



On behalf of the European Commission, DG Regional Policy
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**Study on “territorial cohesion, lessons learned from the ESPON
programme projects and strategy for the future**

**Appendix F – Meeting Minutes of ESPON
Expert Panel
(9th and 10th January 2005)**

June 2006

This document briefly summarizes the main remarks made during the Expert Panel in the framework of the study on “territorial cohesion – lessons learned from the ESPON programme projects and strategy for the future”.

The Expert Panel took place on the 9th and 10th of January in Brussels.

Day 1 – Monday 9th January 2006

1. Workshop 1 Scientists

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS:

For Scientists

A. Integration

- Process related – Important to achieve integration within ESPON findings from individual projects
- Integrated findings from ESPON with other EU research programmes (e.g. Research FP6)

B. Conceptual

- Achieve greater conceptual clarity of terms (e.g. Polycentricity, Territorial Cohesion)
- Explore concepts in greater depth
- For Policy Makers
- Assist with understanding of spatial development – make clear the implications of ESPON for National/Regional/Local strategies
- Assist with applying spatial development strategies at different levels – identify best practice and help with benchmarking

For Practitioners

- Applying Spatial Development Strategies – through benchmarking, best practice
- Address transferability of knowledge
- Help recognise their area's position within the EU

DATA ISSUES:

- Problems – lack of data, comparability, quality, access, reliability
- Where/When – candidate countries, scale, time series, policy relevance
- Reasons – lack of resources, problems of data collection, qualitative v quantitative

- Solutions – more resources, greater use of case studies, use of other data sources (e.g. from other research programmes and other institutions)

2. Policy makers/territorial planners

Q1: Identification of the needs of the three ESPON user groups at the different levels.

The most important needs have been identified at the local/regional level, followed with quite a distance of the European level and finally the national level.

The key issues (needs) have been (in decreasing order):

At the local/regional level:

- Analysis and benchmarking (13)
 - contextualisation of the positioning of the regions
 - need to know reasons for economic growth/drivers
 - best practice examples are very important
- Synthesis/shaping (9)
 - Guidance on which choices to make
 - Clear and concise recommendations for different spatial and administrative levels
- Raise awareness (6)
 - Need for guidance and tools
 - Practitioners need more involvement
- Governance (4)
 - Link to national level
 - Synergies between policy sectors

At European level

- New approaches are required (7)
 - Territorial dimension and cohesion linked to Lisbon and Gothenburg conclusions
- Co-ordination EU sectors (6)
 - Different EU sectors need to have better co-ordination and relate their activities
 - More integration

- Knowledge base (2)
 - A sound knowledge is the basis for the work – data should be comparable

At national level

- Governance
 - Planners and policy makers in the different ministries
- Awareness raising/information
 - Understanding of ESPON
 - Active in ECPs

→ The national level should by means of improved governance be the link to the regional level and raise awareness on the results, findings etc. of ESPON. The EU could co-ordinate and support that process.

Q2: How can ESPON meet these needs?

- No clear answers to that question but see last comment on previous page
 - Developing exemplary processes can be a way of achieving the goal (best practices)
 - ESPON should capitalise on its strengths

3. Workshop 3 ESPON/European Commission (9 January 2006)

3.1 Integration

Regarding future cooperation with INTERACT and URBACT, where do you see potential for cooperation, integration (consolidation).

Cooperation

- Strong consensus on positive possibilities to cooperate including:
 - Discussions at time of developing workplans
 - Unified dissemination communication strategies and events
 - Interact providing guidance on procedures etc.
 - Urbact providing links with urban policy makers
 - Common work on MEGA and Large Urban Zones
- Only no go areas were cooperation of ECPs (common ECPs) and joint management

Integration

- Willing to follow up on:
 - integrated dissemination
 - exchange of good practice
 - common monitoring group (say once a year)
- Only no go areas were integration of ECPs

Consolidation

- No negatives raised. Positive possibilities included:
 - ESPON providing implementation material to Interact (at ESPON expense)
 - Mutual seats on MC

3.2 Tendering

Problem areas covered

Dissemination

- OJ seen as a Strength (?) targeting a wide audience. On the negative side uncertain if bidders will respond and not enough people finding the ITT notice. Could be overcome by working with other programmes (eg through websites) and greater action by ECPS

Definition

- MC defining ToR, but could involve scientists. Provides high quality content and match to EU national policy priorities. On the negative side ToRs not always realistic, and process can be slow
- Suggesting a sounding board linked to projects at definition of ToRs validated by MC and using a common model for project ToRs

1 or 2 Stage Tenders

- 2 step gives time to build consortia e.g. joining SME and Large orgs
- 2 step needed because of complexity of ToRs
- Possibility to have EOI as a first step
- Weakness seen as taking time. Seems to be a strong preference to move to one step approach.

Evaluation

- Strength in independent evaluation. Weakness is lack of evaluators and not always specialists. All could be overcome by:
 - Pay evaluators and establish a pool
 - Mix evaluator competences
 - Balance geography of teams

Day 2 – Tuesday 10th January 2006

4. Workshop (future-oriented) on thematic and geographic coverage

A. ESPON and Geographic Coverage

Opportunities:

- Need to make ESPON more useful to potential users
- Provide greater depth
- Extend to accession/candidate countries and adjacent countries
- For candidate countries it is helpful to be included before entry into EU
- Choice has to be made for full or not full coverage in each study
- Balkan project, filling white hole
- World wide view on some things could be usefull

Problems:

- Willingness/ability of countries to participate
- Lack of data (also reliability, comparability, costs, etc)
- Budget restraints
- Whom ever is paying is Included in ESPON

B. Sort of studies

The 8 types of studies (Need to be clear what studies are for and for whom they are being done):

1. Valuable to many different types of actors – they allow benchmarking of regions and act as a starting point for other studies, However, problems of data availability – but data issues should not dictate these studies
2. The sectoral approach will produce better links to specific areas and create better links to sectoral actors and specific areas. But need to define them carefully and there are problems of representativeness and comparability
3. Integrated topics are important as they allow us to study new phenomena in depth, investigate links between causes and effects of problems. However, need to think carefully over the selection of such studies and think carefully about how to generalize results
4. Will allow better use of ESPON knowledge vis-à-vis policy making, a way of valorising ESPON, also has the potential to generate (political) support for ESPON. However, threatens independence of ESPON, a diversion from ESPON's main tasks
5. There are necessary to make use of what already exists – also helps identify trends and create a dynamic view of developments. But need to think carefully about what needs to

be updated – there needs to be good reasons for continuing to collect data (not simply political reasons)

6. Filling in the “Black Hole” within the existing ESPON coverage and new ESPON countries is important for the EU policy makers and new/future EU members – it is a part of the political integration process, allows the production of knowledge prior to integration (can assist with identification of problems). But data availability is a problem as is finance
7. Important for dissemination and raising the awareness of ESPON, allows for the valorisation of results and can serve as a focus for integration of ESPON with other programmes. Also is a good way to address the needs of end-users. However – there are issues of finance and time.
8. A “screening process” – important way of improving the quality of new (extensive studies) and improving the quality of large-scale projects. But raises issues of budget and time.

Ranking Table of preference of studies according to scenarios (Three highest per scenario in red)

Studies Scenar- ios	Same budget	Increase in budget	Integration : huge overall EU-research programme
1	12	9	9
2	4	4	5
3	8	11	14
4	6	7	7
5	7	5	3
6	4	5	3
7	4	5	5
8	4	4	2

5. Workshop (future-oriented) on Tendering, Scientific validation, Project Admin and Programme Management

5.1 Scientific Validation

Main topics identified covered:

Scientific Board

- Improves quality with possibility to help MC. Offers independence. Better term is "Sounding Board".
- Weaknesses mainly need for funding and potential difficulty in finding experts

Timing

- Process oriented. Need early involvement to redirect projects. Validation during not after project.
- May delay projects. Only useful for longer term projects.

Comments

- Offers better focus so chance of adjusting work to keep it in track with programme objectives

- Could be too scientific – academic controversy

Data

- Validation independent – could be carried out by ECPs and sounding board. Check on data reliability increases confidence.
- Needs additional funding

5.2 Programme Management

- Holistic approach v continuous value development.
- ESPON II should not have slow start, so closer to continuous added value. So results from ESPON I need to be used in setting objectives 2007-2013

5.3 ToR and Recommendations

- Matrix approach proposed when developing work programme (User groups, Policies/themes, level/space)
- Make clear levels of users addressed by programme – map these to project objectives
- Linkage to ESPON I
- Treatment of results – tangible, specific, EU National Regional
- Policy options rather than recommendations
- Projects should focus on recommendations

5.4 Scenarios

Budget stays same

- Regardless of budget very strong support for creation of a sounding board for scientific validation – including possibly end users as well as scientists
- Addressing end users – need to have focussed projects with specific spatial levels clearly defined
- Focus on themes that have high policy value

Budget increases

- All that is in earlier scenario continued. Much greater use of sounding board at all levels (ToR definition, evaluation, monitoring, etc) More end user integration
- More response to data gaps issues
- Increased availability of synthesis reports
- Programme should involve - Policy study integration extended. Extend communications strategy with events, publications etc. Transfer of results to endusers. Measure to enable responsive studies.
- Projects given more realistic budgets to enhance quality and depth of work. Some mechanism to enable local level to get value – could be translation of synthesis reports.

Integration

- True integration not realistic
- Programmes might be better coordinated through 1 common meeting per year to search for overlaps/synergies
- Projects to seek ways to exchange information with other programmes through support measures

6. Workshop (future-oriented) on Communication, Dissemination, Networking

Q1: Which means of dissemination for ESPON user groups (ToR, Results)?

ToR

- Preparation of ToR and Work programme
 - Wide brainstorming about the interests (call for interest, afterwards technical ToR)
- Means of dissemination
 - O.J.: high quality of tenders

- Web pages / sectoral: Inforegion (DG REGION new portal for tenders), Interact, Urbact, ESPON site...
 - Targeted mailings to specific user groups
 - Specialised press (if there is enough budget available)
- Networks
 - For horizontal dissemination use the networks

Results

- Thematic platforms: involve people who are in specific sectors
- Role of project leaders in the dissemination: put not only forward the role of CU, ECP etc.
- Close look at third parties initiatives
- Workshops e.g. thematic ones, joint, specific user groups...
- National events in order to create links (e.g. use the ECP therefore)

Communication on studies should take place at the beginning – raise awareness and interest – and at the end of projects – present results.

Q2: How can non-typical ESPON users be addressed/involved?

Question at 2 levels:

Regional users:

- Addressed through the new kinds of studies e.g. category 2.
- General comment: It would be important to test the results of the studies in regions, in order to get clear and precise recommendation and to have best practice examples on which on can communicate

Other sectors: very important!

- Difficult to solve problem: Policies have to shift to integrated approach.

- Possibility: through creating the need for the use of ESPON results such as awarding criteria for funding (link structural funds); use project results for project generation
- Interesting example NL: In the NL they are using a prospective approach in order to involve the different parties. Acceptance of talk on future co-operation between sectors much easier than related to present.

Q3 Networking: How can the organisation of ESPON networks be improved in the future?

- CU
 - Newsletters, specific communication team
- ECP
 - Improve communication and dissemination activities, organise conferences, more actively related to regional problems – ask for minimum requirements
- TPG
 - Ask minimum requirements in terms of participation of practitioners
 - Use of city/region networks to validate and disseminate results
 - Envisage sort of client server
- MC
 - Should have national/multisectoral backing group (in INTERACT quite some countries have national committees)
- Links/networking
 - Public consultations
 - Stronger links with INTERACT, URBACT (sharing of experts, dissemination)
- Other comments
 - National translation of the results to the national implication of projects
 - Introduce a “ESPON forum” which includes other stakeholders and is interacting with programmes and is organising “hearings” with other stakeholder groups. (This was done by information society at Commission and worked very well)

Implications of the scenarios

- Scenario 1 budget =
 - More electronic communication e.g. electronic newsletter
 - Targeting practitioners and scientific community
 - Foresee a proportion of the budget for communication

- Scenario 2 budget >
 - Work on regional applications
 - Stronger dissemination through CU and ECP
 - Organise more events

- Scenario 3 integration Interact, Urbact...
 - Common communication strategy
 - Take joint actions
 - Exchange of experience