

ESPON 2013 Programme

Work Programme 2009

**Approved by the ESPON Monitoring Committee on 8-9 December 2008
Updated following the written procedure 23 December 2008 – 27 January 2009**

With Work Programme 2009, the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme takes a new step towards implementation. The planning of activities under the 5 Programme Priorities has been started in 2008. The Monitoring Committee and the Concertation Committee have been involved in the selection of themes and elaboration of specifications for the next round of applied research projects and in efforts to finalise the formal setting up of the programme.

It goes without saying that the process of ensuring the proper set up of formalities necessary for all 31 countries involved, as required by Structural Funds Regulations and the ESPON Agreement, has been a major task for the ESPON Managing Authority and Coordination Unit. By the end of 2008 formalities still needs substantial attention in time for the system audit starting in February 2009. Setting up the all formalities needs to be in place in advance of this audit as lack of compliance and/or major findings will only imply delay of EC payments and more resources for procedural work.

The Work Programme 2009 is taking this fact into account and proposes a different rhythm for project calls than decided hitherto. In concrete terms, the calls for project proposals and expression of interest will be launched in April 2009, which is two months later than previewed during 2008. In addition, in 2009 only one round of open calls will be implemented. This strategic decision is made to ensure the quality of the programme implementation in the short term and the quality of outputs in the long term.

The shift of timing does not affect the level of ambition in the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme during 2009. The ongoing projects will start delivering the first results, new projects will be started in early 2009 and the work on establishing the necessary support to the capitalisation actions envisaged will be carried through, including among other outputs a capitalisation strategy, an updated corporate identity and a new version of the ESPON website.

The Work Programme 2009 relates as closely as possible to the policy development process related to territorial cohesion and the future of EU Cohesion Policy which has gained a significant momentum during the second half of 2008. In this context, as the policy understanding and orientations become clearer and clearer, a major challenge ahead will be an operational support to the policy process with territorial facts and evidence. The ESPON 2013 Programme will here proceed in filling its role as delivering solid and profound knowledge on European territorial structures, trends, perspectives and policy impacts.

However, as the policy development seems increasingly to consolidate territorial cohesion, the demand for and supply of studies and analysis of territorial dynamics is in a corresponding increase. This development has to be considered and followed closely

in order for the MC to take decisions that ensure that the ESPON 2013 Programme fulfils its European role and deliver solid results of indisputable scientific quality.

Four major avenues will here be devoted special attention:

- (1) The consolidation of the formal setting up of the ESPON 2013 Programme including all elements, in particular the legal requirements and Agreements with remaining Member States as well as confirmation of ECP appointment from missing countries is a very important avenue for the ESPON 2013 activities in particular in the first part of 2009.
- (2) The establishment of the necessary support for the Capitalisation and Communication activities of ESPON 2013 project results and for a well-functioning scientific platform and inter-phase with users and programme authorities. Very visible outcomes will here be an updated Corporate Identity and a new ESPON 2013 Website.
- (3) The launch of more calls for proposals and expression of interest for projects under Priority 1, 2, 3 and 4. These calls will be opened in one round of calls starting in late April 2009. These calls will include 8-11 Applied Research projects, an invitation to stakeholders for submitting ideas for Targeted Analysis, project(s) accelerating work on territorial indicators and monitoring as well as in the range of 3-7 projects promoting Transnational Network Activities, carried through by groups of ESPON Contact Points.
- (4) Implementation of the work plans for Capitalisation Activities and the Communication towards potential beneficiaries. In particular, a Capitalisation Strategy will provide guidance and propose actions of future capitalisation.
- (5) The cooperation with Lead Partners in terms of scientific progress towards useful results as well as related to an impeccable financial management of the projects shall be given priority as an investment in achieving the best possible results and avoiding future inconvenience related to audit findings.

I. Main avenues of activities

Work Programme 2009 includes the following 9 main avenues of activities, each comprised of a number of individual tasks of which only the major ones are mentioned:

1. Consolidating the Control and Management system as well as missing Implementation Provisions

The setting up and documentation of a system for programme and project management is a major requirement at the beginning of programme implementation. However, despite major efforts to get all elements consistently in place during 2008, more has urgently to be done in early 2009 as the deadline to submit a complete Management and Control System description within the deadline set by the regulation (twelve months from the approval of the OP, therefore by the 6 November 2008) has not been met. In fact, an incomplete Management and Control System description was submitted to the Commission on the 22 December 2008 together with a Compliance Assessment according to Article 71 (2) of Regulation 1083/2006. This fact had the consequence that several shortcomings were identified in the Compliance Assessment made by the Audit Authority. Therefore the finalisation of the Management and Control System

description has been set by the Audit Authority as a major milestone to be accomplished before the System Audit is carried through in the last weeks of February 2009.

It has to be underlined that according to the recommendation made by the Audit Authority on the Compliance Assessment and as well by the requirements of the regulation, until the approval by the Commission of the Management and Control System description, no expenditure releasing ERDF funds can be declared to the Commission.

The Compliance Assessment of the Audit Authority has indicated that the following documents/tasks will have to be finalised prior the system audit takes place:

- Signature of the Agreement by Lithuania and Slovakia
- Procedures for grant applications, appraisal of applications, selection for funding and selection of contractors via public procurement procedures:
 - Programme manual for each programme priority
 - Internal procedure and manual including checklist, instructions for assessment, follow-up and filing
- Procedures for ensuring the correctness and regularity of expenditure declared under the operational programme (Article 58(c) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006):
 - Procedures for the additional quality controls on the spot that will be implemented by the CU, on behalf of the MA on operations, including the risk analysis methodology at the basis of the selection of the sample and standardised template for checks, reports, communication of results, follow-up and filing
 - Guidelines and standardised reporting forms and checklist for the controls according to Article 16 of Regulation 1080/2006 including specification of on-the-spot checks obligations of Member States and MA coordination and supervision role
- Sampling methodology, guidelines and checklist and reporting forms for the quality checks that will be implemented by the MS (and by the CA in the case of Luxembourg) on the functioning of controls according to Article 16 of Regulation 1080/2006
- Sampling methodology guidelines and checklist and reporting forms for the control that will be implemented by the CA on at least one operation per year
- Procedures for the CU verification of the projects deliveries and progress reports including all relevant standard templates and checklist
- Reliable accounting, monitoring and financial reporting systems in computerised form (Article 58 (d) of Regulation (programme project monitoring database))
- System and procedures to ensure an adequate audit trail (Article 58 (g) of Regulation and Article 15 of Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)
- Reporting and monitoring procedures for irregularities and for recovery of amounts unduly paid with description of the procedures for the treatment of irregularities and as well all standardised templates

A close cooperation with the other networking programmes (Interact, Urbact, Interreg IV C) has supported the very demanding task of setting up the formalities in relation to the requirements of Structural Funds Regulations. This cooperation will continue in 2009 and be further consolidated throughout the programme implementation.

2. Priority 1: Applied Research projects

In total, 5 projects are in the process of implementation. Inception Reports have been delivered from these projects and received a CU Response guiding the further applied research and in some cases asking for additional input in relation to the requested content of the Inception Reports. During spring 2009, these projects will deliver their Interim Reports.

A proposal following a re-launch of a project on Climate Change was selected by the MC in December 2008 and will be contracted and start early 2009. This project will deliver its Inception Report in April 2009 and an Interim Report by October 2009.

The next Call for Proposal is scheduled for late April 2009 with a deadline for proposals in mid July 2009. This call will be the only one in 2009 and include 10 or 11 projects.

The proposals received will be evaluated according to the Programme Manual in a process that takes around 8 weeks. Evaluations will first be done on eligibility criteria as decided by the MC. This process takes around 6 weeks including eventual clearance of correctable omissions. Eligible proposals and expressions of interest will then be evaluated and scored by an Evaluation Committee on content, management and partnership related criteria, decided as part of the Programme Manual. The Sounding Board for each of the next projects will have been selected by the MC on 2 June 2009 and one of the two experts will take part in the Evaluation Committee in September 2009.

The next round of projects will address the following themes as decided by the Monitoring Committee during 2008:

- Attractiveness of European regions and cities for residents and visitors
- European patterns of land use
- Territorial cooperation in transnational areas and across internal/external borders
- Accessibility at regional/local scale and patterns in Europe
- Secondary growth poles in territorial development
- European perspective on specific types of territories
- Territorial dimension of innovation and knowledge economy
- Continental territorial structures and flows (globalisation)
- Services of General Interest
- Sea use and maritime inter-linkages
- Regional sensitivity analysis of selected EU Policies (tbc)

The MC is envisaged to take decision on the best TPG and the Lead Partner to contract for these projects on 29-30 September 2009. The project implementation will begin shortly after when a contract is signed. A kick-off meeting for all projects is foreseen. The compliance with requirements in terms of financial management will be given particular attention in complying correctly with the rules.

During autumn 2009 further reflection on project themes for future applied research projects will begin. This process will include a second screening of the demand based on a questionnaire to key stakeholders. During late 2009 or early 2010 project specifications are envisaged to take shape.

3. Knowledge Support System (pool of experts for Sounding Boards)

A second Call for Interest for the Knowledge Support System was launched on 19 December 2008 in order to ensure expertise related to the new Applied Research themes mentioned above. The deadline for expressing interest for becoming expert in Sounding Boards is on 12 February 2009.

The pool of eligible and qualified experts will then be updated. The experts for the new Sounding Boards will be selected by the MC in June 2009 so one expert from each board can participate in the evaluation of the related project proposals in September 2009. The individual experts will be contracted by the Managing Authority to provide the service envisaged.

Further calls for Expression of Interest for the KSS will depend on the match between the skills of experts in the system and the themes of the next round of Applied Research Projects. In case of need further steps will be taken to enlarge the pool of experts.

4. Priority 2: Targeted analysis

The second Call for Interest from stakeholders for this new type of ESPON projects will be launched in April 2009. The Call for Interest will be open until mid July 2009 and followed by an evaluation process, which will prepare for a MC decision on 29-30 September 2009 on the best ideas for the next round of targeted analysis in partnership with the stakeholders. A total of maximum 10 project ideas are envisaged within a budget frame of €3 Mio.

The selected project ideas will be elaborated into detailed project specifications for the targeted analysis, which will be done in cooperation with the stakeholders behind the project ideas. The CC will provide advice on the project specifications during this process. The Call for Proposals on these Targeted Analyses is envisaged to be pre-announced in December 2009 or early 2010.

From the first call the Targeted Analysis/Ulysses has been waiting for the ESPON Agreement with Lithuania. It is envisaged to start early 2009 drafting a project specification together with the stakeholders and include this in the open call envisaged in 2009.

5. Priority 3: Scientific Platform

Under this Priority the first project on the ESPON 2013 Database is set up and under implementation. The second major project mentioned in the ESPON 2013 Operation Programme on Territorial Indicators and Indices failed as an exploratory project to attract any proposals in the second round of calls in 2008. A third major project about the establishment of a Territorial Monitoring System is part of the ESPON 2013 OP when the indicator project has made some progress.

The CU has assessed the situation taking into account that the indicator and monitoring issues have to be speeded up in order to meet the expectations of the ESPON 2013 Programme. The circumstances around territorial indicators and monitoring have to a certain degree changed during the last year with territorial cohesion enjoying increased attention also from analysis outside ESPON that include interesting indicator development.

Instead of re-launching the explorative study on Territorial Indicators and Indices in April 2009, it is envisaged to prepare a project specification of a full scale project on Territorial Indicators and Indicators that can be launched in April 2009. It would follow the same procedure and timing as the next round of Priority 1 projects. The CC will provide advice on the development of these project specifications.

In addition, a number of actions will be engaged under service contracts following Calls for Tender in accordance with Luxembourg law. In autumn 2009 the following actions are envisaged:

- 4 projects on the tools are envisaged started during 2009:
 - Further improvement of the functionality of the Hyperatlas mapping facility.
 - Update of Data Navigator, including Iceland and Liechtenstein
 - Online Map Making Tool
 - Cartographic language for territorial cohesion policy.
- 3 projects on update of indicators and maps in order to observe territorial trends:
 - Lisbon strategy economic performance of regions.
 - Creative workforce as bearer of innovation.
 - Telecommunication and IT roll-out

During the course of 2009 the MC might decide further actions related to the ESPON Scientific Platform on tools and update of maps.

6. Priority 4: Capitalisation, publications and analysis

The necessary actions for establishing a smooth operation related to capitalisation will be undertaken in spring 2009 and presented for the MC in June. These actions are launched in 2008 as contracts for service provision according to Luxembourg law and include:

- A Capitalisation Strategy envisaged giving guidance and concrete actions for the capitalisation of ESPON results during 2008-2015.
- A Corporate Identity and Lay-out development for the ESPON 2013 Programme that shall ensure the continuation to the existing identity and provide for an immediate recognition of the new programme. The corporate identity and lay-out shall be documented in a Manual and be easily applicable for the new website, publications, promotional material, etc as well as for beneficiaries of the Programme.
- An ESPON Webservice including the structuring and programming of the ESPON 2013 Website and the integration of other web facilities. A particular outcome will be that the current ESPON 2013 section on the old ESPON website during 2008 will be transformed into a real ESPON 2013 Website.
- Printing of ESPON publications and other ESPON materials for promotion, press use, stationary etc.

In 2009, three volumes of the series of short publications, ESPON Territorial Observations, are envisaged. The three volumes will focus on Trends in Accessibility, Regional Economic Lisbon Performance and Creative Workforce for Innovation. The basis for these volumes will be the new results from the update of indicators and maps previewed under Priority 3.

Concerning ESPON Seminars and Events, it is foreseen to carry through one open seminar in the Czech Republic, Prague in June 2008 as well as an ESPON conference in Bruxelles in autumn 2009 addressing regional and municipal stakeholders on the use of ESPON results. In addition 2 open ESPON workshops at the CU are foreseen. Further, an effort is foreseen to inform Commission services closer about ESPON results by organising a ESPON workshop. In addition, the cooperation with scientific institutions in the field of territorial science has resulted in demands for ESPON workshops in connection with or incorporated in scientific events.

The capitalisation at transnational level will begin in 2009. A delay has occurred due to the fact that the time needed to complete the network was longer than expected. The Transnational Network Activities foreseen implemented by the ECP Network will be launched in April 2009. Altogether up to 10 projects are envisaged selected by the MC within a budget frame of €2 Mio..

However, in order to allow for starting the ECP networking, the MC will have to appoint and document the selection of the national ECP, constitute the ECP Network as soon as possible. By the end of 2008, 7 countries still did not establish their ECP in compliance with the ESPON Agreement. For these countries a confirmation by the MC has not been possible. The CU will push for all countries being in place by the launch envisaged in April 2009.

The activities for capitalising on ESPON results are detailed in the Work Plan 2009, included as Annex 1.

7. Priority 5: Technical Assistance, Analytical Support and Communication

The Management and Control System description will require the completion of a series of individual documents (as listed under point 1). Particular attention and urgency will be given to the financial reporting requirements (including the treatment of budget reallocation) and to the procedure for certification of expenditure according to 1st level financial control taking into account that the first reporting period of projects approved under the first call came to an end by end of December 2008.

In addition, the computerised Programme Management Support System will become fully operational and fed with the information and data of the first two calls prior the launch of the third call previewed for late April 2009.. The functioning of the computerised system will be checked by the external auditors during the system audit foreseen for the last week of February 2009.

At the latest by mid August 2009, the Managing Authority will have to declare programme expenditure to the European Commission (through the Certifying Authority). An important aspect will be the certification of TA and MA expenditure according to 1st level financial control as, according to the information of the responsible financial controller for Luxembourg, the first certification of expenditure will require an on-the-spot check specifically related to the accounting system.

The Communication Plan for the entire programming period was approved by the MC in November 2007. The Communication Plan includes as well the Action Plan for 2008 which foresee the following elements:

- One major event launching the Operational Programme and the first call for proposals and call for expression of interests, including printed versions of the Programme Manual and Application Package
- Elaboration of the relevant sections of the website targeting potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries, including the elaboration of the list of beneficiaries that have to be published on the website according to the requirements of the regulation (together with the name of the operation and the amount of public funding allocated)
- Completion of the Programme Management Support database
- Elaboration of short articles on the launch of the call for proposals and call for expression of interest to be included in ESPON newsletters
- Elaboration of press releases related to the launch of the Operational Programme and to the second round of calls foreseen for July 2008
- Participation to at least four external events to present the Operational Programme and the funding and cooperation opportunities available
- The elaboration of information and promotional materials on the funding opportunities and the conditions to apply for them
- A seminar for national authorities in charge of certification according to 1st level financial control will be organised in cooperation with the URBACT Programme on 22 January 2009 in Bruxelles.
- A financial manager seminar for financial officers of Lead and Project partners will be organised in Brussels on the 31 March 2009. The first experience made in October 2008 showed the importance of this seminar and was appreciated and found useful by the participants. An additional positive effect of the seminar was that it initiated a close cooperation of financial officers involved in the same projects, which was not always the case in the past programming period.

The Communication Plan 2009 will be sent to the Commission for information. The detailed plan is included as Annex 2.

In order to valorise the dialogue between MC members, ECP network and the Lead and Project Partners involved in the contracted projects from the first rounds of calls an internal ESPON seminar will take place in Sweden in December 2009.

As said, the setting up of the ESPON Contact Point Network started in 2008, however still, 7 member countries have to nominate their national ECP and document the selection process accordingly. The obligation to nominate ECP's is included in the ESPON Agreement with the MA. The complete ECP network should be in place before the next calls previewed for April 2009, including a call for proposals for the Transnational Networking Activities.

Two ECP meeting are envisaged organised in 2009. The first meeting will be in Prague on 5 June 2009, back to back to the open ESPON Seminar. A second meeting in December 2009 will be devoted to exchange of experience with the first phase of implementing the Transnational Networking Projects approved by the MC on 29-30 September 2009. Upon request from the ECP network, a third meeting will be

organised on 18 March 2009 in order to prepare the ECP network the best possible for the upcoming call for proposals.

By the 31 March 2009 the Certifying Authority will have to submit a report on irregularities to the European Commission.

By the 30 April 2009 the Managing Authority will have as well to submit to the European Commission the Forecast Payment for 2009 and 2010.

Finally, the CU will start elaborating the Annual Report for 2009 which will have to be submitted to the European Commission by 30 June 2009 following a formal approval of the MC.

8. Audit requirements

One of the first tasks for the ESPON 2013 Programme will be to support the Audit Authority for the finalisation of the methodology for the audit following the selection of Ernst & Young as external audit firm for the implementation of the audits and audits on operations. The methodological note will have to be approved by the GoA in written procedure at the latest by the beginning of February 2009 as the first system audit is foreseen for the last week of February 2009.

As a consequence of the delay with the setting up of the Management and Control System Description, the Audit Authority and the GoA have decided, at the meeting on the 28 November 2008, to undertake two system audits of the ESPON 2013 Programme during 2009.

The first system audit, foreseen for the last week of February 2009 has been scheduled in order to ensure the Audit Authority with a follow-up of the shortcomings identified in the Compliance Assessment before the launch of a third call for proposal.

Taking into account that this first system audit cannot be complete as no expenditure will have been yet certified to the Commission, this part of the system audit will more specifically focus on the existing and implemented elements of the Management and Control System Description and on the follow up of the shortcomings of the Compliance Assessment. In addition, the Audit Authority indicated that this first system audit should check carefully the procedures for grant applications, appraisal of applications, selection for funding and how they were implemented (as these elements were not part of the auditing exercise in the past programming period) as well as the Audit Trail at the MA, CU and CA. In addition, the Audit Authority has indicated that a more in depth analysis could be done on two important horizontal issues: Procurement Procedures and Information and Publicity.

A second system audit should then be implemented during the first week of September 2009 after a certification of expenditure (including projects related expenditure) has been made to the European Commission. This second system audit shall complete and follow-up on the first system audit. The final audit report will be needed for establishing the confidence level of the Management and Control System Description, a key element determining the size of the projects sample to be audited in 2010. The lower the confidence level, the higher the number of on-the-spot checks that will have to be implemented. Therefore, the highest confidence level will be strived for.

The third meeting of the GoA will take place at the end of November 2008. During this meeting the results of the two system audits will be discussed together with the methodological note for the on-the-spot checks, the annual control report and annual opinion and the sample of projects to be audited in 2010.

9. Closure of the ESPON 2006

In addition to the activities related to the ESPON 2013 Programme, the first months of 2009 will be as well dedicated to the financial and administrative closure of the ESPON 2006. The Final Implementation Report has been submitted for the approval of the MC in December 2008.

However, the final statement of expenditure, the specific reports of the MA and PA, part of the programme document closure, will have to be drafted. In addition, the CU will have to assist the Winding-Up Body and the Financial Control Group for the finalisation of the Final Audit Report and Winding-Up declaration prepared by the external auditor.

It is now foreseen to submit the closure documents to the European Commission no later than June 2009. In this field as well, a close cooperation with the URBACT programme has been established.

10. Planning of activities for 2010 and beyond

During 2009 the long term planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities will be further detailed. As said, only one round of calls will be carried through in 2009 in order to ensure sufficient time to settle the necessary formalities in the beginning of 2009. It is envisaged to discuss the need for a yearly rhythm in 2010 including two rounds of calls as well as the projects to be implemented under the different Priorities and actions.

A set up of the monitoring of the programme implementation in relation to target indicators for output and results will be proposed as part of an ongoing evaluation of the ESPON 2013 Programme as well as the possibility to engage independent experts in 2010 for a evaluation of the relevance, consistency, efficiency and effectiveness of the programme and its implementation.

II. Calendar for 2009

1. Monitoring Committee meetings

In 2009, four MC meeting are scheduled on 17 March 2009 in Bruxelles, on 2 June 2009 in Prague, on 29-30 September 2009 in Bruxelles and on 1 December 2009 in Malmö (tbc). Written procedures are foreseen during the year and will be conducted when needed for an efficient programme implementation.

2. Concertation Committee meetings

The CC will convey ordinary meetings normally at least 6 weeks in advance of each MC meeting in order to prepare for the meetings. This will imply meetings on 28 April 2009, on 29 July 2009 and on 28 October 2009. In addition, at a meeting on 24-25 February 2009 (lunch to lunch), the CC will give its first advice related to additional projects under Priority 1 and 3 to be launched in call in 2009.

3. ECP meetings

The ECP Network will (as explained above) meet three times during 2009, on 18 March 2009 in Bruxelles, on 2 June 2009 in Prague and on 5 December 2009 in Malmö (tbc).

4. The CU in Luxembourg

The organisational support for the ESPON 2013 Programme is well established in Luxembourg. The team has enlarged profoundly and fast since the beginning of the ESPON 2013 Programme and team development exercises will be implemented in 2009 with external expert support.

The ESPON Coordination Unit will during 2009 engage additional staff for dealing with the procedural requirements, including the current vacant post as Financial Expert.

III. Timetable for 2009

The tentative timing 2009 of activities of the ESPON 2013 Programme is summarised in table in Annex 3 showing the major milestones.

IV. Indicative budget 2009

The ESPON Work Programme 2009 is envisaged to imply expenses according to the indicative budget inserted as Annex 4.

Annexes (versions approved by the MC by written procedure from 23 December 2008 to 27 January 2009):

Annex 1: Capitalisation Work Plan 2009

Annex 2: Communication Plan 2009

Annex 3: Indicative Timetable 2009

Annex 4: Budget 2009