



Version 7 December 2011

ESPON 2013 Programme
COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN 2012

Approved by the ESPON Monitoring Committee on 1st December 2011.

Implementation Framework: The ESPON Communication Plan 2007-2013 approved by the European Commission on 10 June 2008



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Contents

1.	Background	- 2 -
2.	Roles and Responsibilities	- 3 -
3.	Coordination between Communication and Capitalisation Activities.....	- 3 -
4.	Aim and Objectives 2012.....	- 3 -
5.	Target Groups	- 4 -
6.	Information and Publicity Measures 2012	- 4 -
6.1.	Information tools	- 5 -
6.1.1.	Programme Manual and Applicants' package	- 5 -
6.1.2.	Official Journal EU	- 5 -
6.1.3.	Programme Managing Support System (PMSS)	- 5 -
6.1.4.	Programme Bodies	- 5 -
6.2.	Communication tools	- 6 -
6.2.1.	ESPON Newsletter	- 6 -
6.2.2.	ESPON Website	- 6 -
6.2.3.	ESPON Intranet.....	- 6 -
6.2.4.	Media.....	- 6 -
6.2.5.	Social Media	- 6 -
6.3.	Targeted activities and actions/Events.....	- 6 -
6.3.1.	Financial managers seminars	- 6 -
6.3.2.	ECP Meetings	- 7 -
6.3.3.	Annual Event - Info Day and Partner Café on Call for Proposals	- 7 -
6.3.4.	ESPON MapArt for Europe	- 7 -
6.3.5.	Working together with the EU Presidencies: ESPON Seminars	- 7 -
6.3.6.	Participation in external events	- 7 -
6.4.	Flying the EU flag.....	- 8 -
6.5.	List of beneficiaries.....	- 8 -
6.6.	Promotional material.....	- 8 -
7.	Evaluation.....	- 8 -
8.	Resources: Budget allocation 2012.....	- 8 -
	Annex 1 – Indicative Calendar of Major Communication Activities 2012	- 10 -
	Annex 2– 2011 Results by mid November 2011.....	- 12 -

1. Background

The Communication Action Plan 2012 will be influenced by the results of the last Calls for Proposals 2011 and in particular the decision by the Monitoring Committee launching an additional Call in 2012. Due to the fact that few projects did not receive any proposals, the Monitoring Committee is expected to decide the implementation of a new Call at its meeting in December 2011.

Therefore, active dialogue with all potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries (Lead and Project Partners), will continue to be a vital feature of ESPON's work within its Communication Action Plan 2012. Events and meetings will help ensure that all parties share information and that views and information are regularly exchanged.

Another priority will be launching the competition "ESPON MapArt for Europe" which has been delayed due to the need of investigating the legal implementation framework and deeply clarifying its structure. Few clarifications are expected to be sorted out by end of 2011 allowing the launch of the competition early 2012.

Dissemination of results from the contracted projects and at the Programme level also feeds into the Plan with messages based on evidence of results of the projects, in particular through giving visibility to projects.

The MA and CU will continue to work with the cooperation of Member and Partner States as well as the ECPs to increase the relevance and understanding of ESPON's communications amongst its key target audiences. This will make ESPON better known and facilitate timely, coherent dissemination of ESPON messages in Europe.

2012 will also mark the 10th anniversary of ESPON and this will be marked by messages throughout the year, in particular, the implementation of the ESPON MapArt Competition.

ESPON will continue to use the full communications mix available. Furthermore, ESPON will promote coherence through strengthened cooperation with relevant authorities at national, European and international levels and continue to enhance dialogue with stakeholders and increase audience interactivity.

All this will take place against the backdrop of the recommendations from the External Evaluation carried out in 2011 which will be taken into account in the implementation of the Communication Action Plan. In particular, among the thirteen recommendations for action 2011-2013 from the External Evaluation, the first part of the recommendation 7 is directly related to the Communication Plan:

Recommendations from the External Evaluation	Comments and Action proposed by the MA/CU
Recommendation 7¹: The diversity and geographic representation of participation in the programme should be extended. The recent extension of eligibility to private sector bodies may help, but the communication plan and capitalisation strategy should be used to increase awareness of ESPON and encourage new participants. (...)	MA/CU asks for MC opinions on the awareness of ESPON and the proposal of locating workshop meetings in countries where a lack of awareness is identified if planned in the Operational Programme. (...)

¹ ESPON Monitoring Committee meeting on 23-24 June 2011, Agenda point 6.2 Ongoing Evaluation - Recommendations of External Evaluation

The Communication Action Plan 2012 must continue to remain flexible to take into account changing circumstances.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Managing Authority: Official communication with Programme bodies and European Commission.

Coordination Unit: Overall Programme level communication to general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, project partners, programme bodies.

ECPs: Informing on ESPON activities to relevant regional / national and academic stakeholders in the transnational context; promoting ESPON in their countries by increasing the national networks around ESPON.

Projects Partners: Developing mandatory set of communication and fulfilling information requirements; participating in meetings, seminars and other events to present results of the projects.

3. Coordination between Communication and Capitalisation Activities

The communication activities are fully complementary with the capitalisation activities that are an inherent part of the overall ESPON Work Plan for 2012.

The key messages of the Communication Plan will be as well channelled through media and action belonging to the Capitalisation Activities, in particular: the ESPON website, Newsletters, Press Releases, Seminars and workshops targeting the Programme stakeholders.

The Communication Action Plan will also serve as support for the main activities envisaged in the Work Plan 2012.

4. Aim and Objectives 2012

Communication and dialogue

2012 will see ESPON continuing to engage in effective communications and dialogue with its beneficiaries and potential applicants as well as partners in the EU institutions and Member States, and internationally.

Being understood

Together with Member States, ESPON will further increase the relevance and understanding of its communications among its key target audiences. It will deploy the full range of tools at its disposal to communicate its messages. These tools will help ensure meaningful, tailored and effective messages reach the relevant audiences.

A coherent approach

Coherent communications will be promoted through strengthened cooperation with relevant partners at national, European and international levels. In close working relationships with the Member and Partner States, its Network of National Contact Points (ECPs), ESPON will continue to enhance dialogue and cooperation with its target groups, European institutions, EC Representations to MS, Europe Direct Centres in order to increase audience awareness and interactivity.

The following priorities will be addressed in 2012:

- a) Inform potential beneficiaries and raise awareness and transparency of the opportunities on offer by calls opened by the Programme; attract potential beneficiaries to submit good quality project applications.
- b) Provide beneficiaries with complete, accurate and updated information about regulations, guidelines for good project management in order to maximise the quality of project implementation.
- c) Inform and raise awareness amongst the general public of the role of the Community in the actions funded by the Programme.
- d) Inform the programme's partners and stakeholders about the programme's management, progress being achieved and raise awareness of issues that may impact on its management and delivery.
- e) Inform project partners and raise awareness of the responsibilities they have under the regulations, provide guidance and advice to help ensure compliance, ensure that results are communicated by the project partners and the programme jointly in order to make the programme operations tangible and visible.

5. Target Groups

The ESPON “Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures” for the programming period 2007-2013 defined and clarified the primary targets and recipients of its communications activities². At any given time additional groups may be added to this list, although it is our assessment that these groups are relevant for the entire programme period.

In general, the following order applies:

- Potential and final beneficiaries: public or public-equivalent bodies described in the Programme Manual and governed by public law, private bodies.
- Programme Bodies: MC, ECPs, Paying Authority, European Commission;
- The Scientific Community: this includes potential applicants for ESPON funding, as well as those with a specific interest in the direction of ESPON and the outputs it will produce.
- Media and Opinion Leader: for journalists working for regional, national and European media; the immediate services for this audience concern the provision of press releases and announcement on events.
- General public, in particular to underline the central role that the European Union plays in the ESPON 2013 Programme in cooperation with the Member and Partner States.

6. Information and Publicity Measures 2012

ESPON will work in partnership with the ECPs and MS and PS to provide information and to promote the Programme. The ESPON CU will keep ECPs informed of all activities that will be undertaken over the year.

All actions will be implemented in the full respect of the information and publicity requirements of the ESPON Programme as well as of EU Requirements as stated in Articles 8 and 9 of Commission Regulation 1828/2006.

² Cf 3. Target groups, “Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures” for the programming period 2007-2013 2006.

For the year 2012, the ESPON Managing Authority, with the support of the ESPON Coordination Unit, intends to implement the following actions:

6.1. Information tools

6.1.1. Programme Manual and Applicants' package

The applicants' package and the programme manual will be updated and completed prior the opening of the Call. They will include the relevant information providing a detailed picture of the priorities, their background and objectives, the principles for applying, assessing, approving and monitoring projects and the application form, the Operational Programme and the Regulation providing the legal framework for the ESPON 2013 funded operations. They will be published on the ESPON website and disseminate during the info day event and on demand.

6.1.2. Official Journal EU

The Call will be announced at the Official Journal in two steps: the pre-announcement and the announcement.

6.1.3. Programme Managing Support System (PMSS)

The Programme Management Supporting System is accessible for the main actors of the Programme, such as the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Certifying Authority, Group of Auditors and First Level Controllers for their use.

The PMSS stores information about the projects and subsequently also information about the various priorities and measures on the Programme level that is updated regularly by the ESPON CU. The database serves as the main source for both quantitative and qualitative data on projects implementation and achievement.

The system is continuously developed with new features in order to make it more useful and efficient. The latest tool that has been introduced is the software OLAP which provides analysis of data stored in the PMSS. OLAP enables the users to extract and analyze the different data according to their needs. The PMSS can be considered as a reliable monitoring and financial reporting system that can support the everyday management and monitoring of the operations.

In the course of 2012, it will be also updated with data from the "MA Led Projects".

6.1.4. Programme Bodies

The programme bodies –MC Members and ECP network, - will be involved in reaching potential beneficiaries, policy makers, other stakeholders and the citizens. The CU itself will provide continuously information about the programme. External information requests will be answered as well as documents will be provided on demand.

Regular meetings and contacts between the different units and actors will be held as well as regular messages to keep the programme's bodies informed.

As for the messages, the CU will keep producing and disseminating the ESPressON towards ECP and MC Members.

6.2. Communication tools

6.2.1. ESPON Newsletter

For each of the newsletters disseminated in the framework of the Capitalisation Strategy during 2012, the ESPON CU will elaborate articles targeting the Call and any other information on the timetable of events. In 2012, it is foreseen to have at least 6 Newsletters.

6.2.2. ESPON Website

The ESPON Website will be regularly updated and constantly developed by the CU through additional pages new ones and new products such as videos. A new Call for Tender under the Priority 4 has been launched in order to ensure continuity of the Website which is managed under a three years contract by the external service provider.

Work to modernize and improve the website shall continue under the Priority 4 of the Programme. Also, in keeping with Commission Regulation 1828/2006 Article 7(2) (d), the list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations will be updated.

6.2.3. ESPON Intranet

During 2010 a makeover of the Intranet has been started updating the functionality and user-friendliness, as well as bringing its design in accordance with the ESPON Corporate design. This update is planned to become operational in 2012.

6.2.4. Media

At the launch of the call, press releases will be elaborated and channelled to the relevant media. The press releases will be mainly targeting the press, the general public and the potential beneficiaries. Timely and informative press releases to promote the Programme and individual projects will be produced as well. This task will be realised in the framework of the Capitalisation Activities 2012. In 2012 is envisaged to opt at the following concrete output: 6 Press Releases.

6.2.5. Social Media

The Social Media tools will continuously being updated during 2012 to communicate calls, events and information about the Programme.

6.3. Targeted activities and actions/Events

In 2012, the following activities and events will take place.

6.3.1. Financial managers seminars

Additional seminars on management and administration of projects will be organised for Lead and Project Partners of approved projects under the round of calls that ended in autumn 2011 and the calls envisaged for spring 2012.

Information about e.g. eligibility rules, programme manual, subsidy contract, reporting and monitoring procedures will be given, as well as information about administrative, legal and practical matters of relevance concerning project coordination and management.

The seminars will as well be open to first level financial controller of centralized and designated controllers of decentralized control systems willing to acquire additional and more specific information about ESPON 2013 reporting procedure and minimum requirements for the certification of expenditure.

6.3.2. ECP Meetings

Internal ECP meetings will be organized in June and December 2012 in order to ensure coordination of activities of the programme at national level, the internal coherence and share of experience.

6.3.3. Annual Event - Info Day and Partner Café on Call for Proposals

The Programme will organise one major information activities (Info Day on New Call including a Q&A session) to present the new funding opportunities and the conditions for applying. Detailed information on the Programme, Call, conditions to access the funding and any other relevant information will be provided. At the event the exchange of experience among ESPON beneficiaries might be included.

Both the event and the Call will be publicised widely in close cooperation with MC and ECP members to ensure participation of actors from all ESPON countries as also recommended by the External Evaluation from 2011.

6.3.4. ESPON MapArt for Europe

Started in 2010, the preparation has been delayed due to the need of investigating the implementation framework in the national legislation and deeply clarifying its structure. Few clarifications due to be sorted out by end of 2011 shall allow the launch of the competition in 2012.

The graphic competition will aim at creating maps with a distinct artistic appeal that will raise attention to ESPON. Participants will have the opportunity to demonstrate their talents by creating artistic maps. The output is intended to be used for promotional material, such as an ESPON Calendar, for wide distribution.

As part of the activity, the CU will organise a prize-giving ceremony with winners and special guests which shall take place luckily during the ESPON Open Seminar June.

With this competition ESPON will engage with new target groups that so far have not been specifically engaged with the Programme. Therefore a strong involvement of the media bureau is envisaged in order to implement the promotional campaign.

6.3.5. Working together with the EU Presidencies: ESPON Seminars

The aim of presenting the achievements of the Programme will be gained through the Open Seminar which is to be organized in June during the Danish EU Presidency.

The Coordination Unit will in cooperation with the Cypriot EU Presidency organise an Internal Seminar on December 2012. The internal seminar shall contribute to ensuring the internal consistency and synergy related to the content of projects within the different programme priorities. It will bring together for dialogue the Monitoring Committee, the ESPON Contact Points, and Project Groups. The thematic scope and aim of the Seminar will be defined in due time during the first half of the year.

6.3.6. Participation in external events

The programme will be marketed at several events like conferences, seminars, exhibitions. Information will be disseminated on e.g. project and programme results, funding opportunities. The ESPON CU will select during 2012 key events, organised by different institutions and/or organisation (the European Commission, other European programmes, etcetera).

6.4. Flying the EU flag

Provision will also be made to ensure that, for one week, starting on 9 May, the European flag will be flown in front of the premises of the Managing Authority and the new offices of the Coordination Unit.

6.5. List of beneficiaries

The list of the beneficiaries has been published on the web site of the Programme since 2008, together with the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to each single operation. The list will be updated periodically after each binding decision of the Monitoring Committee and will be free for download.

6.6. Promotional material

The call for tender for promotional materials which was part of the Plan 2011 is due to be launched end 2011; therefore the envisaged items (bags, umbrellas, pens, memory keys) shall be produced and disseminated during 2012.

All material will be branded in the ESPON's look and the EU publicity requirements. In terms of dissemination, the promotional material will be distributed at ESPON events, to the MC and ECPs for national coverage, to the main target groups, on demand.

Under the Capitalisation measures, in particular the publication plan, additional products will be used as promotional material such posters.

As indicated above, the maps coming from the European MapArt Competition shall be also used to produce an ESPON Calendar 2013. Besides supplying the day's date, the calendar will promote ESPON and its maps from January to December.

7. Evaluation

To ensure a correct implementing of the above listed Information and Publicity Measures 2012, the relevant indicators that are included in the Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures 2007 – 2013³ will be taken into consideration.

The evaluation will also be based on brief questionnaire disseminated at ESPON events.

8. Resources: Budget allocation 2012

ESPON has an allocated publicity budget of 466.000 EUR from 2007 onwards to fund its communication activities. The publicity measures noted in this action plan 2012 will be funded by the communication plan (priority 5), the capitalisation (under priority 4) as well as technical assistance (priority 5).

³ Programme Manual and Applicants' package: number of downloads, number of documents requested, number of visits to the relevant website pages;
Programme Managing Support System: number and type of enhancement of the database;
Programme Bodies: number of ESPressON issued, number of reports distributed, number of meetings held;
Newsletters: number of subscriptions, number of newsletters distributed;
Website: number of website visitors;
Intranet: number of communication distributed;
Media: number of press releases issued;
External events: number of events MA/CU has participated in;
Targeted activities and actions/events: number of participants at the annual event/info day, number of project representatives participating at financial seminars, number of events held;
List of beneficiaries: number of downloads; Promotional material: type and number of promotional material produced, numbers of copies requested and distributed by CU.

BUDGET Commitments: Communication Action Plan 2012		
Information tools	EUR	Source of Funding
Programme Manual and Applicants' Pack		P5 - TA staff budget and P4 Capitalisation
Official Journal of EU		No cost
Programme database		Ad hoc TA Budget Line
ESPressON		P5 - TA staff budget
Communications tools	EUR	Source of Funding
Newsletter		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Website and Intranet		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Media / Press Releases		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Social Media		P4 – Capitalisation, P5 - TA staff budget
Targeted actions and activities	EUR	Source of Funding
Two Financial Seminars	15,000.00	P5 and Partner States in kind contributions
Annual Event - Info Day	25,000.00	P5 - Communication Plan
ESPON MapArt for Europe		P4 and P5. As for P5, the budget is included in the Communication Action Plan (40,000.00) for 2011
Participation in external events		P5 - TA travel budget
Flying of EU flag		No cost
List of beneficiaries		P5- TA staff budget; P4 – Capitalisation
Promotional materials and Stands		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 – Communication Action Plan 2011 (40,000.00)
TOTAL	40,000.00	

Annex 1 – Indicative Calendar of Major Communication Activities 2012

Month 2012	Document of reference	Activity
February /March	Communication Action Plan 2011	Calls August-October 2011 (Decision on best proposals)
January - September	Communication Action Plan 2012	Call for Proposals 2012
January - December	Communication Action Plan 2011 and 2012	Competition ESPON MapArt for Europe
	Communication Action Plan 2012	Financial Manager Seminar
	Communication Action Plan 2012	Financial Manager Seminar
March	Communication Action Plan 2012	Annual Event - Info Day and Partner Café on Call for Proposals
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012	External Events
May	Communication Action Plan 2012	Flying EU flag
Yearly around	Communication Action Plan 2012	List of Beneficiaries
	Communication Action Plan and Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Promotional Materials
February	Communication Action Plan and Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Programme Manual and Applicants' Pack

Month 2012	Document of reference	Activity
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012	Programme Management Support System (database PMSS)
Yearly around	Communication Action Plan 2012	ESPressON
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Newsletter
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Website and Intranet
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Media / Press Releases
Yearly around	Work Plan 2012/Capitalisation	Social Media

Annex 2– 2011 Results by mid November 2011

Events related to the moving of the CU to the new offices in November, including IT deficits, somewhat hampered the elaboration of the outcome of the information and communication strategy and actions until mid November 2011. Therefore, the output listed below is indicative, but can however be summarized as follows:

ESPressON

Since June 2009 until 16 November 2011 the CU disseminated 211 ESpresON, with a monthly average of about 7 messages.

Year	Number of ESpresON
2009 (June)	36
2010	83
2011 (until 16 November)	92
Total	211

Newsletter

5 Newsletters were produced and distributed to a mailing list with more than 2.000 recipients. Direct mailing campaigns towards the newsletter subscribers were implemented as well to spread the announcements of Calls for Proposals, events, and so on.

Media / Press Releases

6 press releases / communications produced and disseminated in 2011:

- 24/01/2011, “ESPON opens new funding opportunities”, Call January 2011
- 01/04/2011, “Over 280 Potential Partners interested in ESPON”, output of Call January 2011
- 30/05/2011, “ESPON Contribution to the Territorial Agenda 2020 and EU Cohesion Policy”, Open Seminar in Hungary
- 24/08/2011, “European Evidence related to Territorial Cohesion - New Challenging ESPON Projects for over 7 million Euros”, Call August 2011
- 28/9/2011, ““European Regions 2010: Economic Welfare and Unemployment”, Map of the Month
- 6/10/2011, “ESPON starts 4 new Applied Research projects”, approved projects

Website

In the period January-October 2011, the ESPON website received 224.792 visits.

Over the course of 2011, new publications or improvements operations were made to the ESPON website including:

- publication of 60 news items and a number of new web pages
- preparation and publication of a video web pages with 4 movies

- adaptation of website about the main activities of the year, including reports from projects, events, calls for proposals, calls for tenders etc

Events

About 900 participants were counted in the 7 events organised by the CU. The Open Seminar in Hungary (258 participants) and the Info Day in Brussels on February were the biggest events organised in 2011, the latter with 232 participants. ESPON attended also different major external events.

Event	Date	Participants
Info Day on New Call and Partner Café	Brussels, 10 February 2011	232
High Level Conference ""Targeted Analyses for Stakeholders: Territorial Evidence in Practice"	Brussels, 11 May 2011	90
Info Day on Calls for Proposals and Partner Café	Brussels, 13 September 2011	198
Open Seminar "Evidence and Knowledge Needs for the Territorial Agenda 2020 and the EU Cohesion Policy"	Hungary 21 and 22 June 2011	258
Workshop "Assessing Indicators for Territorial Cohesion"	Brussels, 20 October 2011	35
Workshop "Evidence on European Land Use"	Brussels, 24 May 2011	35
Financial Managers Seminar	Geneva, 31 March and 1 April	78
Total number of participants (by 10 November 2011)		926

Promotional Material

Several items (pens, memory keys) have been produced within a Call for Tender launched in 2010 and disseminated at events in 2011. Under the Capitalisation Activities, the CU also produced 14 different posters and distributed to the MC and ECPs for their activities at national level.