

ESPON 2013 Programme

Work Programme 2012

Approved by the ESPON Monitoring Committee on 1 December 2011

The Work Programme 2012 includes the actions envisaged in 2012 as the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme continues towards the final years where the output of new knowledge, evidence and facts will peak. The planning and implementation of activities under the 5 Programme Priorities was started in 2008 and has progressed steadily and according to plan since then.

The Monitoring Committee will continue being closely involved in the implementation process together with the other programme authorities. However, as the selection of themes and specifications of new projects, covering Applied Research, Targeted Analyses, the Scientific Platform and Transnational Networking Activities by the ECP Network has almost reached the end, the Concertation Committee will no longer convey meetings, only give advice through e-mailing, if at all necessary.

I. General Outlook and Priorities for 2012

I.1. Policy development and demand

The year 2012 is very important for ESPON in terms of delivering territorial evidence in support of policy. The programme is recognised by Ministers and the Commission for providing important new knowledge with a European dimension. Following Lisbon Treaty and the aim of Territorial Cohesion as part of the aims for EU Cohesion Policy, the European process has fostered the EU 2020 Strategy aiming at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which has a territorial dimension, and which needs supports from all policy areas and levels in order to become successful.

The territorial dimension in policy development is becoming ever more underlined by the policy level. The future of EU Cohesion Policy is including the ambition of integrated and place-based policy approach. Ministers responsible of territorial development and spatial planning have agreed an updated Territorial Agenda 2020 setting a number of policy principles for the development of the European territory.

Future Cohesion Policy post 2013 is opting at evidence-based and result-oriented policy implementation. Member States have recently during the Polish EU Presidency supported this by requesting an enhanced territorial dimension being included in policy implementation at all levels. This development has led to the demand of an ESPON post 2013 that corresponds and replies to the derived needs for comparable territorial knowledge at EU scale and that support the use and capitalisation of the European knowledge base that have been constructed over the last 8-9 years.

In 2012 in this policy context, the ESPON 2013 Programme is expected to live up to its reputation and deliver solid and innovative, useful and staggering new results, all in an easy-understandable fashion and format.

During 2011 the Monitoring Committee has conducted what was thought to be the last round of calls for proposals. However, the reality shows that an additional smaller round

of calls is necessary in spring 2012. The process encountered in 2011 will, following the eligibility checks and content evaluation undertaken late 2011, lead to decision by the Monitoring Committee selecting the final 4 Applied research projects, 4 out of 5 Targeted Analyses, 5 out of 6 projects on Tools and the Scientific Platform as well as 1 or 2 projects in support of the transnational effort of capitalising upon ESPON output.

Once these projects have started in early 2012 and the final round of calls are in good progress, the ESPON CU will concentrate as many resources as possible on ensuring useable, high class scientific and politically interesting results. Simultaneously, the substantially increased recognition by policymakers and stakeholders in adding a European perspective to territorial development will encourage stronger efforts towards communication, capitalisation and support of policy demands for using ESPON evidence as knowledge base.

Elaborating proposals for ESPON post 2013 is another important issue for 2012. Ministers have in 2011 stated the key principles, role and expectations for a continuation and strengthening of the ESPON exercise: (1) The capacity of ESPON should be strengthened in supporting the Commission and Member States in reinforcing the territorial dimension in EU policies, (2) a wide-spread use of territorial evidence-based responses and short-term analytical deliveries and comparable data on regions and cities shall be ensured, and (3) the institutional setting shall be reinforced for ESPON to be able to deliver.

In the process during 2012 in particular, progress during the Danish EU Presidency on the regulatory framework for Structural Funds operations after 2013 will form the legal base for working on proposals for an operational programme and other statutory documents for ESPON post 2013. However, decisive decisions related to the budget of the EU and to Structural Funds after 2013 needs to be in place before the final details of the ESPON post 2013 programme can be fine-tuned and a proposal on an upgraded continuation of ESPON can be submitted to the Commission for approval.

I.2. Implementation status

The implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme is now well advanced. In total 44 projects are final, ongoing or under contracting within the programme priorities. By 31 December 2011 the status for contracted and remaining projects under the ESPON 2013 Programme can be seen from the following table:

Project status by end 2011 (exclusive 7 MA led projects under P3 and 9 under P4)

Major projects	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
Final, ongoing or under contracting	18	18	3	5	44
Remaining foreseen	7	5	7-8	1-2	19-21
Total	25	23	10-11	6-7	63-65

The ESPON 2013 Programme has in 2011 approved 6 expression of interest for targeted analyses and 7 new projects amongst which 4 applied research projects, 2 targeted analyses projects and 1 scientific platform project.

Moreover, a large number of projects have been launched in calls for proposals in August 2011, including 4 applied research, 5 targeted analyses, 6 scientific platform

projects as well as a possibility for 1-2 additional transnational networking activity projects. In total 48 proposals were received, which are currently being evaluated, and which will be tabled for MC decision on 8 February 2012.

In addition, a number of additional ESPON activities are carried through as services under MA-led projects, both within Priority 3 and Priority 4. These are all implemented as services following calls for tender. Altogether 16 MA-led projects are final or ongoing including a total of more than 74 actions, of which 20 services are delivered and the remaining 54 are ongoing, in a tendering process or for implementation after 2012.

These numbers show that the ESPON 2013 Programme in its lifetime will implement around 120-130 actions, of which more than half will be smaller or larger service contracts under MA led projects.

The last round of calls for proposals in 2011 was supposed to ensure that all feasible actions under Priority 1 and almost all actions under Priority 2 will be decided by February 2012. It was hoped that no further calls for proposals would be necessary in 2012. However, due to a few projects not receiving any proposals additional calls for proposals will be implemented in spring 2012 with a MC decision previewed for 19 September 2012.

This call will include the following projects under Priority 2 and 3:

Priority 2: North Sea Star (re-launch)

Priority 3: European Territorial Monitoring (re-launch)

Additional projects might be added following MC decision on 8 February 2012.

During 2012, and in the years 2013 and 2014, the volume of results will increase exponentially. This will require a substantial and targeted effort on the processing, capitalisation and communication of the results to policymakers in an easy and targeted way.

In making this happen, the resources of the CU will gradually be reallocated to be able to cope with this substantial task. In this context external editorial support will need to be supplied. Supporting this, transnational activity networking projects under Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme will as well be contributing and gaining importance during 2012 and onwards.

Connected to the maturity of the programme implementation, the administrative and financial management also becomes a more demanding task. The closure of finalised projects is a significant task in 2012, both in terms of closing the content part and in terms of checking progress reports as basis for payments.

Ensuring the sufficient spending necessary in order to avoid de-commitment of ERDF funds in 2012 is a crucial, serious and very tough task. The progress made in 2011 on the spending side was basically encouraging, however by end 2013 an additional spending of approximately 11 mio. Euro is the necessary in order to avoid de-commitment of funds.

The audits carried through in 2011 were once again successful in having none or very limited findings. In 2012, the number projects to be audited will increase due to the higher number of ongoing projects, and the same level of support and quality assurance shall be applied in line with good administrative practice.

I.3. Strategic Avenues for 2012

As underlined, in 2012, the emphasis in the programme implementation will become increasingly devoted to capitalisation and communication of results. Relatively, the weight of different programme priorities will gradually shift towards Priority 4 on Capitalisation, which will subsequently be reflected in the work priorities of the CU as well.

In parallel, substantial efforts are needed to manage and guide the many ongoing projects towards the best possible results. Moreover, the management of the programme will receive continued attention in order to achieve an impeccable level. In particular, the challenge of avoiding de-commitment of ERDF funds is massive in 2012-2013 and will need committed attention of all actors and programme authorities involved.

The following 4 strategic avenues will guide the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme during 2012:

- (1) **Strengthening capitalisation and communication based on the rising number of final results in support of wide-spread use of ESPON territorial evidence**, including targeted activities and publishing publications according to the decided Publication Plan 2011-2014.
- (2) **Implementing with serenity the Roadmap for avoiding de-commitment within the ESPON 2013 Programme** and continue a sound programme management with finding-free audits and quality checks.
- (3) **Launching the remaining projects within the Targeted Analyses and Scientific Platform and Tools**, absorbing the remaining funds available, and supporting projects with high quality final results, ensuring easy communicating executive summaries.
- (4) **Preparing further the future ESPON post 2013 in a transparent process** that can lead to a proposal in time for the decision making process related to EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020.

More detailed information on the concrete programme implementation in 2012 is included in the following chapters of the Work Plan 2012.

The envisaged overall timing of activities in 2012 is available as annex 1. The Budget for 2012 following decision by the MC on 1-2 December 2011 is included as annex 2.

II. Detailed actions within the main activities of 2012

The ESPON 2013 Programme will in 2012 put emphasis on launching the remaining major Applied Research and Targeted Analysis projects. In parallel, many ongoing projects will deliver final or interim results. In order to guarantee the required high quality and policy relevance, important efforts will be made to support and steer project development and implementation.

For a comprehensive overview on ESPON project, their scope, envisaged results, budget, and partnership, please consult the ESPON Project Overview by November 2011 which is available on the ESPON website.

Many additional projects on tools and data are foreseen linked to the Scientific Platform which will constitute a major new effort during 2012. In addition, the capitalisation through Transnational Networking Activities is envisaged to bring 1 or 2 additional actions, while the first reporting of results achieved will become available.

II.1 Applied Research projects (Priority 1)

The implementation of Applied Research projects will in 2012 be at cruising speed. In 2012, the programme will manage in parallel 25 Applied Research projects taking together contracted projects and projects in preparation.

The project implementation of the 25 contracted projects looks as follows:

- 7 projects have submitted their final deliveries by 31 December 2011.
- 1 project will have delivered its Draft Final Report by 31 December 2011 and will during 2012 deliver its Final Report.
- 7 projects will during 2012 deliver their Draft Final and Final Report.
- 3 projects will deliver their Draft Final Report.
- 2 projects will deliver their Interim Report.
- 5 projects will deliver their Inception and Interim Report.

The Monitoring Committee will on 8 February 2012 decide the Transnational Project Group of researchers and experts for the following final 4 of the 25 applied research projects:

- European Neighbour Regions
- Small and medium sized towns in their functional territorial context
- Territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion in Europe
- Economic Crisis: Resilience of regions.

The specific action under Priority 1, the Knowledge Support System (pool of experts for Sounding Boards) (Priority 1), is complete. Following the last call for expression of interest the Knowledge Support System currently includes 109 experts. No further calls will be implemented anymore during the current programme period.

II.2 Targeted Analyses (Priority 2)

The implementation of Targeted Analysis projects will in 2012 further accelerate. In 2012, the programme will manage in parallel 23 Targeted Analysis projects taking together contracted projects and projects in preparation.

The project implementation of the 18 contracted projects looks as follows:

- 8 projects are expected to have submitted their final deliveries the latest on 31 December 2011 and will enter the phase of financial and administrative closure.
- 10 projects will deliver a Draft Final and Final Report and then also enter the phase of financial and administrative closure.
- 5 projects will deliver an Inception and Interim Report.

The Monitoring Committee will on 8 February 2012 decide the Transnational Project Group for the following 4 of the 23 Targeted Analyses projects:

- Growth Poles in South-East Europe (GROSEE)
- Key Indicators for Territorial Cohesion and spatial planning (KITCASP)
- Liveable Landscapes for Sustainable Territorial Development (LIVELAND)
- Landscape Policy for 3 Countries Park (LP3LP)

For the last of the 23 targeted Analyses, the ESPON 2013 Programme foresees in 2012 one Call for Proposals related to finding a group of experts to carry through the Targeted Analysis, North Sea STAR.

There will be no more Calls for Expressions of Interest for Targeted Analysis during this programme period.

II.3 Scientific Tool developments and Analytical support (Priority 3)

The ESPON 2013 Programme will in 2012 make important efforts to optimise the scientific platform and the ESPON tools for policymakers. The last projects and many of the remaining service contracts under the Priority 3 Scientific Platform project will be launched in 2012. Focus will be put in enhancing the usefulness of ESPON results and tools and its practical use for policymakers at all levels.

Cooperation on European territorial data will continue in 2012, integrating the ESPON Programme further into this European process. In particular the cooperation with EUROSTAT is crucial and a further cooperation will be developed on key topics of common interest: time series, functional areas, urban data, maritime statistics and LAU1/LAU2 data. This approach will ensure mutual benefits in the development of pan-European regionalised information and European maps.

Projects on scientific platform and analytical support

The following projects are running or envisaged in 2012 under Priority 3:

- ESPON 2013 Database (phase II)

The ESPON Database 2013 project – phase II (M4D Project) has delivered its Inception Report in 2011 and will deliver an Interim Report in June 2012. Considering the large number of improvements requested by the ESPON CU and the ESPON MC on the interface and functioning of the ESPON Database the year 2012 will be crucial for the development and consolidation of this ESPON tool by ensuring its practical use by policymakers.

- Territorial Indicators

The project on territorial indicators and indices (INTERCO) will deliver its Final Report on 29 February 2012. This project has had a number of events in which they involved the MC and other stakeholders in the development of a set of comparable and reliable indicators and indices that can be used to measure territorial cohesion. The results are expected to be used in the ESPON Database to improve its hierarchical structure.

More projects under Priority 3 are in the pipeline. The following projects have been in the Call for Proposals that closed in October 2011. The selected projects are envisaged to start in spring 2012:

- ESPON Atlas on European Territorial Structures and Dynamics
- Territorial Evidence Packs for Structural Funds Programmes
- Online Mapping Tool
- Territorial Monitoring in a European Macro Region

In addition the following projects will be re-launched in April 2012 due to none or insufficient proposals in the last call:

- Detecting Territorial Potential and Challenges
- European Territorial Monitoring System

Selected proposals for these projects will be able to start in the fall 2012.

Finally, one additional Priority 3 project is being drafted and will be presented for MC decision on 8 February 2012. A project specification is being developed jointly with the European Investment Bank and Eurostat for a project with the working title:

- European Urban Monitoring

This project will in case be able to start in fall 2012.

In total, this means that there will be 7 or 8 Priority 3 projects up and running by the end of the year 2012.

Tools (actions in MA-led project)

The following services are running in 2012 under this action of Priority 3:

- Online MapFinder

The Online MapFinder is being developed using two service contracts: one on the IT part and one on the content part. The service provider for the IT part develops the tool itself and their final delivery is expected for January 2012. The content part of the Online MapFinder is in a procurement procedure that closes 4 January 2012. The selected service provider is envisaged to start in spring 2012 and to deliver their final results end of 2012.

In addition, the following service contracts for new Tools are being prepared for implementation in 2012:

- ESPON Data Navigator 2012

The ESPON Data Navigator 2012 is expected to deliver an update and an interactive version of the Data Navigator including Iceland and Liechtenstein. This service is in a procurement procedure that closes 4 January 2012. The selected service provider is envisaged to start in spring 2012.

- Cartographic Language

Cartographic Language intends to modernise the communication using maps for territorial science and policy is expected to be tendered early 2012.

- Data Quality Check

Data Quality Check from ESPON projects and services shall ensure that all ESPON research projects and updates of maps service contracts will be supported and their data will be checked in order for the ESPON 2013 Database to offer the same standard and quality in all themes and data sets included. If approved by the MC and considering that many of the above indicated projects that will be covered by this action have already started, a service contract is expected to be tendered early 2012.

After 2012 the following projects are to be implemented:

- Improve the usefulness of the ESPON HyperAtlas for European regions
- TIA web application using the ARTS methodology
- Online training platform with sessions focused on a specific topics.

Update of Data and Maps (actions in MA led projects)

The following services are running in 2012 under this action of Priority 3:

- Update of Maps and Indicators on Natural Hazards

An Update of Maps and Indicators on Natural Hazards is expected to be tendered early 2012. The map updates and the related report will be used for the ESPON Territorial Observation no. 7, planned for autumn 2012. Further update services will be prepared in the second half of 2012 and take place in 2013 and 2014.

- Purchase of data

Purchase of data for use of more than one ESPON project and to be integrated in the ESPON Database, which is expected to be implemented starting in 2012.

II.4 Capitalisation and Communication (Priority 4 and partly 5)

The ESPON 2013 Programme will in 2012 make increasing efforts to capitalise and communicate the final results of the projects through a wide range of activities and channels, existing as well as new ones.

The Communication Plan (approved in 2007), the Capitalisation Strategy (approved in September 2010) together with the Publication Plan approved by the Monitoring Committee in June 2011, provide the strategic framework for implementing a wide range of targeted capitalisation and communication actions aimed at policy makers, stakeholders and the media.

Based on the Capitalisation Strategy the following activities are envisaged in 2012:

Media and Publication (actions in MA-led projects)

The following deliveries in 2012 are envisaged under this action of Priority 4:

In cooperation with the contracted service provider Media Bureau and Capitalisation Strategy, the following activities are planned for 2012:

- At least 6 press releases in relation to major publications launches and events.
- 6 ESPON Newsletters.
- Delivering speeches at external major events.
- Additional video clips.
- Promotion of the ESPON MapArt competition.

The Publication Plan for ESPON Publications related to the strategic MA-led project 4.1b “Publications and Design 2011-2014”, approved by the Monitoring Committee in September 2011, outlines in detail the types and numbers of publications foreseen for the coming years. This is divided into three main categories of publications, and for 2012, the publications in relation to the following types of publications are envisaged:

- Programme Publications

This category and priority consists of the major publications that are specifically mentioned in the ESPON 2013 Programme documents. In 2012, the work to produce the second *Synthesis Report* (to be published in the first quarter of 2013) and the second *Scientific Report* (to be published in the second quarter of 2013) will commence in 2012 with the involvement of external expertise.

The ESPON Synthesis Report provides further territorial evidence from major ESPON projects to support European policy development. The projects to be included in the second Synthesis Report will be decided publications in the beginning of 2012.

The ESPON Scientific Reports, targeting the European scientific community involved in research and higher education on territorial development and cohesion. The second Scientific Report will be prepared based on inputs from a planned Scientific Seminar carried out during 2012 and made public in 2013.

The *ESPON Territorial Observations*, targeting policy makers, practitioners and the private sector, focuses on particular territorial trends reflecting key themes in the current policy debate. Territorial Observation no. 6 is planned to cover “Territorial comparisons of Europe in relation to other Continents” and be published in the first quarter of 2012, while Territorial Observation no. 7 will focus on “Hazards and Climate Change” and be ready for publication at the end of 2012.

- Project-related publications

This category consists of publications based on major findings and results from various Priority 1-3 projects on six themes that are particularly important in relation to current policy development. These publications target mainly policy-makers, practitioners, stakeholders as well as other Structural Funds programmes.

The first publication in this category to be produced is “Indicators/Atlas on EU 2020”, envisaged for the first quarter 2013. This publication will display the most significant results of the Priority 1 project “European Regions: Potential contribution to the EU 2020 Strategy”, in easy accessible and comprehensible maps based on facts and indicators related to the main objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy. The work will start during 2012 and involve external expertise.

- Supporting ESPON Publications and Collaterals

This category consists of a high number of various publications and printed products/collaterals related to ESPON activities and events as well as promotional material and compilations of overviews of the progress of the ESPON Programme. For 2012 the following publications are envisaged within this category:

ESPON Seminar Report, drawing on the discussions, presentations and conclusions of the annual ESPON seminars and presented in an easily accessible way targeting policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners. A Seminar Report based on the ESPON Open Seminar in Aalborg, Denmark, is planned for the third quarter of 2012.

The first *ESPON Policy Briefs and Factsheets (2-3)* are planned to be produced during 2012. These are simple and accessible “one-page style news flashes” based on the key findings and policy messages emanating from the ESPON projects on territorial development in Europe the various target groups and to the wider public. The dissemination format for this publication will be web-based.

As previously a number of *Maps of the Month (3-4)* will be produced, delivering maps from major ESPON projects addressing current policy relevant topics in a simple and easy accessible way. In total around 6 issues are previewed. The dissemination format for this publication will in 2012 as in previous years be solely web-based.

- External Expertise

In order to ensure the implementation of the increasing number of ESPON publications, it will be necessary to involve external expertise to a relatively high degree for the envisioned output of publications to be achieved. This will be based on a frame service contract for “External expertise” which will be tendered and contracted in the first half of 2012. The service provider/company is expected to provide a pool of own in-house

and/or sub-contracted expertise that can be activated by the CU upon request and deliver drafting and editorial services as well as being capable of handling data and mapping.

- 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 and will be contracted in the beginning of the year. This will ensure continuity of the Website which is managed under a three years contract by the external service provider.

- Lay-out, Graphic Design and Printing

In addition, new frame service contracts for “Layout and Design” and “Printing” will have to be tendered and contracted during 2012, as the running contracts end during the year.

European Seminars and Workshops (actions in MA-led projects)

The following deliveries in 2012 are envisaged under this action of Priority 4:

The strategic MA-led project “4.2 European Seminars and Workshops 2011-2014” was approved by the Monitoring Committee in February 2011, and envisages for 2012 the following activities:

- 3 European Seminars

In 2012, the *ESPON Open Seminar* will be organized on 13-14 June in Aalborg, Denmark, during the Danish EU Presidency. The Open Seminar will link into the territorial dimension of policy making and the concrete use of ESPON as part of considerations related to a stronger territorial dimension in Policy. As previously a large number of ESPON projects will be for debate between policy makers, stakeholders, the ECP Network and experts/scientists.

A ESPON Scientific Seminar will be organised in late fall 2012, highlighting the scientific progress on territorial development and dynamics. The second ESPON Scientific Report, planned for 2013 (second quarter), will be based on the proceedings of this seminar. Scientific themes the scientific seminar will be decided in cooperation with the multitude of European Scientific organisations in the field of territorial research.

A third seminar might be considered later in 2012 depending on policy demand.

In addition, however not under this MA-led project but under the Communication Plan, the Coordination Unit shall in cooperation with the Cypriot Presidency organise an *Internal Seminar* on the beginning of 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. A thematic scope and the exact aims of this Seminar will be defined in due time during the first half of the year.

- 2 ESPON Workshops

Two ESPON Workshops will be organised during 2012, probably in April and in September. As previously the Workshops will consist of thematically oriented workshops based on specific ESPON projects/topics and often engaging dialogue among relevant groups of scientists and policy-makers in an interactive exchange of

knowledge and experiences. The themes being planned for these workshops are Territorial Impact Assessment (spring 2012) and Innovation and Knowledge (fall 2012).

Other workshops will be arranged as stand-alone events, in co-operation with scientific organisations/bodies, such as the annual Regional Studies Association Conference, and/or during the Open Days arranged by the European Commission. ESPON workshops can also be organised in connection to events by other bodies.

ESPON results will also as in earlier years, be the basis for many presentations around Europe, including the Open Days in Bruxelles.

Finally, the cooperation with other networking programmes dealing with European Territorial Cooperation will continue in 2012, starting with a coordination meeting early January 2012 seeking to explore complementarities between the different activities carried through by ETC Programmes.

Transnational Networking Activities

The Transnational Networking Activities are carried through as projects following calls for proposals involving the network of institutions confirmed as ESPON Contact Points.

In the beginning of 2012, the ECP network will be asked to report their national activities carried out until the end of 2011. Their reports will be compiled as one annual report for 2011 (and before) and will be made available to the MC and published on the ESPON website.

A third Call for Proposals on Transnational Networking Activities was launched in August 2011 resulting in two proposals. The decision on these proposals will be taken by the Monitoring Committee on 8 February 2012.

The INTERSTRAT project, initiated in 2010, presented a Draft Final Report in December 2011 and will deliver its Final Report during 2012. The other four Transnational Network Activity projects – NORBA, SCALES, CaDEC and ESPONTrain - are in full progress and will during 2012 carry out a number of national and transnational activities, such as workshops, seminars and teaching cycles, in support of the capitalisation and dissemination of ESPON evidence.

Communication Action Plan 2012

The planned communication activities are outlined in details in the ESPON Communication Action Plan 2012 which is available on the ESPON website.

II.5. Management of Programme and Projects, Audit and Evaluation (Priority 5)

The main challenge in relation to the Programme Management in 2012 will be to meet the commitment targets and pave the way for the more challenging commitment targets in 2012. Additional 4.792.371 EUR of ERDF will have to be certified to the Commission by the end 2012¹ (by the end of the year 2011 a total of 4.210.685,82 EUR of ERDF since the beginning of the Programme implementation period could be certified to the Commission).

Reaching the commitment targets for 2012 will require a close monitoring of projects and of the respect of the reporting deadlines, as the ESPON CU will have to assess and process in one year a higher amount of progress report than the amount assessed and

¹ For this first year of application of the de-commitment rule the 7% advance payment has to be reduced from the total ERDF to be declared to the European Commission.

process during the last three years of programme implementation, concretely from beginning of 2009 and end of 2011. In addition, it will be crucial to pave the way for a smooth and faster financial implementation of the programme as additional 11.410.480 EUR of ERDF needs to be certified by the end of 2013.

Programme Management

From the programme management side during 2012 the main milestones are related on one side to the reporting duties to the European Commission, and on the other side to the implementation of the specific programme management verifications that are foreseen in the approved management and control system description.

From the reporting side, two main reports will have to be submitted to the European Commission via the SFC-2007:

- Forecast Payment for 2012 and 2013, by the 30 April 2012
- Annual Implementation Report for 2011 which will have to be submitted to the European Commission by 30 June 2012 following its discussion and formal approval of the MC.

The Managing Authority and the Coordination Unit will have as well to cooperate and coordinate with the Certifying Authority for the submission of the report on irregularities due by the 31 March 2012.

In relation the management verifications, during 2012 the Managing Authority will have to continue implementing quality controls on ongoing projects and as well support Member States for the implementation of their quality checks on their respective first level financial control system. More information can be found in the section related to the Audit activities.

Finally, as underlined in the introductory text, an important milestone for 2012 will be to make sufficient progress with the financial implementation leading to a no de-commitment risk for the years 2012 and ensuring sufficient progress for avoiding de-commitment in 2013.

Calls for proposals, calls for expression of interest and call for tenders

During the first months of 2012, the ESPON CU will still be busy finalising the eligibility and financial management checks of the 8th round of calls closed on the 20 October 2011. The CU will at the same moment be contracting the selected experts related to the projects to be approved under the 8th round of calls. In addition the CU will be running the 9th round of calls that will be opened on the 18 April 2012. This last call will include at least one targeted analysis and one priority 3 project for which no proposals have been received in the framework of the 8th round of calls and as well one additional project under the scientific platform of priority 3. However, more projects can be added for a re-launch as result of the eligibility check and evaluation. This will be known by the MC meeting on 8 February 2012.

The eligibility checks (including the treatment of eventual correctable omissions cases) and the evaluation of the Management and Financial capabilities if proposals received for P1, P2, P3 and P4 will be closed only by mid January 2012. Following the decision of the MC, kick-off meetings with the selected Lead Applicants will have to be organised. During the kick off meetings the remarks of the evaluations will be considered which in most of the case results in the compilation of an annex to the standard subsidy contract and the resubmission of the Part A of the application form.

Finally, the MA and CU will have well to manage call for tenders related to the implementation of actions in the framework of priority 3 and priority 4 (see sections II.3 and II.4) as described in the MA led project proposal approved by the MC.

Project Monitoring

In relation to project monitoring during 2012 there will be a major increase related to the monitoring of ongoing projects together with the contracting of the new projects selected following the call closed on 20 October 2011. The CU expects receiving 102 progress reports during 2012 and addressing the financial closure of 14 projects.

Particular attention, in agreement with the priority set for the year, and in line with the Road Map to avoid de-commitment, will be provided to the timely and correct submission of projects reimbursement claim, taking into account the important deadline with the application of the de-commitment rule by the end of the year. The experience of 2011 showed again an insufficient level of quality of the submitted reimbursement claims and as well shortcomings in relation to the certification according to first level financial control.

In order to avoid de-commitment at the end of 2012 and in particular at the end of 2013, the ESPON CU will have to reinforce the support to Lead and Project Partners, but as well to the first level financial controller. As indicated in the section related to the Communication Plan, specific events have been planned in order to treat with the needed urgency this issue. In addition, specific session at the ESPON seminars will be organised.

Close contact with the Lead Partners and the first level financial control will be reinforced and as well projects will be encouraged to send to the CU the draft reimbursement claims before they are sent to the first level financial controller for verifications.

Audit activities 2011

The main audit activities within the year 2012 will mainly include:

- Audit of operations during the first half of the year to be finished by 30 June 2012,
- Annual control report and opinion during the second half of the year to be delivered to the EC by 31 December 2012.

The audit of operations will be implemented on behalf of the Audit Authority by the external auditor between February and April 2012, taking into account the need of giving all audits closed by the 30 June 2011. The methodology of the audit of operation will remain the same as in 2010. However, based on the previous experience, the preparatory phase of the audit of operations will start already in December 2011 by informing the audited beneficiaries and planning the on-field interventions by the external auditor.

The Group of Auditors meeting held in Paris on the 14 and 15 November 2011 has defined the confidence level of the ESPON 2013 programme based on the results of audit of operations of 2011 and set the size of the sample to be audited. Due to positive results of 2011, it will be most probable that there will be no system audit of central authorities in 2012. The sampling of audit of operation will most probably include projects from priority 1 to 3, as these types of payment claims are more numerous in 2011. On the basis of the number of operations paid and certified by the Certifying

Authority in 2011 (23 operations reported costs during 2011), the sampling size of the audit of operation will be of 7,5% corresponding to 2 operations selected, therefore 2 Lead Partners and 2 projects partners during February-April 2012.

The AA and the GoA have decided and approve both the random and the complementary sample during the meeting on 14 and 15 of November. As random sample the DEMIFER and EUROISLANDS have been selected. Of these two operations the LPs located respectively in the Netherlands and in Greece will be audited together with the Austrian partner of the DEMIFER project and the Maltese partner of the EUROISLAND project.

The complementary sample is left to the AA and GoA's discretion according to the results of the mandatory sampling if it helps to conclude and provide a meaningful opinion to the EC by the 31 December 2012. For this reason the AA and GoA's have decided to add an operation as complementary sample. The selection methodology of the complementary sample as been the following:

- Operations and countries not already covered by previous audits or controls by the external auditors and the Certifying Authority
- Countries and beneficiaries having the highest expenditure declared.

According to result of the above mentioned analysis it has been decided to audit an additional beneficiary located in Germany, and in particular the TRANSMEC project, a specific project implemented by a single private beneficiary.

The annual control report and opinion of the reference year 30/06/2011-30/06/2012 will be prepared by the external auditor and approved by the Audit Authority and Group of Auditors during the GoA meeting foreseen in Luxembourg and planned for the 12 and 13 November 2012 in Lille, France.

The MA Quality checks

The Managing Authority and the ESPON Coordination Unit will continue in 2012 to perform MA quality checks on operations, on-the-spot. Due to the workload, it has not been possible to implement quality checks in 2011. However, taking into account that the audits and the quality checks implemented by the CA have detected serious weaknesses in relation of the audit trail, the ESPON CU will have to implement a considerable amount of checks in 2012. The MA/CU is planning to conduct between 5 and 10 MA quality checks during 2012.

The beneficiaries, Lead partners or Project partners, will be selected for MA quality checks, based on the risk analysis performed by the MA/CU which plan to inform the latest on an on-going basis over the year 2012.

The main focus of the MA Quality checks in 2012 will be put on the improvement of the audit trail with a direct impact on the reporting process, in particular the improvement of the quality of documents submitted to the FLC and the ESPON CU, as part of the MA/CU' efforts to ensure no de-commitment in 2012 and 2013. Involvement of the MC members, First Level Controllers and Central Approbation Body representatives in relation to the beneficiaries concerned by MA quality checks will be demanded from the preparatory phase until the implementation of necessary corrective actions, if any.

Results of the MA quality checks will be presented to the central authorities of the Programme, MC and CA over the year 2012, once the final reports are ready. The

follow-up on implementing corrective actions should be the case, will be controlled by the First Level Controllers concerned.

Member and Partner State Quality checks

The Member States and Partner States will still be strongly recommended by the MA/CU to perform Quality checks of their First Level Control Systems. During 2011 some improvements on the checks implemented by the MS have been noticed. Quality checks have been implemented by Spain and France and are ongoing in Romania, Germany and the Netherlands. The UK has organised a meeting for FLC located in the country.

The MA/CU will continue supporting the Members States and Partner States via internal manuals, interview guidance and an overview by country of their First Level control system and issues encountered during desk review performed by the CU on behalf of the MA. Involvement of the MC members, First Level Controllers and Central Approbation Body representatives in relation to MS/PS quality checks will be demanded from the preparatory phase until the implementation of necessary corrective actions, if any.

The main focus of the MS/PS Quality checks in 2012 will be put on the improvement of the certifying process, in particular the improvement of the First Level Controllers' qualifications and of the quality of control documents submitted and the verification controller's implements on the audit trail.

Due to the fact that each Member States and Partners States must perform at least one quality check of their First Level Control System in place during the programming period according to the regulation, further MS/PS quality check must be planned for the entire year 2012. The assistance of the ESPON CU/MA to the MS/PS has been identified as essential for the successful implementation of these quality checks.

Certifying Authority quality checks

The Certifying Authority will perform a CA quality check on operations in the second half of 2012. The selection of operations will be made based on the list of operations paid and certified between 30/06/2011 and 30/06/2012 prepared by the MA/CU early July 2012.

One project will be sampled based on a risk analysis performed by the CA in accordance with the defined methodology. Most probably, the CA will perform CA quality checks on two operations in 2012. The selection of the second operation was foreseen already in 2010 and 2011. However, due to the low number of operations paid and certified between 01/01/2007 (beginning of the programme) and 30/06/2011, the CA decided in 2011 to postpone the selection of this second operation to 2012. The CA already informed that the FOCI and ATTREG projects under Priority 1 cannot be selected again in 2012 in accordance with the defined methodology, because they have been already controlled in 2010 and 2011 by the CA.

Results of the CA quality checks will be communicated to the central authorities of the Programme via final reports before the 31 December 2012. Follow-up on implementing necessary corrective actions, should this be the case, will be given to the MA/CU in case of irregularities and to MC members and First Level controllers concerned.

Ongoing Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme shall according to EC Regulation 1083, Art. 47 be conducted as an ongoing evaluation during the entire programme implementation. Hence, the ongoing evaluation will continue in 2012 with internal evaluation reports using the created Scoring Board for the second half of 2011, including the evaluation scoreboard, by February 2012, and in September 2012 for the first half of 2012.

The envisaged External Evaluation started in November 2010 and after the selection of external evaluator through a call for tender this evaluation was finalised by late spring 2011.

The Monitoring Committee addressed the 12 recommendations from evaluators at their meeting on 23-24 June 2011. The MC approved the final report of the External Evaluation and decided to implement the proposed actions concerning:

- The involvement of Sounding Boards in an exchange of experience effort, eventually as a survey.
- An enhanced emphasis on Capitalisation in the years ahead.
- Efforts to get more potential beneficiaries from more countries made aware of ESPON.
- Emphasis on executive summaries with a high communication value from all projects.

The recommendations on an improvement of regional data and an ex-post evaluation of impacts of results were directed towards the European Commission.

The MC also took note of the expert's considerations related to a future ESPON programme and the recommendation of a preparatory study in that respect.

The majority of recommendations decided by the MC for the current programme period have been implemented. Strong focus on capitalisation is a strategic avenue in this Work Programme for 2012. The additional communication and awareness raising implemented in 2011 led to a substantial increase in proposals for the last call for proposals. All Lead Partners have through a revision of the ESPON Guidelines to project partners been made aware of the importance of a high quality, easy understandable executive summary of results targeting policy makers and practitioners.

Only the survey among Sounding Boards is outstanding and will be implemented in early 2013 when a larger number of Sounding Boards have gained solid experiences to exchange. No additional follow up of the External Evaluation is needed in 2012.

II.6 ESPON post 2013

The discussion on ESPON post 2013 started in 2010 with the involvement of the TCUM and the MC. In 2011, at meetings of Ministers, General Directors, the NTCCP and the ESPON MC, the discussion has advanced further on the scoping the content and institutional arrangement.

Key words in the conclusions by 25 November 2011 of the Polish EU Presidency follow earlier policy orientations for ESPON post 2013 demanding of a strengthened capacity and a reinforced institutional setting, leading to proposals and decision on a new framework for ESPON post 2013 as a European Territorial Observatory Network.

The work in detailing a proposal on ESPON post 2013 will be progressing during 2012. It may include an evaluation in 2012 of the results of ESPON providing the basis for its future work, commissioned by the European Commission.

Elaborating proposals and making the decisions necessary for establishment of a new framework for ESPON post 2013 as European Territorial Observation Network will progress in parallel. Likewise, preparation of Operational Programme and other statutory documents accordingly to the institutional setting adjusted to the new framework of ESPON post 2013 will be processed during 2012 and 2013.

III. Time planning 2012

Monitoring Committee meetings 2012

The ESPON Monitoring Committee is scheduled to meet on 8 February, 11-12 June, 19 September and 3-4 December 2012.

Concertation Committee activity in 2012

The Concertation Committee will instead of meeting in 2012 give advice via e-mail on project specifications for the very last calls for proposals opening on 18 April 2012 and closing on 13 June 2012. Additional advice due to the role of the Concertation Committee will also be organised via e-mail.

ECP meetings 2011

In 2012, the ECP network will be gathered for meetings on 15 June and 7 December 2012.

Group of Auditors meetings 2012

The next meeting of the GoA will be on 12-13 November 2012 in Lille.

Financial Managers Seminars 2012

A first financial Manager seminar will be held in spring 2012. A second seminar will be organised in autumn 2012.

IV. Budget 2011

The implementation of the Work Programme for 2012 is envisaged to imply expenses according to the indicative budget inserted as Annex 3. During 2012, the MC will be presented for budget updates corresponding to the contracting, spending and absorption of funds.

IV. Annexes

- Indicative Calendar 2012-2013
- Budget 2012