steering of researches by the management	- Tender procedures could be burdensome for the management system; they require appropriate competences and short time for tendering
<i>Steering knowledge demand/offer</i>				
Steering demand territorial knowledge	- Framework for actions “upon request” on Sp. Ob.2 (targeted analysis and policy briefs); thematic focus of targeted analysis will be defined by stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devising programme actions that support more policy-making and policy development directly - Achieving a tighter research focus with regard to Applied Research projects 	- More usefulness and focus for policy-making; the framework for actions “upon request” includes consultation of EU institutional stakeholders, priority accorded to analysis contributing to policy coordination, territorial analysis not limited by administrative boundaries, studies related to the added value of EU 2020 and TA 2020 strategy; it is intended to enhance the transfer and use of territorial evidence produced by Espon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The promptness of selection of policy brief requests is to be carefully considered as well as swift product delivery - The demand for knowledge could be split into two main categories: content-related knowledge and methodology-related knowledge. The two types of products call for different competencies and delivery patterns
Steering production territorial knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project Support Teams - EGTC endowed with the necessary in-house capacity to provide the required scientific input in the framework of the project support teams - Additional external scientific expertise can in special cases be contracted to participate in the PST 	- Limited capacity to steer the quality of researches, deliver targeted policy-relevant communication and knowledge transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSTs is intended to increase the support of the MC for the researches and enhance the policy-relevance of results - The inclusion of experts in the PSTs is in the interest of policy uptake - This PST model (proposed as a simple rapporteur system) would avoid the problem that each MC member has to comment on all the various reports of all the studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strategy seems to envisage a “commission system” for the direct involvement of the MC in the process of knowledge production; the proposal to set up a PST will be advanced by the EGTC in the annual work plan; the features of its involvement will also be better explicated. - However, it is presumable that the PST require a significant amount of resources (e.g. time, competences, travel costs) from the MC members involved. This will mean careful selection of the PST intervention areas.

Focal challenges of ESPON post 2013 strategy	Elements (policy tools) of the ESPON post 2013 strategy	Weaknesses addressed	Expected results/opportunities	Critical factors and/or threats for the success of the strategy
Greater policy relevance				
- Increased focus on policy making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swifter outputs: publication of short and readily comprehensible reports on themes of policy interest (40-50 policy briefs for 5-10 pp each, 32 for MS participating in ESPON, 7-8 requests annually accepted) - Pre-legislative assessments of EC policy proposals with territorial impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devising programme actions that support policy-making and policy development more directly - Deliverables too dense, long and not easily digestible by non-academic audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swifter, policy-focused products should reinforce the uptake/use of ESPON products in policy making (also overcoming the problem of direct consultation of databases) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How swift a product should be delivered, depends on both the product and the person who needs the information. The different ways in which this could be done should be carefully considered in the strategy - Timeliness and regularity of production of major importance, delivering swifter analytical responses based on the well-established ESPON evidence-base, starting from demand expressed by policy makers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSTs will favour the continuous involvement of the MC and will ensure policy relevance of the themes and results of the research, by supporting the EGTC in supervising larger projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devising programme actions that support policy-making and policy development more directly - Achieving a closer research focus with regard to Applied Research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The appointment of MC members in the PST is intended to ensure higher quality of research and policy relevance and a more consistent approach as the same persons will be involved in all the steps in the project cycle - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presumably a significant amount of resources (time, competences, travel costs...) are necessary on the part of MC members, which could mean careful selection of the intervention areas
- New delivery to other ESIF programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy briefs and packs to be prepared for ESIF programmes - Reviews on European territorial evidence and assessment for policy makers; - A major report on the state of the European territory to be published 2-3 times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not a weakness but an extension of the strategy realized so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enlargement of the evidence support to ESIF programmes other than ETC programmes will increase the use of territorial information in policy making and institutional capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High number of ESIF programmes - Lack of capacity in programme secretariats to process territorial evidence is to be addressed - Right timing for feeding policy process with territorial evidence requires the necessary delivery capacity in the management of the Programme but also in the ESIFs secretariats to process the territorial evidence available
More quality (scientific, comparability of results)				
- Scientific quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum quality standards to be achieved included in the OS (p.15) - Strategy to be prepared by the Single beneficiary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of scientific recognition of the ESPON research 	Solid/reliable results for policy making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of specific provision: how to achieve better scientific quality? Is a citation policy for ESPON envisioned? Is diffusion in academia a goal for ESPON to pursue? - Scientific quality and swift production could be conflicting

Focal challenges of ESPON post 2013 strategy	Elements (policy tools) of the ESPON post 2013 strategy	Weaknesses addressed	Expected results/opportunities	Critical factors and/or threats for the success of the strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coverage, Comparability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance and improvement of the ESPON toolbox for supporting research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Coverage of all the countries participating in ESPON, o NUTS 3 level details o Technical support for users - Coordination with other European Institutions and data standards applied - Technical support for users, particularly policy officers and practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not a weakness but an extension of the strategy realised so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The possibility of making comparisons among territories is one of the main added values of ESPON; the completeness of databases and availability of details are overarching requirements for knowledge to be useful/satisfactory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating and completeness of the different indicators included in the database is essential to enhance confidence and usefulness for target groups
Better communication and outreach to new users				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outreach strategy for the entire programme period to be implemented with the ESPON Contact Point Network, as institution able to activate relevant national policy makers - calls for tender in order to provide complementary support to the ECP Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the visibility of the Programme and its results, - Addressing the language barrier (English communication) for the regional and local levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CPN could overcome the language barriers in the Member and partner states, in particular at the regional and local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A vast audience with different skills and needs to be fed with territorial evidence, - The role, involvement and the events of the ECPN will be defined as part of the Work programme of the single beneficiary; the “how to” of the ECPN strategy is yet to be defined in depth.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced use of the social media - Establishment of PSTs - Publication of short and readily comprehensible reports on themes of interest - More translations in different languages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach will support a high level of knowledge brokerage, more presence of territorial evidence in policy debates, better uptake based on readily comprehensible communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A vast audience with different skills and needs to be fed with territorial evidence

4.4 Consistency of the financial allocation

Following the political agreement between the European Parliament, the Council Presidency and the European Commission on the Multiannual financial framework 2014-20 of 27 June 2013, the European Commission indicated for ESPON post 2013 a provisional budget of 41,377 million Euro, in current prices, amounting to an increase of around 20% over the European Commission budget, compared to the contribution to the ESPON 2013 Programme.

Table 6 below shows the provisional breakdown of resources allocated to ESPON from 2014 to 2020.

Discussion is currently in progress on the formula used to calculate the co-financing elements to be provided by Member and Partner States. The MA/CU prepared three notes on this topic, which were discussed during the JWG meeting of 2-3 December 2013. During the same meeting the MA/CU pointed out the importance of addressing the way financial resources are to be divided between the two Axes and among the Specific Objectives.

As a final decision on this matter has yet to be taken, at the moment is not possible to assess the consistency of the budget allocation to the Axes and Specific Objectives of the Programme.

However, According to Art. 17 of Reg (EU) 1299/2013, regarding technical assistance “*The amount of the ERDF allocated to technical assistance shall be limited to 6% of the total amount allocated to a cooperation programme. For programmes with a total allocation not exceeding EUR 50,000,000 the amount of the ERDF allocated to technical assistance shall be limited to 7% of the total amount allocated, but shall not be less than EUR 1,500,000 and not higher than EUR 3,000,000.*” □ According to this article, Axis 2 of the ESPON post 2013 programme should absorb 2.8 millions euro while 38.48 millions euro should be assigned to Axis 1.

Table 6 Provisional budget of the ESPON post 2013 Programme, compared to that of ESPON 2013

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Mio EUR, current prices	2.052	2.997	4.279	7.776	7.931	8.090	8.252	41.377

Source: European Commission, DG Regio, letter of 10th October 2013, ARES (2013) n.3207262

5 The management system

This Section deals with the soundness of the management system. It is worth noting that the following considerations are based on the elements included in the draft versions of the OP and the OS and on issue papers; however, no agreement on these elements by the Joint Working Group has yet been reached.

The main novelty of the ESPON post 2013 OP, which the whole programme centres around, lies in the set up of a new institutional framework for its management, based on a single beneficiary – the EGTC - who will be entitled to a “Single Operation”. According to the indications included in the OP and the OS, the Single Operation will deliver all the actions provided for in the Axis 1.

The EGTC has been introduced in order to tackle the limitations of the current management system, which mainly concern the heavy administrative burden imposed on team partners, national authorities and also the programme authorities.¹¹ The current system requires the establishment of national first level control systems for certification of the costs incurred by project partners from their country their respective countries. In order to claim reimbursement of costs, project partners are compelled to compile cost statements to be processed into progress reports. Similarly, the Programme authorities are required to process the financial progress reports. This management system has been accused of damping interest on the part of project teams in applying for grants, because of the large share of human resources necessary for its own administration and because it does not allow for prompt and short-notice deliveries.¹²

A note of the Managing Authority reports some data which help understand the proportions of the issue at stake: *“the ESPON 2013 programme will in total process around 440 progress reports dealing with the finances of the projects. As the programme includes 350-400 partners, and considering that each project has in average 4-6 partners the total number of project partner’s reports drafted and subject to individual national FLC is at the level of 2000-2500. All 440 progress reports are as well processed by the CU/MA and CA. These procedures are coming on top of a public procurement style organisation of the call for proposals with thorough checks of the deliveries on the content side”*.¹³

The creation of an EGTC should overcome many of the issues previously analyzed. The new system is expected to produce three fundamental improvements:

¹¹ ADE, Evaluation of the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme;

¹² ESPON OP, Programme Strategy (version 21/11/2012), p. 13;

¹³ Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures in Luxembourg, Designated MA for the ESPON post 2013 Programme, Note for the Director General Meeting on 10 October 2012, Progress and agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013;

- Simplified and leaner cooperation among the managing and control authorities,
- Reduction of administrative burden for the ESPON knowledge providers,
- Reinforced ESPON Programme management capacity, by hiring new personnel with specific profiles (e.g. scientific and/or policy advisor profiles, as signalled in the OS, p. 16).

It is worth noting that the EGTC is expressly fostered by the new Regulations (See Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, (32): “*Member States should be encouraged to assign the functions of the managing authority to an EGTC or to make such a grouping responsible for managing the part of a cooperation programme that relates to the territory covered by that EGTC.*” □

As discussed in Section 4.3, **the creation of the EGTC is to be considered a fundamental milestone in the implementation process of the ESPON post 2013 Programme.** Some relevant risks are, however, to be carefully considered in this respect. The new management system will presumably require additional time to be ready to start the implementation phase (for the process of preparation and evaluation of the Multiannual and annual work programme, and for the hiring of the personnel). **This could have consequences for the financial absorption of the programme.**

The new system will radically change the pattern of cooperation between MA and Monitoring Committee. A new liability system was discussed during the JWG meetings, together with provisions aiming at the enhancement of the direct role of the Member and Partner States in the implementation process, with main regard to the ESPON Contact Point Network and to the Project Support Teams. Some concerns still remain on these issues. Section 5.4 presents an overview of the main opinions issued by the ESPON national representatives on the new management system.

In order to take into account the relevance of the innovation and the possible risks connected to the creation of the new management system, the evaluator suggests adding to the tasks of the EGTC with **a self-assessment exercise** (based, for example, on the Common Assessment Framework developed by the EIPA: http://www.eipa.eu/files/File/CAF/CAF_2013.pdf) to provide support to the new organization, and more specifically to identify and manage its fundamental processes, stakeholders, clients and key results.

It is worth noting that by 1 August 2018 the Commission “*shall forward to the □European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions a report on the application of this Regulation, □evaluating, based on indicators, its effectiveness, efficiency, □relevance, European added value and scope for simplification.*” (Art. 17, Reg. (EU) 1302/2013, amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation.) The self-

assessment exercise could provide information on the progress of the EGTC, to be taken into account in the Commission's Report.

The self-assessment exercise could be carried out periodically (ideally, during the first year of implementation, with annual updating) and should involve representatives of the MC and other stakeholders in order to collect and discuss with them the most relevant issues for enhancement of the 'enabling factors' and achievement of the 'key results'. The involvement of a PST could be considered in forming the self-assessment unit (the group assigned with coordination of the self-assessment exercise).

Moreover, the OP-OS documentation could provide further details with regard to the scientific capacity and expertise sought for the staff of the future ETGC

It could also prove useful to draw up the 'minimum steps' to be followed by PSTs to ensure they adopt a common and structured approach to the management of research projects.

The OP-OS has not as yet provided indications regarding the issues to be analysed in the evaluation plan (which will be realised under the Priority Axis 2 Technical Assistance). According to Art. 114.1, Reg.(EU) 1303/2013, "*An evaluation plan shall be drawn up by the managing authority or Member State for one or more operational programmes. The evaluation plan shall be submitted to the monitoring committee no later than one year after the adoption of the operational programme.*" However, it could be advisable that the evaluation plan appraises the main novelties of the ESPON post 2013 strategy including assessment of the functioning of the new management system (including EGTC, PST, ECPN), progress in simplification, and the effectiveness of the focus on policy making.

5.1 The management and control system

The following sections provide an overview of the main provisions on the ESPON programme management and control system, and in particular:

- the Monitoring Committee (MC),
- the Managing Authority (MA),
- the Certifying Authority (CA)
- the Audit Authority (AA),
- the new EGTC as single beneficiary
- other coordination mechanisms (Project Support Teams and ESPON Contact Points).

5.1.1 *Monitoring Committee*

The MC is the **deciding body** of the OP with the overall responsibility of steering the programme. According to article 49 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013¹⁴, it shall review implementation of the programme and progress towards achieving its objectives, examine all issues that affect the performance of the programme, give opinions on any amendment of the programme proposed by the MA and issue recommendations to the MA regarding the implementation of the programme and its evaluation.

With regard to the single operation, the MC shall perform the following functions:

- Detail the conditions for the application procedure, including the elaboration of the operation specification;
- Assess the operation proposal presented by the single beneficiary which will include the multi-annual work-plan and the multi-annual budget framework and the proposal for the annual work plan;
- Agree upon and approve the grant agreement template which will be signed by the MA and the EGTC and will detail the rights and duties of both parties;
- Approve the annual work plans annexed by the individual fiches on major actions together with the specific budget allocation for the implementation of the annual work-plans;
- Act as supervising body for the liability mechanism;
- If so decided, take part in the Consultative Committee of the EGTC;
- If needed, decide on the establishment of an Advisory board, composed of first level control experts of volunteering countries to support the First Level Controller of Luxembourg.

Moreover, the MC will:

- Provide feedback via the rapporteur on major actions related to knowledge production, gateways, observation, outreach via the rapporteur on behalf of the MC;
- Nominate representatives for MC to participate in Project Support Teams accompanying the project implementation of major projects and to act as a rapporteur to

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund as well as general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

the MC (see in detail below); and address the proposals made by Project Support Teams.

5.1.2 Managing Authority

The designated authority assuming the functions of the MA is the *Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures Department for Spatial Planning and Development, Directorate of International Affairs, Luxembourg*.

One novelty of the ESPON post 2013 OP lies in the provision for the MA to undertake the functions of the CA, in compliance with article 21(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, which claims that: “*Member States participating in a cooperation programme may designate the managing authority as also being responsible for carrying out the functions of the certifying authority.*”¹⁵ Consequently, the MA and the CA will be established in one body (the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures Department for Spatial Planning and Development) but the CA will be functionally separated from the MA.

Another novelty resides in the MA undertaking the functions of a **joint secretariat** in order to keep the administrative and financial burden low.

ESPON 2013 set up a Coordination Unit which acted as Joint Technical Secretariat for the programme in order to provide technical support to the Monitoring Committee and to the Concertation Committee as well as the MA and the AA in relation to the management of the ESPON 2013 Programme.

In the case of ESPON post 2013, the MA acting as Joint Secretariat shall assist the MC in carrying out its functions, provide information to the beneficiary about funding opportunities under cooperation programmes and assistance to beneficiary in the implementation of operations. The OP provides that “the necessary staff supporting the MA will be contracted and the work space will be at the location of the MA in order to have best conditions for a smooth functioning of the secretarial function with the MA.” (OP third version, p. 42).

5.1.3 First level controller

To carry out the above-mentioned verifications the **Ministry of Finance, Directorate for Financial Control of Luxembourg** has been designated. The main duty of the first level controller designated by Luxembourg is to validate the expenditure declared by the Single Beneficiary.

¹⁵ See article 21.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal

5.1.4 *Certifying Authority*

The functions of the CA are, as mentioned above, held by the *Directorate for Administration and Budget of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of Luxembourg*.

5.1.5 *Audit Authority*

The function of the Audit Authority is represented by the Ministry of Finance, General Inspection of Finance (IGF), Luxembourg.

5.2 *The EGTC as single beneficiary*

The main novelty of the ESPON post 2013 programme lies in the provision made to set up an EGTC contracted as a *single beneficiary* carrying through the content-related actions under priority 1 using public procurement and service contracts instead of grants, the aim being leaner, more effective and efficient administration.

The **ESPON 2013 OP** implementation logic was based on a *multi-beneficiary* setting, distinguishing between *direct beneficiaries* (all public and public equivalent bodies contracted for the implementation of the actions) *and indirect beneficiaries* (public authorities at administrative level that will receive the knowledge, results, data, tools, etc. from the programme.)

All operations were implemented by one direct beneficiary or a group of direct beneficiaries and contracted by the MA through subsidy contracts to cover the costs incurred in carrying out the actions, following the decision of the MC based on the results of the call for proposals and their evaluation.

Within this institutional setting, and in accordance with the provisions of Article 16 of Regulation (EC) 1080 /2006 of the European Parliament and the Council, each Member State is required to set up a control system in order to validate the expenditures incurred in its territory and to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared for operations or part of operations implemented in its territory, and the compliance of such expenditure and of related operations, or part of those operations, with the Community and its national rules¹⁶.

According to the ESPON 2013 OP ex-post evaluation report¹⁷, these administrative procedures were found to be *burdensome*; they implied the use of substantial administrative resources and decreased interest in tendering for contracts. Moreover, as underlined by a Note from a Director

¹⁶ ESPON 2013, *ibidem*.

¹⁷ ADE, Evaluation of the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme. Final report, March 2013.

General meeting held on 10 October 2010¹⁸, the administrative burden of this management system also entailed consequences for project teams and the MA/CA/CU, which were also required to process all financial reports.

The evaluation report therefore recommended implementing a leaner administrative and financial system.

Another criticism put forward to the current ESPON management system concerns the fact that Structural Fund programme regulations are not designed for running a research oriented programme which needs to react swiftly on demand and respond efficiently with evidence to the policy challenges; the need for a reduction in the response time with regard to analytical support for policy is therefore stressed and a *leaner administrative structure* favoured.

Finally, on several occasions the Director General voiced the need to enhance the internal scientific and communication capacity of ESPON in order to process scientific results more effectively for policy-makers¹⁹.

Given these circumstances, the new ESPON post 2013 OP provides for a new institutional setting entrusting – as mentioned above – a single beneficiary with implementation of content-related actions.

The **ESPON post 2013** operational programme has, accordingly, made provision for some important changes in the management system. As mentioned, the main novelty lies in setting up an EGTC as single beneficiary in order to undertake the implementation and execution of the single operation under the operational programme.

The EGTC will be endowed with the necessary in-house capacity to carry out, among other things, policy briefs, working paper publications on themes, synthesis and shorter reports, and indeed supply of the required scientific input in the framework of the project support teams²⁰. It is to be noted, however, that the procedure for the EGTC to be endowed with the necessary competences and capacity to carry out the required scientific tasks clearly does not stem from the provisions of the Operation Specification.

The EGTC will, moreover, manage communication of the ESPON results and act as a central node for ESPON contact points. In order to acquire the required external expertise, the EGTC will make use of service contracts tendered by public procurement (there will therefore be a shift from a grant logic to a contracting logic).

¹⁸ Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures in Luxembourg, Designated MA for the ESPON post 2013 Programme, *Note for the Director General Meeting on 10 October 2012, Progress and agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013*.

¹⁹ Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructures in Luxembourg (2012), *ibid*; Ministerial meeting, 19 May 2011 in Gödöllő and Ministerial meeting, 25 November 2011 in Poznan.

²⁰ See Operation Specification, version 3 (12 November 2013), p. 16.

With regard to the EGTC set-up procedure, the operational programme will specify the conditions for the selection, evaluation and approval of the operation, identifying the single beneficiary, its main scope and objectives. In particular, the operation specifications will entail specific information about the strategy to fulfil all the objectives indicated in the Operational Programme, analysis of how the operation aims to fulfil all output and result indicators, a strategy to ensure sufficient scientific and policy oriented standards, a description of the proposed types of activities to be implemented by the EGTC, analysis of how all target groups identified in the Operational Programme will be addressed, an overall budget for the operation, a description of the overall project management and financial management of the project and a detailed annual work plan for the first year of implementation. Once the **operation proposal** is approved, a grant agreement, approved by the MC, will be signed by the MA and the EGTC; this will constitute the legal basis for the relations, rights, duties and obligations of the parties involved and will entail a multi-annual work plan and the first annual work plan, which will be renewed and detailed every year by the Single Beneficiary and which will include scoping notes of the main activities to be carried through in the course of the following year²¹.

The EGTC will be composed of a limited number of countries (Luxembourg and the three Belgian regions, as informally indicated so far) mainly tasked with internal affairs issues and questions of legality of the EGTC as a grant receiving body. Luxembourg, where the EGTC will be based and whose national legal provisions will apply to the EGTC together with its statutes and convention and to Regulation (EC) N° 1082/2006, will cover the set-up costs of the structure, while Belgium will not provide any financial contribution. The EGTC's main financial resources will be constituted by direct contributions from its members (EGTC Structure Budget) and by contracted external sources (EGTC Activity Budget) such as the grant agreement related to the ESPON post 2013 OP.

The EGTC will set up:

- an Assembly composed of the representatives of its members,
- a Director who will represent the ESPON EGTC and will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the EGTC
- a Consultative Committee (optional) in order to ensure transparency and provide advice on administrative and financial soundness of the EGTC²².

²¹ Operation Specifications and Programme Manual as guidance for the single beneficiary rafting the Operation Proposal, ESPON JWG meeting on 10-11 June 2013.

²² See Issue Paper related to the ESPON post 2013 OP: Draft Statute of the ESPON EGTC, 29/08/2013.

Finally, as far as the issue of financial control is concerned, this new implementing logic will concentrate first-level financial control in one single country, Luxembourg, verifications being ensured by the Ministry of Finance, Directorate for Financial Control of Luxembourg.

In order to share the potential financial burden deriving from ineligible costs related to execution of the ESPON single operation among all countries involved in the ESPON Programme, a **liability mechanism** has been foreseen which will be established in the form of a Fund – hold by Budgetary Directorate of the Managing Authority , equipped by all countries participating in ESPON and acting as a sort of insurance for ineligible EGTC expenditure. The mechanism will cover a maximum of 2% of ineligible expenditure; costs in excess of the liability limit of 2 % will be covered by Luxembourg, the ESPON MA country. Distribution of the liability and contributions to the Fund by country will be proportional to the national contribution to ESPON by country and will be paid annually. Unused funding at the end of the programming period will be paid back to all countries in relation to their contribution.

5.3 Further coordination mechanisms

5.3.1 Project Support Teams

PST will ensure higher quality of research and policy relevance by supporting the EGTC in supervising project groups (service providers) and boost the policy relevance, quality and applicability of results; in particular they support the larger actions financed under the **strand of applied research** and accompany the project from drafting the ToR via selection to verification of final deliveries providing non-binding feedback – PST will have *consultative functions* and will issue non-binding recommendations. Moreover, they will ensure regular contact between the researchers and the team to discuss problems and agree on solutions as the project unfolds.

The proposal to set up a PST will be advanced by the EGTC on all major activities as part of its annual work plan. Given that the themes and the scoping/specification in the course of the annual work plan are decided by the MC, members of the MC have a say as to whether or not a PST is established.

PST will be composed by:

- One member of the MC acting as rapporteur to the MC – The MC member in his/her rapporteur role will report to the MC on the project and collect the MC's feedback, consolidate it and then report back to the PST. MC representatives are chosen on a rotating basis.
- One or two experts from the EGTC with high scientific and/or policy advisor profile;
- A representative from the EC (upon request);

- Additional members of the MC (upon request);
- Additional external scientific expertise can in special cases be contracted to participate in the PST, if needed and requested by the PST.

All the PTS components will be involved in all the steps of the project life-cycle.

The issue paper on PST suggests that the EGTC should be instructed in the contract to apply a disclaimer covering the MC members' liability for research results, releasing MC members from direct liability.

The proposal to set up a PST would allow for increased continuity and guidance to the researchers and experts preparing the applied research actions given that the same people would follow the entire project preparation and implementation phases. Moreover, this system would mean that not all MC members had to comment on all reports and studies, which currently generates a heavy workload for many MC members.

The **availability of resources in terms of time and competences** is to be taken into account for the effectiveness of the PST. As already discussed (see Section 4.3), the risk is that, as in the past, a considerable amount of the knowledge produced will receive only limited feedback from the MC. Another element that the OP-OS could detail in more depth is related to the **support in terms of competences and profiles** provided by the EGTC to the PSTs in addressing the scientific aspects of the tasks assigned to the PSTs. Finally, it could prove useful to draw up **the 'minimum steps' to be followed by a PST** in order to define and share a common procedure among the MC members.

5.3.2 ESPON Contact Point Network (ECP)

The ESPON 2013 network had 30 contact persons covering all Member and Partner States apart from Portugal. Recruitment of ECP institutions was done at the national level by nomination followed by MC confirmation. The composition of the network was a mixture of highly skilled researchers and administrators depending on each country's provisions.

The main weaknesses underlined in the midterm evaluation indicated that the ECP network was an underused resource for ESPON; other weaknesses concerned the capacity of the ECPs to involve policy-makers other than scientists, and the need for a stronger ability to communicate and organise events with policy makers as participants.

For the post 2013, the role of the national ECP's will be to support the outreach activities and capitalisation of the results, in close connection with the outreach activities carried out by the ESPON EGTC.

The ESPON EGTC will launch calls for tender in order to contract external expertise able to support and implement outreach and capitalisation activities in the transnational and national

contexts. For each country these activities will be implemented in close cooperation and consultation with the appointed national ECPs institution in order to maximise complementarity, synergy and impact.

The **profile** of the ECP institution appointed is a national decision and may change from country to country. In some countries the ECP is expected to be closely linked to policy making, while in other countries the ECP could be more related to the scientific community.

There is consensus that the Member and Partner States should **nominate** or decide on their national ECP institution in accordance with national procedures and inform the MA and the EGTC of their choice.

As already pointed out (see Section 4.3), the ECP Network is one of the main policy tools provided by the ESPON post 2013 for the **outreach strategy, with particular reference to the regional and local target groups**. This part of the strategy is left both to the details of the Operation Proposal and to the self-organisation of the national ECP by the MS. Limited working of the ECP Network could have a ripple effect on the involvement of sub-national policy makers.

5.4 Overview of the main opinions of the ESPON national representatives

Relations between the MC and the EGTC

Several members of the JWG expressed some fears over the possibility of the EGTC becoming an autonomous agency, some countries being endowed with more decision-making power than others (namely those sitting in the EGTC Assembly). It was underlined that the monitoring committee should retain a central decision-making role at the strategic level on ESPON activities, that concrete tools to structure communication between the MC and the EGTC members should be established and that it is necessary to keep the relations between the MC and the EGTC members as simple as possible.

A further point raised by some country representatives concerned the issuing of policy briefs by the EGTC. Given the importance of such instruments, they claim, the decision on their production should be made by the MC within the annual plan and leave decision to the EGTC on only a few policy briefs. Some doubts have also been advanced over the effective scientific in-house capacity of the EGTC, as foreseen by the OP and the OS, to produce policy briefs.

Project support teams

Several national representatives at the JWG meetings raised the issue of the profile and functioning of the envisaged project support teams. According to some (in particular of the smaller countries), this new system, meant to guarantee the policy relevance of ESPON production, could imply an additional burden on ESPON countries in terms of both human

resources and administrative issues. Also in this case, some member states still seem to be uncertain about the role of the EGTC within this set-up – fearing that it might be endowed with strong influence over the functioning of PSTs. In order to avoid this situation, the need for the PST to be impartial is underlined. Some members also recalled the importance of ensuring that the PST rapporteurs pursue the interest of the programme as a whole and not their own national interest.

ESPON Contact Points

A point on which it has been difficult to reach a decision concerns the profile of the future ECPs. Some differences of opinion still exist as to whether they should be more related to science or to policy, and to what extent they should be equipped to perform more scientific tasks. Moreover, it seems to be common opinion that it would be useful for ECPs to focus on national and regional stakeholders, providing them with information on the programme results and activities.

6 The new performance framework. An overview of the requirements

6.1 The performance framework and the indicators

Like all the ESI funded Programmes, ESPON post 2013 is subject to the new performance framework provision. Identification of performance indicators for a programme dealing with the production of territorial knowledge is not easy, as has been noted in previous evaluations.

The CPR (Reg(EU) 1303/2013) introduces a series of conditions on the granting and use of structural funding that reveal a stronger orientation towards *performance*. In particular the CPR includes provisions on:

1. Thematic objectives and investment priorities,
2. Ex ante conditionalities,
3. Performance review,
4. Arrangements for monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

The performance framework is one of the main innovations of the programming period 2014-2020. However, some of the components of the systems still remain to be specified or definitively approved. The following sections provide short descriptions and some suggestions for the ESPON post 2013 performance framework. The information is drawn from various different, non-definitive documents. We considered to this end the following:

- **COM(2013) 246 final, of 22 April 2013**, Common provision regulations: Amended proposal for Regulation of the European Parliament and Council, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006,
- **Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

- European Commission– DG Regio, Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation – European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund – Concepts and Recommendations (draft guidance), November 2013.
- European Commission, “Guidance Fiche - Performance Framework Review and Reserve in 2014-2020 version 3, (draft guidance), 19 July 2013”,
- European Commission – DG Regio, Result Indicators 2014+: Report on Pilot Tests in 23 Regions/Ops across 15 MS of the EU,
- European Commission – DG Regio, Position Paper on ESPON 2020, 9 July 2013.

6.1.1 Thematic objectives and investment priorities

Each CSF Fund shall contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through support for 11 thematic objectives. Each thematic objective shall moreover be translated into investment priorities specific to each CSF Fund and set out in the Fund-specific rules. MS and Fund-specific rules shall concentrate support on actions yielding the greatest added value in terms of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. However, the ETC Regulation does not set a specific thematic objective under interregional cooperation for ESPON post 2013: art. 5 (3) indicates that “all thematic objectives may be selected for interregional cooperation programmes”. The ERDF Regulation, art. 5, moreover supports a number of investment priorities under the 11 ESIF thematic objectives.

In the light of these indications, the ESPON post 2013 Programme considered that the content of the all 11 optional thematic objectives are in principle relevant in terms of territorial evidence, in support of ESIF programmes, and hence for ESPON actions. “On this backdrop, the ESPON post 2013 Programme will aim at providing support in general to an enhancement of institutional capacity and efficient public administration by offering relevant territorial evidence and knowledge” (OP third version of November 2013, p.8).

Regarding investment priority selection, in accordance with the Reg(EU) 1299/2013, art. 7 for interregional cooperation ESPON selected “enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration”. It is worth noting that the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities strongly determines the definition of the overall logic of the programme, from the main problem/needs/opportunities to be addressed by the programme to the intervention strategy (resources, tools, outputs) to be implemented and the outcomes expected to be achieved.

The selection of the *institutional capacity and efficient public administration* appears to be coherent with the great importance accorded to the issue of a leaner ESPON Programme, as

emerged from the previous evaluations, and with the goal of supporting the European Institutions involved in the implementation of Cohesion Policy.

6.1.2 *Ex ante conditionalities*

Ex ante conditionalities are provisions that must be in place before the funds are disbursed (Article 19 CPR). The CPR identifies 11 thematic ex-ante conditionalities, which are specific for each thematic objective of Cohesion Policy and general conditionalities that reflect cross-cutting issues relevant to the achievement of the EU 2020 agenda²³.

Assessment of respect of ex-ante conditionalities is made within the context of the preparation and negotiation of the operational programmes and the Partnership Contract by Member States²⁴ and the Commission²⁵.

ESPN is exempted from ex ante conditionalities, as they are not applicable to ETC Programmes (art. 19.8 CPR final version).

6.1.3 *Performance reserve*

Article 18 of the CPR ((COM 2013)²⁴⁶ final) established that 5% of the resources allocated to each CSF Fund and Member State shall constitute a **performance reserve**. However, the CPR specified that “due to their diversity and multi-country character, there should be no performance reserve for 'European Territorial Cooperation' programmes”, which are exempted together with the Youth Employment initiative and with Title V of the EMFF Regulation.

The CPR (Reg.(EU) no. 1303/2013 of 17 December 2013), art. 20, amended the rules for the performance reserve, which increased from 5% to 6% of the resources allocated to the ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal. **The ETC goal is expressly excluded by the performance reserve** (Art. 23.14 Reg.1303/2013).

6.1.4 *Performance review*

Article 21 of the CPR final version describes **the performance review** system envisaged for the 2014-20 period. The performance review shall be undertaken by the Commission in cooperation with MS in 2019.

Recommendations and budget corrections can follow a negative performance review. On the basis of the performance review, the Commission shall within two months of receipt of the

²³ They mainly relate to compliance with EU law and capacity building to support compliance Mendez C., Kah S., Bachtler J. (2012), *The promise and perils of the performance turn in EU cohesion policy*, IQ-Net Thematic Paper N. 31(2).

²⁴ Which assess whether the applicable ex ante conditionalities are fulfilled and set out the detailed actions relating to the fulfilment of ex ante conditionalities.

²⁵ Which assesses the information provided by MS on the fulfilment of ex ante conditionalities.

respective annual implementation reports in the year 2019 adopt a decision to determine for each ESI fund and MS the programmes and priorities which have achieved their milestones (art. 22.2 CPR.)

Where priorities have not achieved their milestones, the MS shall propose reallocation of the corresponding amount of the performance reserve to priorities set out in the above-mentioned Commission decision and other amendments which result from the reallocation of the performance reserve, no later than three months after the Commission decision (art. 22.3).

Moreover art. 22.6 states that: “Where there is evidence, resulting from the performance review for a priority, that there has been a serious failure in achieving that priority's milestones **relating only to the financial and output indicators and key implementation steps set out in the performance framework** and that that failure is due to clearly identified implementation weaknesses, which the Commission had previously communicated pursuant to Article 50(8) following close consultations with the Member State concerned, and that Member State has failed to take the necessary corrective action to address such weaknesses, the Commission may, not earlier than five months after such communication, suspend all or part of an interim payment of a priority of a programme in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Fund-specific rules.”

6.1.5 The performance framework

The performance review will be carried out on the basis of the **performance framework** set out in the Partnership Agreements and in the Operational Programmes. The method (Annex II to the CPR) for the preparation of the Programme performance framework provides for the specification, for each priority, of the related indicators and measurement units (where appropriate), of intermediate milestones and targets for 2023. The standard format for the performance framework is described in the Table below.

Table 7 Standard format for the performance framework (Reg.(EU) 1303/2013, Annex II)

Priority	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Target for 2023
		- Shall include financial, output and where appropriate, result indicators	

More specifically:

- Indicators are the measurable concepts used in order to monitor the progress in accomplishment of the priority,
- Milestones are the intermediate targets for achievement of the specific objective of a priority, to be accomplished up to 2023,
- Milestones shall be relevant, capturing essential information on the progress of a priority; transparent, with verifiable targets and the source data identified and publicly available; verifiable, without imposing a disproportionate administrative burden; consistent across operational programmes, where appropriate.

According to the CPR, the milestones for 2018 shall include financial indicators and output indicators and where appropriate result indicators. However, according to the new CPR, **only financial and output indicators and key implementation steps should be the basis for assessment of the performance review and the assignment of the performance reserve** (Art. 22.6 Reg.(EU) 1303/2013).

The DG Regio draft “Guidance fiche” on performance review²⁶, though provisional, suggests including two more columns (in grey in the table below) describing the source of data and the relevance of the indicator, where appropriate.

Table 8 Revised standard format for the performance framework (DG Regio draft Guidance fiche on performance review, July 2013)

Priority axis	Indicator and measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Target for 2023	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of the indicator
		-			

In grey, proposed added columns

Other relevant suggestions included in the draft fiche of the DG Regio (even though it is a provisional text, without prejudice to the on-going negotiations in the trilogues) concern indicators. Summing up, the main indications are (pp. 5-6):

- To include one financial indicator per priority,
- To relate output indicators²⁷ to operations representing the majority of the resources allocated to a priority (but the number of indicators shall be as low as possible),

²⁶ European Commission, “Guidance Fiche - Performance Framework Review and Reserve in 2014-2020 version 3, (draft guidance), 19 July 2013.

- When no measurable output is expected by the end of 2018, a key implementation step should be used to set a milestone; however the 2023 target should not be represented by a key implementation step,
- Performance frameworks should be based on output and financial indicators, while result indicators are not “recommended” to this end; however, result indicators have to be included in order to frame the general logic of the programme and what kind of change the intervention is supposed to achieve.

Regarding the Technical assistance, according to the final CPR, art. 20(b) “resources allocated to technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission are excluded for the purpose of calculating the performance reserve”.

6.1.6 Monitoring and reporting

Articles 50 and 51 of the CPR set out specific provisions for the monitoring of progress towards programme implementation which concern:

- ✓ submission of **annual implementation reports** (article 50),
- ✓ organization of **annual review meetings** for assessment of performance of programmes **from 2016 until 2023 included** (article 51).

In particular, implementation reports shall provide information on the implementation stage of the OPs and of their priority axes by specifying financial data, any issues affecting the performance of the programme (including the achievement of target values), the values for the result indicators of programmes and actions taken to fulfil the ex ante conditionalities.

Moreover, article 51 of CPR requires the organization of annual review meetings between the Commission, which will provide feedbacks and comments on programme’s implementation on the basis of the annual implementation reports and its previous comments, and the Member States. These meetings, chaired by the Commission, shall take place every year from 2016 to 2023.

The monitoring system appears to be the backbone of the new performance framework. The monitoring system of the ESPON 2013 Programme consisted of two components:

1. A **monitoring scoreboard** including a few key output and financial indicators,

²⁷ According to the EC-Dg Regio Guidance Fiche on performance review, all the ESI funds can use common indicators as output indicators; however common indicators do not apply to ESPON Programme. Concerning outputs indicators, it is worth noting that the European Commission in the Position Paper on ESPON 2020 suggests, since the main activities of the programme will not significantly change in the future, maintaining the same set of output indicators already included in the ESPON Programme 2013.

2. A more detailed **table for the Ongoing internal evaluation**, the “Background Table”, describing all the indicators included in the OP.

The Monitoring Scoreboard “is the tool that identifies the overall tendencies at programme development and provides a general understanding of the programme implementation”²⁸. The Scoreboard is quite simple and refers to a few key indicators:

- output indicators, globally referred to all the priorities of the Programme; 7 indicators were identified (see table below),
- financial indicators, referred to each Priority of the Programme.

The scoreboard is summarised in the next table:

Table 9 The Monitoring Scoreboard used in ESPON 2013 – key indicators

(Output) indicators

Indicators	Aggregated target from the OP	Level of implementation by (06/2013)	Execution rate	Simulation for 2013 (in percentage)
Number of actions realised in priority 1-4 (projects contracted via subsidy contract and MA-led projects)	110	82	74.55%	
Number of proposals submitted in priority 1-4	No target	197		
Number of submitted Expression of interest under P2	No target	87		
Number of publications, press releases and e-newsletters	22	97	440.91%	
Number of participants in all events	3,150	4,693	148.98%	
Monthly average of website hits in past 6 months period	No target	1,653,274	-	
Number of website hits	No target	32,814	-	

(financial) indicators

Payments made by CA reported to the European Commission (considering ERDF funds and Member States contribution)	€	Accumulated payments made by 06/2013 by CA	Execution rate
Total budget for priorities 1-5	45,378,012.00 €	...	%
Priority 1	19,24,512.00 €	...	%
Priority 2	6,536,250.00 €	...	%
Priority 3	6,148,000.00 €	...	%
Priority 4	58,514,100.00 €	...	%
Priority 5	7,938,150.00 €	...	%

The **Background Table for the Internal Evaluation** includes **output, result and impact** indicators for each Programme priority. **Result indicators** mainly refer to the involvement of

²⁸ ESPON 2013 Programme. Note in the Ongoing Internal Evaluation – Status no. 8, version 27 august 2013.

target groups (such as participation in conferences and information events, number of people visiting the website, etc), but also to the number of new themes and policies extended in greater scope and detail than in the previous programming period. Impacts mainly refer to the degree of usefulness of the territorial knowledge provided by ESPON, including the European documents making reference to ESPON maps and other information produced by ESPON. Some of the data required by the result and impact indicators were not collected during the implementing period.

It is worth noting that the monitoring scoreboard and the Background Table for the Internal evaluation **should be adapted to the new requirements of the Performance framework for 2014.20**. This mainly implies adding, once the indicators are agreed on, the **procedural milestones** and **targets for 2018 and 2023** together with the **baselines** and their periodic monitoring.

With regard to the result indicators, **the EGTC should be entrusted with the responsibility of progressively monitoring the achievement of results** as a “core activity” of the management system.

6.1.7 Indicators

As stated above, each operational programme shall set out a number of indicators and target values in order to assess the progress towards the programme goals. Article 27(4) of the CPR specifies that each priority shall include three types of indicators:

- **Financial indicators** which relate to expenditure allocated;
- **Output indicators** are the direct products of a programme and derive from the intervention logic of the programme, expressing its actions.;
- **Result indicators** reflect what change is expected from the designed intervention. They refer to the programme-specific objectives identified for all investment priorities and shall meet certain quality requirements. They shall be *responsive* to policy, which means closely linked to the policy interventions supported; *normative*, therefore having a clear and accepted normative interpretation; *reliable*, statistically validated; and *available* when needed, with room for debate and revision when needed and justified²⁹.

For each result indicator, the operational programmes shall also identify *baseline values* at the beginning of the programming period.

Result indicators are closely connected to the concept of *change*: as stated above, they identify the desired change brought about by an intervention on the basis of the needs of a given

²⁹ European Commission, The Programming Period 2014-2020, Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, Concepts and Recommendations, June 2013.

situation. However, variation in result indicators is due to the effects of an intervention as well as to other, external expected or unintended factors. The **impact** is defined as the direct contribution of an intervention, which disentangles the effects of an intervention from the “other factors” and measurement of it is an impact evaluation task. In this sense, impact shall be defined only after the conclusion of an intervention in an ex post perspective.

The CPR refer also to the **common indicators** which are designed to aggregate information in a Member State and across Member States and shall be chosen from a list provided by the European Commission. Their inclusion as programme indicators is not compulsory; in fact, the CPR specifies that they are to be identified “when appropriate”.

6.2 Preparing the ESPON post 2013 performance framework

In order to set up the performance framework for the ESPON post 2013 programme, summing up the above mentioned qualifications, it is worth noting that:

- ESPON is exempted from the ex ante conditionalities provision (art. 18 CPR)
- ESPON is exempted from the 6% performance reserve (art. 23.14 CPR),
- Like all the other ESIF Programmes, ESPON shall define its own performance framework, and will be subject to the performance review of the Commission (art. 21-22 and Annex II CPR); the deadlines will be in 2018; the final target is to be achieved by 2023,
- The performance review of the ESPON post 2013 Programme will focus on Priority Axis 1 “TETETO”, while the priority axis 2 “TA - technical assistance” is exempted from the performance review (art. 20 (b));
- Output and financial indicators are the main reference for the performance review;
- This does not exempt from establishment of result indicators; result indicators will be used *ex ante*, in order to justify the added value of the programme, and *ex post* as a reference in order to conduct the final evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme;
- Milestones (intermediate targets) will presumably refer only to priority axis 1 and may also be established for key implementation steps (Annex II.2 CPR); if no measurable outputs are expected by the intermediate deadlines, it is possible to use key implementation steps as main milestones.

7 The clarity and relevance of the proposed programme indicators

Regarding performance indicators, ESPON shall identify the expected changes to be achieved through the priority axis and objectives. The latest version of the OP (November 2013) correctly reframed the wording of the five objectives, giving indication of the transformation to be achieved and some further information on the ways in which the Programme is to achieve the objectives.

Moreover, results are described for the Specific Objectives 1-4 but not for the Specific Objective number 5 (see Table 4). Results for this Specific objective should be added as a Programme milestone.

The performance framework of the Programme is not yet completed (also for lack of some relevant information until the recent final version of the CPR approved in December 2013). A final version of both milestones and indicators should follow the finalization of the strategy, including allocation of the budget on the 2 Axes and the Specific Objectives.

Another point to note is that part of the strategy will be finalized in the Operation Proposal to be prepared by the Single Beneficiary. This shift determines some elements of uncertainty about specific issues (such as definition of the actions to be carried on), which can affect the elaboration of indicators.

However, a general overview of the ESPON post 2013 indicators has been discussed in the JWG meeting of 2/3 December 2013 in Vilnius. The issue paper “Development of Indicators for ESPON” (26 November 2013) entailed a preliminary overview of output and result indicators for each Specific Objective of the Programme.

The overview of the indicators provided in the issue paper is consistent with the requirements of the performance framework as it identifies both output and result indicators, the latter referring to “expected changes” in the behaviour of target groups. With regard to output indicators, double checking with the output list provided in the OS (p. 19) could prove useful.

A further improvement of the indicators could derive from:

- inclusion of indicators referring to the Specific Objective 5 Leaner Administration, and more in particular to: a) The set-up of the new management system (the EGTC) which could be referred to as a milestone for the entire programme; b) Indicators able to appraise the degree of simplification for the knowledge providers; in this latter respect, two possible measures could be:
 - o Average number of days between submission and approval of the (draft) final report, calculated on the total of reports submitted,

- Average payment time.
- specification of the sources of data to be used for collecting the information (where to find information and how to collect them, for example, through questionnaires or other specific detection tools),
- identification of targets and baselines³⁰ for each indicator. For main result indicators, the identification of baselines (where not already available) and the monitoring of progress could be one of the activities to be realized by the Single Beneficiary as part of its Multiannual work programme.

³⁰ According to Art. 17.2 and 3, Reg (EU) 1299/2013, “For common and programme-specific output indicators, baselines shall be set at zero. Cumulative quantified target values for those indicators shall be set for 2023. For programme-specific result indicators, which relate to investment priorities, baselines shall use the latest available data and targets shall be set for 2023. Targets may be expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms.”

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

External coherence

- Evaluators found the ESPON post 2013 programme consistent with the provisions contained in the CPR, the ERDF and ETC fund-specific Regulations, as well as the Regulation regarding the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.
- The ESPON post 2013 programme mission and objectives were found to be well-aligned with the tasks proposed for ETC programmes
- However, the extent to which the Observatory supports specific flagship initiatives contained in the EU 2020 Strategy, or the Territorial Priorities identified in TA2020, will in fact be largely dependent upon the themes selected for research.

Added value

- The assessment dealt with respect of the partnership principle and the relevance of the Programme. The assessment is positive but improvements are possible.

Partnership

- Two main categories of stakeholders are clearly defined in the Programme. Stakeholders (mainly institutional and European level actors in charge of Cohesion Policy strategies) have been involved in the drafting phase of the Programme. Two open consultations are planned at the beginning of 2014. However, according to the CPR it is necessary to involve partners and stakeholders throughout the whole programme lifecycle. Accordingly, the involvement of partners in the implementing phase could be strengthened. Compliance with the CPR art.5 and the Code of conduct on partnership could be added among the criteria to be followed by the EGTC.
- Different forms of involvement of partners are, however, provided for in the strategy (such as, in the definition of the Framework for actions upon request; for the involvement of regional and local authorities through the ESPON Contact point network); these elements could be referred to in the OP (p.9) dealing with partnerships.

Relevance

- The programme is relevant as the strategy identifies a list of key elements (in particular, the need for a knowledge production more focused on policy) as needs for renewal, reorientation and upgrade, which are fully consistent with the set of messages emerging from previous evaluations.
- All the main lessons deriving from the past are included in the post 2013 strategy.

- However, no weighting has as yet been determined among the various Specific Objectives;
- The complementarity of the strategy could be enhanced with more explicit reference to the other interregional cooperation programmes and to the Programme Horizon 2020.
- The SWOT analysis could be enriched with details (policy tools and innovations introduced to address the focal challenges, weaknesses assumed to have been overcome, opportunities in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, critical factors to be taken into account) in order to make it an overarching framework for the entire ESPON post 2013 strategy.

Internal coherence of the programme

- The third version of the OP improved the structure of the programme, which appears more coherent and clearer (levels of the strategy have been simplified, description of Specific Objectives improved, with identification of types of action, outputs, results).
- Further improvement could derive from: elimination of some remaining inconsistencies in the terminology adopted (i.e. between activities and actions; output and results) and between the OP and the OS; refinement of the description of Specific Objectives; a further grouping of the types of actions envisaged in the Axis 2 Technical Assistance (types could be: management and coordination, communication, evaluation).
- Reconstruction of the logic of change underlying the Programme suggests considering satisfaction with, awareness of and confidence in ESPON products as 'intermediate results' to be addressed in order to reach the final goal expected of the programme.
- Results should be added for Specific Objective 5 of the Programme, linking them to the capacity to renew the management system and simplify it for the ESPON providers. Renewal of the management system could be considered a Programme milestone (in the context of preparing the Performance Framework).

Soundness of the strategy

- All the focal challenges identified for ESPON post 2013 have been addressed, with no single issue left outstanding. Particular attention is dedicated to the re-focus of the strategy on policy making, and to the establishment of an EGTC as a way to promote a leaner administration.
- Even though the strategy takes into account all the main relevant issues emerging from the past, not all of them are addressed through policy tools defined at the same level of detail.

- Some critical factors and possible threats to consider are: the length of time necessary for the building of an EGTC and the connected risks for the financial absorption of the programme; how issues of quality (and in particular, scientific quality) will be addressed; the number/type of actions that PSTs can reasonably be expected to support; and possible imbalances in the involvement of regional and local target groups deriving from the fragmented nature of the national ECP Network.

Consistency of financial allocation

- A provisional budget of 41,377 million Euros has been indicated for the ESPON Programme; however, discussions are currently ongoing with regard to the formula used to calculate the co-financing elements to be provided by Member and Partner States. No final decision has been taken on how to divide the financial resources between the two Axes and among the Specific Objectives; for this reason it is not as yet possible to assess the consistency of the budget allocation.

The management system

- The main novelty of the ESPON post 2013 strategy lies in the setting up of a EGTC, which will act as a Single beneficiary for all activities developed under Priority Axis 1. This solution aims at overcoming many of the concerns raised in previous programmes in terms of excessive administrative burden for the partner institutions and for the project teams applying for grants.
- The setting up of the EGTC is in line with the Regulations on the ETC programmes and should be considered as a fundamental milestone for the implementation of the Programme.
- There are, however, some potential risks to be considered. The new management system will in fact presumably require additional time to be ready for the beginning of the implementation phase. (Time will be needed to prepare and evaluate the multiannual and annual work programme, and for hiring the new personnel). This could have consequences for the delivery of outputs and the financial absorption of the programme.
- The evaluator suggests that the EGTC should perform a self-assessment exercise with the goal of supporting the new organization, and more specifically identification and management of its fundamental process, stakeholders, clients and key results. The involvement of a PST could be considered in this process, in order to form the self-assessment unit (the group assigned for coordination of the self-assessment exercise).

- In order to strengthen the management system, the OP-OS could detail in greater depth the **support in terms of competences and profiles** provided by the EGTC to the PSTs in order to address the scientific aspects of the tasks assigned to the PSTs.
- It could prove useful to draw up the ‘minimum steps’ to be followed by a PST in order to define and share a common procedure among the MC members.

Clarity and relevance of the proposed programme indicators

- The programme performance framework is yet to be completed. A final version of both milestones and indicators should follow finalization of the strategy.
- A general overview of the ESPON post 2013 indicators has been drawn up in the issue paper “Development of Indicators for ESPON” (26 November 2013). The overview meets the needs of the performance framework as it identifies both output and result indicators, the latter referring to “expected changes” in the behaviour of target groups. with regard to output indicators, double checking with the output list provided in the OS (p. 19) could prove useful.
- Further improvement in the indicators could be made by including: indicators referring to the Specific Objective 5 Leaner Administration; specification of the sources of data to be used for collecting the information; and identification of targets and baselines for each indicator. For main result indicators, identification of baselines (where not already available) and monitoring of progress could be among the activities to be performed by the Single Beneficiary as a part of its Multiannual work programme.

Annex 1. Sketch of the internal structure of the programme

The following table provides an overview of the internal structure of the ESPON post 2013 programme on the basis of the indications of the latest version of the Operational Programme (version of 22/10/2013).

ESPON post 2013		
Priorities	Specific objectives*	Actions
Priority axis 1: Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach (TETOTO)	Specific Objective 1: Continued European territorial evidence production through applied research and analyses	Action 1.1 Territorial structures, situations and Action 1.2 Territorial scenarios and prospects Action 1.3 Territorial impact of policies
	Specific Objective 2: Upgraded knowledge transfer and analytical user support	Action 2.1 Targeted analysis defined for and by stakeholders Action 2.2 Territorial evidence briefs and packs to ESIF programmes Action 2.3 Territorial policy briefs/working papers, fast and timely, to European policy process
	Specific Objective 3: Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analysis	Action 3.1 European continuous territorial observation, monitoring on territorial structures, trends and dynamics by a European Territorial Action 3.2 Custom-made macro regional and transnational monitoring systems Action 3.3 Regular reporting and reviews for policy development based on indicators capturing present policy orientations given priority Action 3.4 Coherent toolbox development, including maintenance and development Action 3.5 "Technical" support to users
	Specific Objective 4: Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence	Action 4.1 Outreach strategy for the entire Action 4.2 Arrangement of events, conferences, seminars, workshops at EU, transnational and national level Action 4.3 Active participation at events at EU, transnational and national level Action 4.4 Publication of thematic and synthetic results from applied research and analysis Action 4.5 Publication of short easy-understandable reports on themes of particular pol. Action 4.6 Web based communication efforts
	Specific Objective 5: Leaner, effective and efficient implementation provisions and proficient programme assistance	

*terminology used in the OP updated on 19 November 2013

<p>Priority axis 2: Technical Assistance (TA)</p>	<p>Specific Objective 5: Leaner, effective and efficient implementation provisions and proficient programme assistance</p>	<p>Action 5.1 Elaboration of an Operation Specification that details for the Single Beneficiary the necessary content and administrative arrangements and sufficient guidance to the Single Beneficiary on how to propose, set up and implement the Single Operation</p>
		<p>Action 5.2 Set up and maintain a computerised system for the electronic exchange of data between the programme authorities, the single beneficiary and the EC</p>
		<p>Action 5.3 Other actions such as quality checks, ongoing coordination between the Single beneficiary and the MA/JTS (depending on requirements of the management and controls arrangements that are still unknown).</p>
		<p>Action 5.4 Inclusion in the Operation Specification of provisions ensuring a sufficient coordination between the Single Beneficiary and the Monitoring Committee and the Managing Authority</p>
		<p>Action 5.5 Organisation of coordination meetings between the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority and the Single beneficiary around 2 times per year</p>
		<p>Action 5.6 Supporting the participation of MC members or delegated expert in Project Support teams in order to ensure the policy relevance of the results</p>
		<p>Action 5.7 Set up of a grant agreement specifying the detailed legal arrangements between the Managing Authority and the Single beneficiary specifying the requirements, the financial plan and the time-limit for the implementation of the operation</p>
		<p>Action 5.8 Inclusion in the Operation Specification specific requirements in relation to the products and/or services to be delivered by the Single Operation</p>
		<p>Action 5.9 Publish on the MA Operational Programme website the relative information related to the grant awarded and the name of the Single Beneficiary</p>
		<p>Action 5.10 – Elaboration of a seven year communication strategy and a yearly communication action plan</p>
		<p>Action 5.11 – Target the widest possible media coverage, using various forms of communication</p>
		<p>Action 5.12 – Organisation of a programme launch event/ annual major information activity;</p>
		<p>Action 5.13 – Display of the EU flag at Managing Authority and Single Beneficiary premises;</p>
		<p>Action 5.14 –Support of an ECP network</p>
		<p>Action 5.15 –Elaborate an evaluation plan able to provide robust evaluations of the impact of interventions, supporting the explanation of the programme mechanism and understanding its delivery systems and allowing for their improvement.</p>
		<p>Action 5.16 – Define and set up the management and control arrangements also in the view of keeping the administrative burden at the minimum level for all involved actors still in full respect of the EU and national legal and regulatory frameworks.</p>
		<p>Action 5.17 – Set up a computerised system for the electronic exchange of data between the programme authorities, the single beneficiary and the EC</p>
		<p>Action 5.18 – Set up of the Operation Programme implementation framework in order to minimise the administrative burden by having a Single Beneficiary and a Single Operation..</p>

Annex 2. How the ex ante evaluators' recommendations have been taken into account and synthesis of new comments and recommendations

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	Preliminary comments on <u>documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	<u>Comments and recommendations on documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
External coherence and added value of the programme strategy			
✓ Involvement of partners	At the moment the key stakeholders who have been most involved are Member States (as represented in the MC and DG meetings), and the EC through its participation in the JWG.	No progress on this point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two main categories of stakeholders are clearly defined in the Programme. Stakeholders (mainly institutional and European level actors in charge of Cohesion Policy strategies) have been involved in the drafting phase of the Programme. Two open consultations are planned at the beginning of 2014. • The involvement of partners in the implementing phase could be strengthened. The compliance with the CPR art.5 and to the Code of conduct on partnership could be added among the criteria to be followed by the Single Beneficiary. • Different forms of involvement of partners are, however, provided for in the strategy (such as, in definition of the Framework for actions upon request; for the involvement of regional and local authorities through the ESPON Contact point network); these elements could be referred to in the OP (p.9) dealing with partnerships.
✓ Relevance of the strategy			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme is relevant as the strategy identifies a list of key elements (in particular, the new management system, need for a knowledge production more focused on policy) as needs for renewal, reorientation and upgrade, which are fully consistent with the set of messages emerging from previous evaluations. • All the main lessons deriving from the past are included in the post 2013 strategy. • However, complementarity of the strategy could be reinforced with more explicit reference to the other interregional cooperation programmes and the Programme

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	Preliminary comments on <u>documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	Comments and recommendations on <u>documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
			Horizon 2020.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Update and revise the SWOT analysis. 	<p>Revision of the SWOT analysis is still ongoing. However the CU/MA have agreed to focus analysis on the incremental achievements envisaged with an improved ESPON strategy.</p>	<p>SWOT was drafted; the approach appears correct although some of the observations could be articulated in greater depth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SWOT analysis could be enriched with details (policy tools and innovations introduced to address the focal challenges, weaknesses supposed to be addressed, opportunities in term of effectiveness and efficiency, critical factors to be taken into account) with the potential for the SWOT to be used as an overarching framework for the entire ESPON post 2013 strategy.
Internal logic of the programme			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Simplify the levels of the strategy and clarify the description of objectives ✓ Fine-tuning and further elaboration of the objectives 	<p>These recommendations were partially addressed. More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The tier made up of strands was deleted - The number of <i>objectives</i> and <i>specific objectives</i> under priority 1 was reduced - BUT under priority 2, 6 new specific objectives have been created, corresponding to 15 new actions; this could be simplified in the next update of the document; - The distinction between <i>objectives</i> (p. 6 OP) and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The thematic objective and the investment priority of the ESPON post 2013 have been selected. - The specific objectives of priority axis 2 have been reduced to one; - The distinction between <i>activities</i> (set of actions, as defined in the Updated Glossary on important terms in the ESPON 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improvement could be made with: elimination of some inconsistencies remaining in the terminology adopted (e.g. between activities and actions; output and results) and between the OP and the OS; refinement of the description of Specific Objectives; further grouping of the types of actions envisaged in the Axis 2 Technical Assistance (types could be: management and coordination, communication, evaluation). • Reconstruction of the logic of change underlying the Programme suggests considering satisfaction with, awareness of and confidence in ESPON products as ‘intermediate results’ to be addressed in order to reach the final goal expected from the programme. • Results should be added for Specific Objective 5 of the Programme, linking them to the capacity to renew the management system and simplify it for the ESPON providers. Renewal of the management system could be considered a Programme milestone (in the context of preparing the Performance Framework). <p><i>Details:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With regard to the number of specific objectives under priority

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	Preliminary comments on <u>documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	Comments and recommendations on <u>documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
	<p><i>specific objectives</i> (p.11-14) is not always consistent;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The evaluators suggest referring only to <i>specific objectives</i> (note that the ETC programme template does envisage identification of <i>specific objectives</i> only). <i>They also suggest</i> using the definition provided at the top of p. 6 of the OP as this gives a sense of the expected changes related to the Programme; - At the level of the <i>actions</i>, some inconsistencies between the Draft OP version and the Draft Operation Specification were noted. See for example the Specific Objective 1 (4 actions identified in the OP but only 3 actions identified in the draft Operation Specification) 	<p>context) and <i>actions</i> should be briefly referred to in the OP; however, use of the word <i>action</i> is preferable (it is the one used in the ETC template);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some inconsistencies in the use of outputs and results (p. 12, first lines), and probably in the use of actions and outputs (p.15) 	<p>axis, the OP and the OS are not always consistent (e.g. on p. 11 the OP refers to 4 specific objectives).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The distinction between activities (set of actions, as defined in the Updated Glossary on important terms in the ESPON context) and actions still needs to be briefly referred to in the OP. Reference to actions and types of actions alone could simplify the structure. - The number of actions envisaged corresponding to each specific objective could also be reported in the OS documents, as is the case in the OP documents. - Some inconsistencies remain in the use of outputs and results (OP, p. 13: “Results shall be of high quality in terms of research“ to be changed in “outputs shall be,....”), probably in the use of actions and outputs (OP p.20: “In total 15-20 actions are foreseen”... to be changed in “in total 15-20 outputs are foreseen”; p.21; p. 22; p. 23)) and of objectives and specific objectives. In the OP reference is made to both these terms but it would be preferable to keep one single terminology (we suggest sticking to the use of <i>specific objectives</i> as referred to in the ETC template). - Clarify whether PSTs will be made available (mismatch in the OP and OS; PSTs are not mentioned under Actions related to Specific Objective 3, p. 12-13 OS; not mentioned under Objective 1 in the OP). - Note that actions 2 and 17 of priority axis 2 – specific objective “Leaner, effective and efficient implementation provisions and proficient programme assistance” are the same. - The OS document refers to the same actions listed in the OP but it does not make reference to the number of actions envisaged for each specific objective. This information should be included for full correspondence between the documents.

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	<u>Preliminary comments on documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	<u>Comments and recommendations on documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
<p>✓ Soundness of the strategy</p>	<p>This part of the strategy could be improved, addressing more explicitly the different roles, policy agendas, and knowledge needs of the targeted policy audience.</p>	<p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the focal challenges identified for ESPON post 2013 have been addressed, with no single issue left outstanding. Particular attention is dedicated to the re-focus of the strategy on policy making, and to the establishment of an EGTC as a way to promote a leaner administration. • Even though the strategy takes into account all the main relevant issues emerging from the past, not all of them are addressed through policy tools defined at the same level of detail. • Some critical factors and possible threats to pay attention to are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the length of time necessary for the building up of the EGTC and the connected risks for the financial absorption of the programme; how quality (and in particular, scientific quality) will be addressed (for example providing further information on which types of actions should require higher scientific quality than minimum standards); - the number of actions (or criteria for identifying actions) that the PSTs can reasonably support in order to guarantee the follow up of main researches; - possible limited involvement of regional and local target groups due to weak workings of the national ECP Network.
<p>✓ Integration of the intervention logic with the intended effects (outcome) in order to tackle the knowledge gaps identified in the strategy (causes)</p>	<p>This recommendation was acted upon and this is reflected in the new version of the OP. For each specific objective, the document identifies a small set of corresponding expected results. However, the</p>	<p>Outputs and results have been included in the description of each specific objective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to further improve the description of Specific Objectives, the following template could be followed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rationale (problems to be solved/opportunities/needs) - Target groups - (Types of) Actions to be realized

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	Preliminary comments on <u>documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	Comments and recommendations on <u>documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
	results identified should be further refined in order to facilitate generation of appropriate (measurable) outcome indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Types of) Outputs to be delivered - Expected results
✓ Consistency of the financial allocation	No weighting has yet been applied to the various areas of intervention. It is expected that this aspect will be promptly addressed once the 6 year-budget envelope for the ESPON programme as whole is confirmed.	The budget for 2014-2020 counts €41,377 million, around 20% more than the previous programme. An exercise to prioritise and allocate the resources can now begin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decision has yet been taken with regard to the financial sums to be allocated to each Axis and related Specific Objectives.
✓ The management system	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to take into account the relevance of the innovation and the possible risks, the evaluator suggests adding to the tasks of the EGTC, performing a self-assessment exercise with the goal of supporting the new organization, and more specifically identification and management of its fundamental process, stakeholders, clients and key results. Involvement of a PST could be considered in order to form the self-assessment unit (the group assigned with coordination of the self-assessment exercise). • The OP-OS could detail in greater depth the support in terms of competences and profiles provided by the EGTC to the PSTs in order to address the scientific aspects of the tasks assigned to the PSTs. • It could prove useful to draw up the ‘minimum steps’ to be followed by a PST in order to define and share a common procedure among the MC members.

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluation draft report (based on the documents produced up to June 2013)	Comments on <u>documentation produced up to August 2013</u>	Preliminary comments on <u>documentation produced up to October 2013</u>	Comments and recommendations on <u>documentation produced up to November 2013</u>
<p>✓ Definition of appropriate output and result indicators</p>	<p>Indicators are still to be defined; the evaluators will suggest to the CU/MA an appropriate methodology to support the identification of indicators; the methodology will be prepared following interviews DG Regio – evaluation unit personnel.</p>	<p>Methodological paper prepared by the evaluator, discussed by the MA/CU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A preliminary list of indicators has been drawn up following the indications of the evaluator. A refined list and full performance framework are to be added. • Reconstruction of the logic of change underlying the Programme suggests considering satisfaction, awareness and confidence on ESPON products as ‘intermediate results’ to be addressed in order to reach the final goal expected of the programme. • Results should be added for Specific Objective 5 of the Programme, linking them to the capacity to renew the management system and simplify it for the ESPON providers. • Renewal of the management system could be considered a Programme milestone (in the context of preparing the Performance Framework).

ANNEX 3: ESPON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED SO FAR

N.	DATES	TITLE	THEME/SUBJECT
1.	29/09/2012	Progress agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
2.	8/11/2012	Draft final minutes of the JWG meeting on 19/9/2012	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
3.	15/11/2012	Chapter I. 1-4 – Introduction	OP Chapters
4.	16/11/2012	Input to the Joint Working Group on ESPON post 2013 from the ESPON European Contact Points (ECP)	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
5.	19/11/2012	Discussion paper for ESPON post 2013 OP including an EGTC	Issue paper
6.	19/11/2012	First ideas on ESPON Contact Point Network	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
7.	19/11/2012	Draft final agenda of the JWG meeting on 3/12/2012	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
8.	20/11/2012	Chapter IV - Implementing Provisions	OP Chapters
9.	21/11/2012	Chapter II – Programme Strategy	OP Chapters
10.	23/11/2012	Terms of Reference ESPON post 2013 Ex-ante Evaluation; Technical and Administrative Terms and Conditions	ESPON evaluation documents
11.	3/12/2012	Flow of decision and contractual relations between MC and the single beneficiary (slide)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
12.	21/12/2012 (1 st draft) 26/05/2013 (2 nd draft) 29/08/2013 (3 rd draft) 19/11/2013 (4 th draft)	Indicative Timing towards the Operational Programme and supporting documents	General information about the programme
13.	9/01/2013 (1 st draft) 19/03/2013 (2 nd draft)	Draft final minutes of the JWG meeting on 3/12/2012	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
14.	1/02/2013 (1 st draft) 21/02/2013 (2 nd draft) 29/03/2013 (3 rd draft) 26/05/2013 (4 th draft) 16/07/2013 (5 th draft) 6/09/2013 (6 th draft)	Narrative on the ESPON post 2013 programme	Narrative and Comments
15.	6/02/2013	Written Comments to the JWG documents of 3 December 2012	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
16.	7/02/2013 (1 st draft) 25/02/2013 (2 nd draft) 17/05/2013 (3 rd draft)	Draft Template and guidelines for the content of the cooperation Programme	General information about the programme
17.	14/02/2013 (1 st draft) 26/07/2013 (2 nd draft)	Glossary of important terms in the ESPON context	Issue paper

N.	DATES	TITLE	THEME/SUBJECT
18.	24/02/2013 (1st draft) 27/05/2013 (2nd draft) 22/10/2013 (3rd draft)	ESPON Contact Point Network	Issue paper
19.	27/02/2013 (1st draft) 26/05/2013 (2nd draft)	Project Support teams (PST)	Issue paper
20.	28/02/2013 (1st draft) 29/08/2013 (2nd draft)	The EGTC Liability Mechanism	Issue paper
21.	28/02/2013	Draft final agenda of the JWG meeting on 13 March 2013	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
22.	28/02/2013	Compilation of JWG member comments to the narrative	Narrative and comments
23.	1/03/2013 29/08/2013 22/10/2013 18/11/2013	Draft statute of the ESPON EGTC	Issue paper
24.	1/03/2013 (1st draft) 26/05/2013 (2nd draft)	Towards an EGTC ESPON single operation	Issue paper
25.	5/03/2013	Italy comments to the narrative	Narrative and Comments
26.	13/03/2013	Membership in an EGTC as single beneficiary the ESPON post 2013 Programme (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
27.	13/03/2013 (1st draft) 10/06/2013 (2nd draft)	Elements of an Agreement on the conditions for an EGTC, overview on the EGTC Statutes (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
28.	13/03/2013	Towards a single operation by an EGTC under the ESPON post 2013 Programme (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
29.	25/03/2013 (1st draft) 3/04/2013 (2nd draft)	Second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
30.	25/03/2013	BE comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
31.	25/03/2013	CZ comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
32.	25/03/2013	GR comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
33.	25/03/2013	MT comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
34.	25/03/2013	SK comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
35.	25/03/2013	UK comments on the second agreement in principle on ESPON post 2013	Documents produced by the MA and by the CU and related comments
36.	25/03/2013	Evaluation of the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme – Final Report	ESPON evaluation documents
37.	15/04/2013	Draft minutes of the JWG meeting on	JWG meeting agendas, minutes

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N.	DATES	TITLE	THEME/SUBJECT
		13/03/2013	and presentations
38.	22/05/2013	Intervention logic of ESPON post 2013	General information about the programme
39.	26/05/2013	Observer status and membership of the Monitoring Committee	General information about the programme
40.	26/05/2013	Agreement between the Member and Partner States and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg in its role as the Managing and Certifying Authority on the implementation of the "ESPON post 2013 Operational Programme"	Administrative documents
41.	26/05/2013 18/11/2013	Grant Agreement for the implementation of the single operation of the Operational Programme ESPON Post 2013	Administrative documents
42.	26/05/2013	Template for Scoping Notes for main Activities	Administrative documents
43.	27/05/2013	Operation Specifications and Programme Manuals guidance for the single beneficiary drafting the Operation Proposal	Administrative documents
44.	27/05/2013	Programme and Annual Work-Plan Templates for Multiannual Work	Administrative documents
45.	27/05/2013	Overview of the table on main documents and where important issues are treated	General information about the programme
46.	27/07/2013	Updated glossary on important terms in ESPON context	General information about the programme
47.	27/05/2013	Draft final agenda of the JWG meeting on 10-11/06/2013	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
48.	10-11/06/2013	Drafting the Operational Programme for ESPON post 2013 (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
49.	10-11/06/2013	Liability Mechanism and Elements of an Agreement on the conditions for an EGTC (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
50.	10-11/06/2013	Membership in an EGTC acting as Single Beneficiary the ESPON post 2013 Programme (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
51.	10-11/06/2013	Sharing of Liability for an EGTC between Luxembourg and Member/Partner States	JWG meetings' agendas, meetings and presentations
52.	5/07/2013	Draft Minutes of the 10-11/06/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
53.	9/07/2013	POSITION PAPER ON ESPON 2020	EC Position paper on ESPON
54.	29/08/2013	Membership of the EGTC	Issue Paper
55.	28/08/2013 22/10/2013 26/11/2013	Operation specification	OP Chapters
56.	29/08/2013 22/10/2013 19/11/2013	OP Draft Version	OP Chapters
57.	29/08/2013	Indicative Timing towards the Operational Programme	General information about the programme
58.	6/09/2013	Final Narrative for ESPON post 2013 in relation to main findings and recommendations of the EC Evaluation of ESPON 2013 Programme	Narrative and comments
59.	9/09/2013	Final Minutes of the 10-11/06/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
60.	9-10/09/2013	Draft Final Agenda of the 9-10/09/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
61.	9-10/09/2013	Pre-Agreement on the Management, Financial and Control Arrangements between MS (or MS and third countries) participating in an ETC	Administrative documents

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N.	DATES	TITLE	THEME/SUBJECT
		programmes 2014-2020 (Draft Template)	
62.	9-10/09/2013	Multi Annual Work Programme, Annual Work Plans and Scoping Notes (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
63.	9-10/09/2013	Pre-Agreement or Commitment and Support Letter for the Submission of the OP (ppt presentation)	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
64.	9-10/09/2013	Charts on Structures and Flows time within the new institutional setting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
65.	27/09/2013	Letter of reinforced cooperation between ESPON and the Committee of the Regions	
66.	3/10/2013	ESPON Post 2013: Overview table on important issues and the documents in which these issues are treated	General information about the programme
67.	4/10/2013	Final minutes of the 9-10/09/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
68.	22/10/2013	Issue paper on Swift Analytical Policy Briefs/Working Papers	Issue paper
69.	22/10/2013	Overview on liabilities regarding the ESPON post 2013 OP	General information about the programme
70.	12/11/2013	Main legal requirements for the Monitoring Committees in the Operational Programmes; Compiled by Czech Delegation	
71.	12/11/2013	Comments and feedbacks - ESPON post 2013 Programme JWG Written Procedure on 22 October – 5 November 2013	
72.	19/11/2013	Budget scenarios	Administrative documents
73.	19/11/2013 26/11/2013	Budget scenarios	General information about the programme
74.	31/10/2013 19/11/2013	Draft agenda of the 2-3/12/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, meetings and presentations
75.	19/11/2013	The situation regarding the Agreement between the Managing Authority and all countries participating in the ESPON post 2013 Operational Programme	Issue paper
76.	18/11/2013	The calculation of the national contribution to the ESPON post 2013 Operational Programme.	Issue paper
77.	26/11/2013	Development of Indicators for ESPON	Issue paper
78.	2-3/12/2013	Draft pre-agreement	Administrative documents
79.	2-3/12/2013	Draft agenda of 2-3/12/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
80.	2-3/12/2013	Ex-Ante Evaluation of ESPON post 2013 (ppt)	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
81.	20/12/2013	Draft minutes of the 2-3/12/2013 JWG meeting	JWG meeting agendas, minutes and presentations
82.	24/12/2013	Budget note: towards budget clarification	Administrative documents

Annex 4. LIST OF STRATEGIC REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

EU high-level strategies (and related material)

- Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM(2010) 2020 final)
- Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020. Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions, agreed at the Informal Ministerial Meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development on 19th May 2011 Gödöllő, Hungary
- Böhme, K., Doucet, P., Komornicki, T., Zaucha, J., Świątek, D. (2011) How to strengthen the territorial dimension of 'Europe 2020' and the EU Cohesion Policy Report, Warsaw

ESI Funds Regulations:

- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
- Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006
- Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal
- Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings

Cohesion Policy 2014 – 2020 Factsheets

- Targeting Investments on Key Growth Priorities Factsheets:
 - Research and Innovation
 - Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
 - Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy
- Simplifying Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020 Factsheet
- Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Factsheet
- Research Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation Factsheet
- Community-led Local Development Factsheet
- Financial Instruments in Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 Factsheet

- Ensuring the visibility of Cohesion Policy: Information and communication rules 2014-2020 factsheet
- Integrated Territorial Investment factsheet

European Code of Conduct on Partnership

- Commission staff working document, the partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership (SWD(2012) 106 final)
- EC (2013) Fiche no 12, Delegated act on the European code of conduct on partnership ("ECCP") Version 2, Meeting of the Expert Group on Delegated and Implementing Acts for the European Structural and Investment Funds: European Code of Conduct on Partnership (10th meeting), 21 June 2013

Guidance documents on Evaluation

- EC (2013) Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation: Guidance document on Ex ante Evaluation, January 2013
- EC (2013) Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation: Draft Guidance on the performance framework review and reserve in 2014-2020, Version 3, 19 July 2013
- EC (2013) Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation: Concepts and Recommendations, October 2013
- EVALSED (2013) The resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development, September 2013

Annex 5. List of stakeholders contacted

Name	Position	When	Type of interview
Lewis Dijkstra	Deputy Head of the Analysis Unit, DG Regio	10/09/2013	Face to face
Thomas Wobben	Director Horizontal Policies and Networks, Committee of the Regions	11/09/2013	Face to face
Dagmara Stoerring	Administrator Committee on Regional Development (REGI) Directorate General for Internal Policies European Parliament	11/09/2013	Face to face
Daniel Mouque	Principal Administrator, Evaluation Unit, DG Regio	11/09/2013	Face to face
Michael Smyth	Member of the EESC	14/10/2013	Phone Interview
Elke Ballon	Head of Unit, Impact Assessment at European Parliament	14/10/2013	Phone Interview
Thiemo W. Eser	ESPO Managing Authority	10/09/2013	Face to face
Peter Mehlbye	Director of ESPO Coordination Unit	17/09/2013	Phone Interview
Sandro Balducci	Professor of Urban Policies, Politecnico di Milano	24/07/2013	Face to face
Anne Wetzel	Interreg IVC Managing Authority and North West Europe Managing Authority	4/09/2013	Phone Interview
Matteo Malvani	Head of the INTERACT programme secretariat	5/09/2013	Phone Interview
Christiane, Breznik	Head of the Central Europe Managing Authority	13/09/2013	Phone Interview
Monica Schoenerklee-Grasser	JTS Head of Evaluation and Monitoring Unit, Central Europe	13/09/2013	Phone Interview
Emmanuel Moulin	Head of the URBACT II secretariat	18/09/2013	Phone Interview

Annex 6. Questions to stakeholders

1. ESPON KNOWLEDGE: PAST AND CURRENT UPTAKE

- ESPON strives to provide pan-European territorial knowledge. Have you made use of ESPON evidence (e.g. ESPON maps, data, studies, reports etc.) in the past? Are you currently using ESPON material in your work-related activities (for example, if relevant, practices related to Structural Funds 2014-2020)?
- If the answer to one of the two previous questions is 'YES', could you please provide one or two examples of specific instances where ESPON knowledge was used in your work, and briefly describe how?

2. ESPON KNOWLEDGE: POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE UPTAKE

- Building on the answers given so far, what kind of knowledge, intelligence, information or data should the Observatory produce in the future in order to support you in your day-to-day work?

3. ESPON KNOWLEDGE AND 'ITS MARKET': IDENTIFYING THE CONTENDERS

- Assuming you did make use ESPON knowledge in the past, which other EU or national service providers did you use to gather the territorial evidence needed?
- If you did not make use of ESPON knowledge in the past, it is because:
 - you were unaware of the existence of ESPON material
 - you were aware of the existence of ESPON material but you find this not easy to understand/use
 - the scale, topics or the territorial dynamics studied by the Observatory do not appear particularly relevant to your work
 - you obtained similar evidence and information from other sources (e.g. National or EU institutions such as Eurostat or DG Regio)
 - Other reasons (please specify).

4. SCOPING POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS OF ESPON KNOWLEDGE

- From your point of view, which phases/aspects of the policy-making process could benefit from ESPON knowledge? (The list below is indicative only, feel free to expand or comment as you see fit).
 - Forecast/anticipation of territorial trends and perspectives for the setting of agendas
 - Informing the drafting of EU or national legislation and/or policy
 - Informing the preparation of EU or national funding programmes (e.g. Structural Funds)
 - Evaluation / justification of choices (legislation, policies, programmes)
 - Monitoring and benchmarking results (legislation, policies, programmes)

5. IDENTIFYING SUITABLE 'FORMATS' FOR ESPON KNOWLEDGE

- ESPON produces a wide array of products, among them: studies and scientific reports, but also datasets, maps and data navigation tools, policy briefs, territorial information packs, video feeds etc. These serve different functions and in fact have slightly different audiences. In light of what commented so far, what 'formats' would be most suited to convey ESPON knowledge to you and your organisation?

6. LINKING THE ESPON RESEARCH AGENDA TO EUROPE 2020

- In your view, how can the ESPON research agenda for the period 2014 – 2020 be shaped to help achieve Europe 2020 goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

Annex 7. List of acronyms

CA	Certifying Authority
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
CU	Coordination Unit
DG	Directorate-General
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ECCP	European Code of Conduct on Partnership
ECPN	ESPN Contact point network
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ENI	European neighbourhood instrument
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme
NTCCP	National Territorial Cohesion Contact Points
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
JWG	Joint Working Group
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee

MF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
OS	Operation Specification
PS	Partner State
PST	Project Support Team
TA	Territorial Agenda
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
ToR	Terms of Reference
WP	Work Package