On behalf of the European Commission, DG Regional Policy
(2005 CE 16 0 AT 017)

Study on "territorial Cohesion, lessons learned from the ESPON programme projects and strategy for the future"

Final Report

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RAMBØLL
management

This document is the Final Report for the European Commission, DG Regional Policy Study on “territorial cohesion – lessons learned from the ESPON programme projects and strategy for the future” (2005 CE 16 0 AT 017).

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List of abbreviations

AESOP	Association of European Schools of Planning
CEEC	Central and Eastern European countries
CIP	Community Initiative Programme
CU	Co-ordination Unit
DG Regio	Directorate General for Regional Policy
ECP	ESPON national Contact Point
ECTP	European Council of Town Planners
EoI	Expression of Interest
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
ETCI	European Territorial Cohesion Index
EU	European Union
EUKN	European Urban Knowledge Network
FCG	Financial Control Group
GEOSS	Global Earth Observation System of Systems
GMES	Global Monitoring for Environment and Security
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
INSPIRE	The infrastructure for spatial information in Europe
KTEN	Know Trans-European Networks
LAU	Local Area Unit
LoI	Letter of Interest
LTDB	Long-Term Database
MA	Managing Authority
MASST	Macroeconomic, Sectoral, Social and Territorial Model
MC	Monitoring Committee
MEDA	Mediterranean Area
NSO	National Statistical Office
NUTS	Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Paying Authority
PC	Programme Complement
SDI	Sustainable Development Indicators
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SIA	Sustainability Impact Assessment
SPESP	Study Programme on European Spatial Planning
TEN	Trans-European Networks
TIA	Territorial Impact Analysis
TINA	Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPG	Transnational Project Group

Executive Summary

Analysed from a user- and demand- perspective, the still ongoing ESPON programme is a very complex programme that created a strong potential added value to a vast audience. Referring to the nature of the programme being an 'applied study' or 'applied science' programme, ESPON creates more actual added value for the scientific community (scientific side) yet less actual added value for practitioners and policy-makers (application side). Developing the potential value created for the latter user groups into actual value should be the main focus of ESPON in the future.

The added value of ESPON is a function of a various aspects. In order to be able to identify and tackle the shortcomings of the current programme a holistic analysis of these various aspects and their interplay has to be made.

Given the complexity of the programme, it is not possible to address all findings and recommendations in this executive summary. A complete list of findings and recommendations can be found in Section 4 of this report. The key-findings on the current ESPON programme and corresponding key-recommendations for the future ESPON programme are as follows:

Key finding	Causes	Key-recommendation
Complexity – Programme Approach and Management	ESPON has ambitious objectives as it ▪ addresses large number of potential users, ▪ covers a large number of topics, ▪ and covers large territory to cover. At the same time the programme provides for little focus or priorities. The new programme went through a learning process which does not provide for holistic clarity in the approach.	ESPON II must be simplified by providing for ▪ More focus with regard to the three dimensions of thematic coverage, administrative level, and user groups , ▪ Provide for more clarity and continuity in its approach, ▪ Realise simple solutions to current shortcomings.
Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance not clear	No clear process have been defined as regards both ▪ Scientific Validation and ▪ Quality Assurance with regard to the recommendations to be brought about.	Establish sounding boards for each study that provide for more clarity and value creation in both respects – scientifically and practically[1].
Tendering problematic	In average a small numbers of tender has been submitted and the number of bidders was decreasing over time. This is related ▪ to administrative burden of projects for TPGs which impede attractiveness to participate in programme, ▪ little flexibility in tendering process with regard to innovative approaches and methodologies.	▪ Increase attractiveness of ESPON II projects for TPGs (see below). ▪ Introduce Call for Proposals combined with 'negotiated public procurement procedure'[2]. ▪ Engage in direct dissemination of Tenders to increase number of potential bidders reached.

[1] A sounding board is based on the idea of a scientific board, the purpose of which is to accompany a study team in scientific terms by means of verifying, commenting and approving the scientific approach of a particular study. Going beyond the concept of the scientific board, the sounding board would also provide for input from policy makers and practitioners.

[2] Negotiated Public Procurement Procedures are procurement procedures whereby the contracting authorities consult the economic operators of their choice and negotiate the terms of contract with one or more of these. Please see Section 3.3.2.3 for further detail.

Key finding	Causes	Key-recommendation
Project Administrative and Management burdensome for TPGs	▪ Subsidy contract ▪ No room for profit margin, thus little attractiveness for certain institutions ▪ Data facilitation by ECPs problematic	▪ Increase the financial attractiveness of projects to increase the number of bidders where possible ▪ Endow TPGs with power for data collection
Thematic coverage overall satisfying but with room for improvement	Thematically, the programme covers ▪ Large variety of themes ▪ Themes not yet very integrated ▪ Relatively long delays between project start (data used) and outcomes ▪ New themes could be added if this deems necessary with regard to client-orientation	ESPON II should ▪ Provide for more focus ▪ Define priorities in terms of topic by taking into account demand ▪ Provide for more immediate value creation through detailed recommendations ▪ Provide for thematically integrated studies ▪ Provide for demand driven studies on short-notice ▪ Provide for continuity with regard to the topics
Geographic Detail does not address lower level users	Geographic detail is impeded ▪ By the approach mostly targeting NUTS 3 ▪ The availability of data at lower levels and in CEEC	ESPON II should clearly define which levels should be addressed. In this context it appears as if the regional level would be appropriate. This requires some ESPON studies to cover LAU 1 (NUTS 4)
Communication, Dissemination and Networking could be improved	▪ Little initial communication since communication basically oriented on value creation of ESPON II ▪ Cooperation with INTERACT interesting but certainly improvable ▪ No coordination or cooperation with other similar programmes to develop complementarities	▪ Joint communication and dissemination strategy with URBACT II and INTERACT II ▪ Communication Strategy consistent with work programme ▪ More direct communication and dissemination ▪ Increase ECP responsibilities in terms of networking, communication and dissemination

Table EX.1: Summary of Key-Finings, Causes and Key-Recommendations

1. Introduction

The purpose of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) is to contribute to increased territorial cohesion among the European regions, hence also to the implementation of the ESDP, by means of concentrating on technical and scientific aspects of spatial development and territorial policies. The ESPON programme provides for studies focussing on different topics related to spatial development. By means of the programme projects, ESPON is supposed to increase the knowledge on spatial development and on the spatial impact of policies. Establishing a network shall foster the exchange of results and experiences. In this way, the programme aims on providing policy-makers, practitioners and scientist active at all levels – European, national, regional and local levels – with a scientific foundation, the results of which could be employed for policy formulation.

The first ESPON period (2002 – 2006) has entered its final stage. Throughout 2006 the programme will continue its activities: further ESPON programme projects will be finalised and the respective reports will be published. In addition, the programme will engage in significant communication efforts.

Recognising the important role of this first ESPON period, the 2004 EU Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion in Rotterdam strongly favoured a continual observation of European territorial trends and development as this would be supportive for the pursuit of territorial cohesion. Thus, the ministerial meeting laid down the basic foundation for a continuation of ESPON, yet leaving the task of specifying the key priorities and institutional settings for later occasions.[3]

The Informal Ministerial in Luxemburg reiterated the support for the programme, yet, given the then state of negotiations on the EU financial perspective 2007 – 2013, decided that it is too early to work on an agreement with the Commission on the future if ESPON. The Ministers agreed on the document 'Common understanding on Orientations of an ESPON II' Programme for 2007-2013 in which they express their main considerations in developing proposals for a future ESPON programme. They ask the Commission to take the common understanding into account in developing its proposal on ESPON II.[4]

The overall purpose of this study on "territorial cohesion – lessons learned from the ESPON programme projects and strategy of the future" is to prepare the detailed recommendations on a second ESPON programme, which, lasting from 2007 to 2013, should provide for a highest possible added value for policy makers at all governmental levels, practitioners and scientists. These recommendations however require a thorough, independent and objective assessment of the existing ESPON programme, of its achievements and shortcomings, as well as a profound understanding of the possible future scenarios for the development of the EU and EU Regional Policy.

Therefore, this study is divided into two parts. The first part (Section 2) will be past-oriented and analyse value of the existing ESPON programme for its user, taking into account both the programmes institutional settings and its content. In order to complete the study, Part II (Section 3) will be future-oriented in terms of identifying and formulating recommendations regarding the configurations of the future ESPON II programme. All recommendations will be summarized in Section 4.

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[3] See Presidency Conclusions, no. 4.3, EU Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion, Rotterdam, 29 November 2004

[4] See Presidency Conclusions, no. 2.4, EU Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion, Luxembourg, 20/21 May 2005

Before entering the main sections referring to the analysis, each part of the study will start with a small introduction briefly the approach that has been used for elaborating the respective part. The findings stemming from each part's individual sections will be integrated in a respective concluding section.

As for the overall objective of the study – the development of recommendation on a potential ESPON II programme framework that provides for maximum added value for its actual and potential users – this study will adopt a strict user and demand-orientation throughout the study process.

2. Part I – Lessons learned from the current ESPON Programme

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The major interest of this study's first part is to determine the value of the current ESPON programme for its actual and potential users. Thus, the study refers to the questions whether and, as the case may be, how ESPON 2002 – 2006 created Added Value for the major three user groups (Policy Makers, Practitioners, and Scientists). In this respect, a first distinction has to be made between the Added Value of ESPON for Policy-Makers and Practitioners (also Territorial Planners) which we will also refer to as "Practical Value or Value Added" and the Added Value for Scientists which we will also refer to as "Scientific Value".

Six elements determining the value of ESPON have been identified. The following figure groups these six elements under two headlines – the ESPON Institutional Framework and the ESPON Content – and illustrates their relation with the 2 remaining element, ESPON Practical and Scientific Added Value (Figure 2.1).

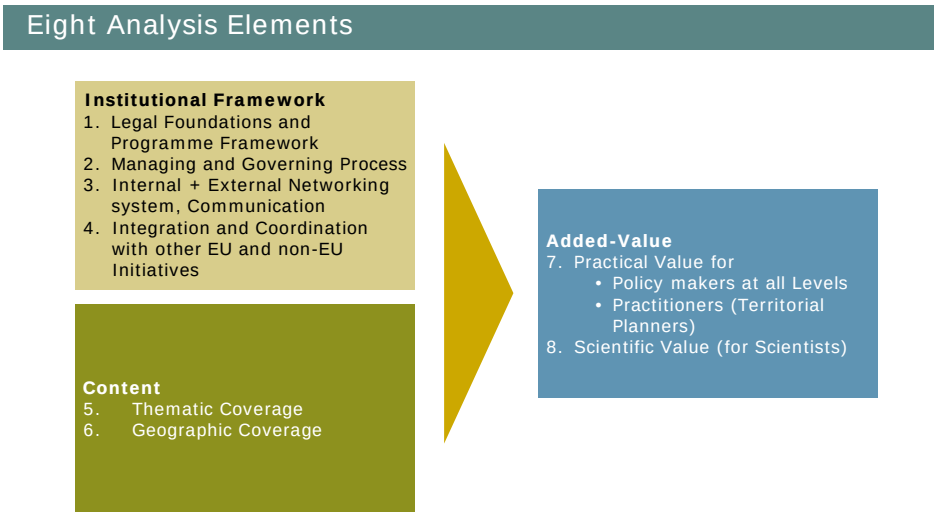

Figure 2.1 Eight Analysis elements

Building on this scheme, the subsequent sections of Part I will refer to each of these elements. All aspects regrouped under the same headline will initially be discussed in separately and then as the subject of an integrated discussion. All finding on the Added Value of ESPON will be addressed in an integrated way in Section 2.4.

2.2 ESPON – Institutional Framework

2.2.1 Legal Foundations and Programme Framework

The European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) was implemented in the framework of the Community Initiative INTERREG III in 2002 to provide a common platform for applied research in the policy fields related to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). Its aim being to improved co-ordination and consistency of policy actions and measures at the EU level and between the EU, national and regional levels, as well as for bilateral relations of individual states.

A spatial planning observatory network has a long history, originating from the ESDP work up to 1999 and incorporating the Study Programme on European Spatial Planning (SPESP 1998-2000) that established guidelines for an observatory. Although formally opened in January 2002, the ESPON 2006 Programme was only approved by the Commission on 3 June 2002. Signature of the ESPON agreement by ESPON states also took a protracted period which constrained early implementation in some ESPON states.

It is quite likely that a similar pattern of programme initiation, approval and signature will occur for ESPON 2007-2013. Continuity of activity between ESPON I and ESPON II should be encouraged to avoid loss of impetus and breakdown in programme support structures.

The programme was put in place to facilitate improved knowledge and understanding on spatial development arising out of an enlarging European Union. As the EU grows there are implications for regional policy and initiatives in Member States and Accession States. ESPON has always embraced an extensive geographic coverage to address this need extending not only to the EU 25 and paying Partner countries (Norway and Switzerland), but also examining Accession States (in the current programme Bulgaria and Romania, which are not paying for being covered).

The ESPON programme underlines the importance of co-operation in a wider European territorial context, setting out seven concrete objectives to which the programme can be expected to make significant and measurable contributions:

1. To add value to existing national research studies by taking a clear European and transnational focus and improving the understanding of the diversity of the European territory and territorial development, including the prospective dimension and sustainable development, and beyond the usually employed statistical units. These would include an analysis of territorial trends in the 13 candidate countries and neighbouring countries as well as in the Member States to draw conclusions for the territorial development of the Union.
2. To specify the implications of the ESDP policy orientations on transnational-national spaces, the interpretation of existing ones (such as INTERREG II/III) and eventually evolving ones in the wake of the enlargement of the EU.
3. To develop orientations for instruments and institutions necessary for a better perception and application of the ESDP policy options by policy actors at all levels from the EU to the local level; also including a better co-ordinated application of the ESDP principles.
4. To contribute to a better understanding of the enhancement of the spatial dimension of the Structural Funds, Cohesion policy and other Community policies, and national sector policies.
5. To make concrete contributions and proposals to improve co-ordination of territorially relevant decisions, taken at different levels (at the Community, national, regional and local level) and in different sector policies.
6. To bridge the gap between policy makers, administrators and scientists.
7. To create a network of the scientific European community in the fragmented field of spatial development.

The outcome of the ESPON programme is expected to support policy makers in respect of the territorial dimensions of national, local and EU policy analysis. Territories, depending on the context are defined as one or a combination of administrative regions, as clusters of cities, as urban-rural regions, cross-border areas or trans-national territories, etc. Competence at European level is gradually evolving as can be seen in the Cohesion reports and Draft European Constitution.

The 2nd Cohesion report added the territorial dimension as a factor in future Structural Fund initiatives, calling for a better co-ordination of territorially relevant decisions. This is reinforced in the 3rd Cohesion Report 2003 which includes input from ESPON.

In 2004 the Commission adopted the Third cohesion report [COM(2004)107] which presented a detailed proposal for the priorities and delivery system for the next generation of programmes under cohesion policy for the period 2007-2013. Proposals for regulations to carry out these programmes (into which ESPON II would fit) have also been published. These draft regulations remain the subject of further development and debate (e.g. in the European Parliament) before they are confirmed around mid 2006.

In their present form the proposed regulations retain the features of the current financial restrictions imposed by the ERDF regulation which constrained implementation of ESPON 2002-2006. In particular, development of the future programme must take account of the continued application of the N+2 rule (expected to become N+3) designed to encourage rapid implementation, the small percentage of programme budget allocated to management, and the limited range of contract models that will exist.

ESPON was been implemented as a low budget initiative within the INTERREG programme and is likely to remain modest in financial terms as compared to the overall ERDF budget, but with ambitious objectives. Its horizontal character offers considerable scope for synergy with other INTERREG strands building on initial collaborations (e.g. between ESPON and INTERACT).

A major constraint for ESPON is the small scale budget derived from both ERDF and Member State funds. The total ESPON budget for the period 2000-2006 was initially €12,000,000 comprised 50% from ERDF and 50% from EU Member States. This is supplemented by €910,000 from Partner States (Norway, Switzerland, Slovenia, and Hungary) which does not attract ERDF co-funding. In addition, Luxembourg offered a contribution of €2,063,000 towards the establishment of the Co-ordination Unit.

Following expansion of the EU the ERDF and matching EU Member State contribution rose to €14,464,688.

The ERDF contribution is expected to represent a maximum of 85% of budget for ESPON 2007 – 2013.

Budget allocations are set out in the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) and Programme Complement (PC). The substance of the CIP for ESPON was established well in advance of the Commission agreement in June 2002 on the basis of the SPESP and ESDP report. It has seen only minor modifications which relate to financial allocations against the 5 Priorities and associated Measures.

The CIP is a binding document that may constrain programme implementation if it is not well defined. In particular, budget transfers between priorities are not permitted (without a new CIP) and even adjustments of budget between Measures inside a Priority are constrained (and require a new PC). Modification of the CIP is a lengthy process which is best avoided. Modifications of the PC may occur relatively quickly in comparison to modifying the CIP.

ESPON 2002-2006 adopted a broad based approach. The measures were developed in an organic way over time offering some opportunity to respond to policy need. This strategy has been seen to

provide useful flexibility and should be further encouraged within a follow-up programme where greater emphasis on a “Client Driven” philosophy could provide considerable added value.

2.2.2 Managing and Governing Processes

The strategy for control and management of ESPON was set out in the CIP in line with conventional INTERREG policy. It includes a Managing Authority (MA), Paying Authority (PA) and Monitoring Committee (MC).

Control of the programme rests firmly with the MC, supported by the Co-ordination Unit (CU) as a programme secretariat. The committee has adopted an active role in the programme, holding frequent meetings to guide the implementation and gather feedback from interim project reports.

The quality and efficiency of joint operation of the main entities and bodies involved in programme management (i.e. Monitoring Committee, Managing/Paying Authority and Co-ordination Unit) has been good; aided by the MA and PA being drawn from one organisation (Ministry of the Interior of Luxembourg).

2.2.2.1 Tendering Process

The tender process has been closely managed by the MC who ultimately takes all decisions from project definition and development of the Terms of Reference (ToR) through to project selection. The process of tender evaluation follows the conventional formal model applied in all Community procurement exercises.

There are, however, several lessons that emerge from the application of the tender process in the ESPON programme. These have given rise to refinement in the process as the programme matured. Initially, ESPON adopted a 2-Step tendering process made up of a Call in which organisations are invited to express interest in becoming Lead Partners, followed by a restricted Call for Tenders from those organisations found to be most likely to produce high quality offers.

The main perceived advantage (strength) of this approach is its potential to enable consortia to be brought together. In reality this approach appears to have more weaknesses than benefits. A 2-Step approach takes more time to process, is expensive to evaluate, and has not been shown to be necessary as a way of reducing the number of full scale offers. No ESPON evaluation has had a large response and in most cases the number of offers has fallen short of the indicative 5 offers for a competitive restricted call. In some cases only 1 offer was presented.

A perceived disadvantage (weakness) with regard to the Terms of Reference (ToR) is that the objectives outlined in the ToR were often too broad and not always clearly defined. Sometimes, tasks demanded by the ToR appeared not to be feasible, especially regarding the collection, compatibility or lack of data. Some ToR of ESPON projects were perceived to have ambivalent objectives in the sense that the scientific approach and the political demand laid down in the ToR did not fully match.

Over time the number of offers received in response to Calls for Tender has tended to decline.

An explanation of the low number of applicants might be a limited pool of potential organisations able or interested in bidding. If this is the case then the logic of a 2-Step approach is seriously un-

dermined. In the event that it is the thematic scope of studies that limits participation it might be appropriate to investigate ways to influence thematic selection prior to tendering studies. In the more theoretical research programmes this is commonly dealt with by Calls for Expressions of Interest (EoI) that can influence annual work programmes.

ESPON has moved to a simpler 1-Step model in later Calls where time constraints existed and the budget for individual studies has been limited to €100,000. This less elaborate approach ought to be more widely used in ESPON 2007-2013 for all but the very largest most competitive studies.

The tendering process and the TPGs involved in the studies have been assessed in a formal way during the analysis of the studies carried out through the ESPON programme. This analysis has shown that no clear link can be drawn between the formal quality of the tendering procedure and the formal quality of the study. The assessment of the tendering procedure was hereby based on formal characteristics such as for example the number of submitted tenders, the number of institutes involved and their geographical split.

It has been observed, that the number of tenders for the studies is quite limited. For several projects only one tender was submitted and the average number of tenders per study ranges at 2.7. The maximum of 6 tenders submitted was obtained for 2 studies. Concerning the transnational project groups (TPGs) it can be noticed, that they include in most cases more than the 3 partners from different countries such as stipulated by the ESPON regulations. Nevertheless, a clear preponderance of lead partners from North West Europe can be noticed as well as a lack of partners from the new Member States in general even in the 5th and 6th tendering round that started after the accession of the new Member States. Another element is the general predominance of universities and big research institutes in the TPGs. This could lead to the assumption that a greater involvement of consultancies would allow more pragmatism and a general easier understanding and dissemination of the studies. Nevertheless, this assumption could not be proven by the analysis, as no clear link between the quality of the tendering procedure including the assessment of the TPGs and the quality of the study was found. More detailed information on the TPGs can be found in the case study dedicated to them.[5]

Regarding the key-element of the study at hand – analysing the ESPON programme from the perspective of the identified ESPON User groups (policy makers, practitioners and scientists), it has to be mentioned that in most cases the Terms of Reference did not explicitly list any requirements. This could be seen as one explanation why often these three groups are not distinctly addressed in the studies.[6]

Where a 2-Step approach is used it must be supported by a complete ToR at the initial publication and incorporate a comprehensive commentary of initial offers to increase to quality of final submissions. There must also be extensive promotion of calls with active publicity from ECPs, or events.

Concerning all ESPON programme projects, three to five Tender evaluators have been tasked to select the best tender. These have either been found from within the core representatives of the ESPON programme or they have been national experts proposed by the MC. Regarding the latter, the profile of national expert sometimes resulted in these evaluators not being familiar with the programme and its objectives. Wider participation has not been achieved due to limited funds to pay evaluators and the lack of a database from which to draw experts. In ESPON 2007 – 2013

5 Please see Appendix C

6 For further details in the analysis of the ESPON studies and the respective ToRs please see Section 2.3.3.

more resources could be put into developing a pool of experts to support programme development and management activity.

2.2.2.2 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in ESPON is carried out in various ways. Formal procedures have been instigated in respect to financial monitoring, including audits. In respect to programme content and performance quality assurance is achieved through internal project validation, commenting on reports by the ESPON Contact Point (ECP) network and MC responses to Interim and Final Reports, which are provided through the CU.

Overall responsibility for quality assurance and performance of the programme rests with the MC. Realisation of quality assurance together with its strengths and weaknesses is described in more detail below.

2.2.2.2.1 Financial and Administrative Aspects

Financial control procedures have been an ongoing issue in the ESPON programme. Financial control within INTERREG III programmes occurs at several levels and through various intermediaries. It represents a thorough, but rather complex and burdensome process. For ESPON there was no exception. Consequently, it has been essential for managing bodies through the CU to provide support to projects to ensure compliance.

Experience has found the multi-level financial control and audit procedures to be both time consuming and expensive to operate. Minor errors can create significant delays in payment, cause concern over meeting the N+2 rule and generally induce a negative attitude towards participation in the programme.

Besides normal and regular interventions related to project monitoring, financial management and administration, some projects seem to have suffered from additional disturbances through intervention and additional demands from the side of the ESPON authorities. This is considered to have had negative implications for the overall quality of the studies.

The above mentioned aspects might explain why or be related to the fact that the funding for ESPON programme projects is generally perceived to be insufficient.

In ESPON 2007-2013 greater efficiency could be realised through a more simplified audit regime.

To overcome these issues the Paying Authority has disseminated a protocol on a common approach to all authorities responsible for financial control which is now agreed and working. First level financial control is carried out for each partner in their own Member State, harmonised by meetings organised with Member States Financial Controllers to ensure a common understanding and application of the relevant EU regulations.

Provision for the Second and Third Level Financial Controls have also been agreed. Following the model of other INTERREG funded programmes involving the entire EU territory, a Financial Control Group (FCG - composed of two representatives per Member States in charge of second and third level financial controls) has been officially constituted. The FCG contract an external international

auditor to execute checks and prepare draft reports according to art. 4 and art. 5 of Commission Regulation 438/2001.

Individual ESPON studies now benefit from guidance papers developed during the programme to harmonise project administration and reporting. However, the mere parallel existence of four separate guidance papers may cause confusion among the users of the guidance papers. Therefore, the integration of the different guidance papers into one coherent paper seems advisable.

Technical implementation and financial performance clearly suffer from the financial control procedures imposed by the ERDF regulation.

Under the ERDF regulation applied to the INTERREG programme projects are only financed through subsidy contracts. In consequence only costs incurred for their realisation/implementation can be reimbursed and no advance payment is allowed under the ERDF regulation. This is an important difference in comparison to the conditions applicable to Commission funded studies and also to studies financed under the R&D Framework programme regime, making ESPON unattractive to consultancies, Universities and Research units in general.

In ESPON 2007-2013 the possibility to implement conventional service contracts for some activities could be advantageous.

2.2.2.2.2 Scientific Aspects

Approaches to scientific validation have been debated at length in ESPON to ensure acceptable levels of confidence can be attached to results from the projects. Until now scientific validation of TPG results has been a patchy process involving ECPs, with guidance and coordination from the cross thematic projects.

Achieving a high overall quality of research necessitates a holistic approach for each study, commencing with the conceptual formulation of the terms of reference, ensuring the evaluation process selects the best, and during the study paying close attention to validation of data and results in a timely manner. To satisfy this model it is important that stakeholders and/or end users can comment on and influence studies at each stage. This is not currently happening in the early stages.

The MC is tasked with monitoring projects and ensuring the quality of results. The MC set out with the expectation that the ECP network could provide the necessary validation support, and that they might be further supported by cross thematic projects. In reality this has been found to be a flawed assumption since the ECP network is not a homogeneous collection of institutions that possess appropriate skills and resources. In ESPON 2007-2013 the ECPs would need to be selected with this capability in mind if they are to have a more extensive role in scientific validation.

Expectations that the process could be performed by a project have likewise proven unrealistic since only the MC or CU has appropriate enforceable feedback channels to influence projects.

Peer group reviews were suggested in the Mid-Term Evaluation and the MC has considered various strategies to provide peer group scientific validation in ESPON II. The concept of establishing a "Scientific Board" (or a more generally termed "Sounding Board") has emerged in response.[7] It is

[7] Precise definitions for the concepts of Scientific Board and Sounding Board will be given in Chapter 3.3.2.1.

our opinion that such a body could have considerable value in a follow-up programme and that it might be further developed to incorporate practitioner involvement. Detailed recommendations on how this could be realised were listed in the ESPON MTE Update report 2005.

In the study on the ESPON study reports the adequate presence of formal tools for scientific validation was assessed. The overall impression is that the scientific quality of the studies carried out under the ESPON programme seems to be good. The analysis of the reports has shown that the validation is based on the scientific values respected by the project partners. Each TPG includes reputable institutes such as universities and/or national research institutes. Moreover, the reports provide in general adequate tools allowing a formal validation such as extensive references for the methods, models etc. and the indication of the data sources. In addition, some reports indicate how the results of the projects were shared with the scientific community (such as foreseen in the guidance papers, notably in the Lillehammer guidance paper), which allows external appreciation of the results.

Nevertheless, even though the analysis has shown that in general the scientific quality seems to be good, there is at present stage no external procedure existent for a proper scientific validation. The current procedure is that the project experts at the Coordination Unit read the studies and give their feedback and comments. In addition, the ECPs give comments on the reports, concerning the national representation as well as on the scientific quality in general.

As these assessments are done by people directly involved in the programme, it would be desirable for the future to have external impartial experts carrying out the quality validation. This would increase the transparency of the validation and support the recognition of the scientific value of the studies.

2.2.3 Internal and External Networking Systems

ESPON has established a variety of network linkages to handle the needs of internal and external collaboration and awareness building. These are discussed in more detail below.

2.2.3.1 Internal Networking System – ECPs and TPGs

Networking is an integral part of the ESPON programme which is being addressed in several ways:

- Through a network of national contact points (ECPs);
- By collaborative research work (TPGs); and
- A coordinated communication strategy.

Comments from the survey, interviews, Delphi and expert panel conducted in our study confirm the need for ESPON to increase its outreach by growing an ever larger community of clients for its research and working closely with these clients to identify spatial issues for future studies and to provide appropriate targeted analysis offering guidance on policy options.

The responsibilities of the ECP network are related to reinforce both the scientific capacity and the network of the ESPON programmes. The ECP network has expanded and taken on new responsibilities as the programme matured. Owing to a particular financial allocation of about 360.000 Euros, the ECPs managed to especially reinforce their responsibilities with regard to transnational networking by means of organising specific dissemination seminars addressing regional level players and young people in the field of territorial development. However, it remains a heterogeneous collection of organisations with weaknesses in geographic coverage and capabilities.

ECPs are appointed by Member States and have largely been funded from national budgets with notable differences in funding. This is not an efficient model, or one that is compatible with the desire to have ECPs conducting transnational coordination and commenting on programme results. ECP funding and their contractual commitments should be harmonised in ESPON 2007-2013 to achieve effective and efficient operation.

There has been considerable debate on key issues surrounding ECP activity, both by the ECPs and other stakeholders. Arising from that debate is a general consensus that they have an important role in ESPON which should be continued in ESPON II. It is highly desirable to have focal points in each country to promote the programme and to disseminate results in a way that integrates them into the programme communication strategy.

ECPs should operate at the national level identifying the relevant practitioner community and helping to build the scientific network. They should organise national events and could usefully contribute to centralised transnational events. In addition ECPs ought to be responsible for proactive liaison with National Statistical Offices (NSO) to promote availability of compatible data sets, assisting the TPGs identifying data needs.

TPGs in ESPON provide another direct networked community. Although each project operates in isolation, overlaps in the participation of organisations across projects and the ESPON seminars provide awareness of activity. Several organizations have been partners in 5 or more TPGs. This concentration of involvement by a small number of key institutions has both strengths and weaknesses. It suggests that there are few organisations capable of conducting the work, or that promotion of the programme is inadequate to build a more extensive network. Increasing the pool of participants TPGs and a more equal distribution of TPG members and especially Lead Partners throughout the ESPON space should be a priority in future, yet recommendations in this respect have to be kept realistic.

The declining response to Calls for Tender may be seen as validating a view put forward in the survey and Delphi study that organisations are increasingly becoming less willing to join TPGs after experiencing the complexity of INTERREG financial regulations and administrative procedures.

Exploring the causes for this decline revealed a number of reasons, some of which have already been mentioned in Section 2.2.2.1. In addition, to weaknesses concerning the tendering and administrative procedures of ESPON, problems related to data-collection, -compatibility, and completely lacking data created significant problems and additional costs for the TPGs.

In this context, it appears that the data-facilitation by the ECPs did not always go as smooth as desired by the project partners. The causes identified by the lead partners for this were the heterogeneity in professional background of the ECPs and the differences in resources allocated to the different ECPs.

Due to the costs related to these issues, some TPGs appear to have subsidised the studies they elaborated. This also appears to be important with regard to the very small number of private organisation represented in the TPGs. Due to both the high costs related to the projects and the ESPON projects' contract form (subsidy contracts), ESPON projects appear to not provide for sufficient profit margins in order to be attractive to private firms.

2.2.3.2 External Networking System and Communication

External networking during ESPON has been limited and is only now beginning to develop broader linkages as results become available. There is, however, acknowledgement that more could be done and some potential opportunities have emerged in the course of this study. Much rests on the extent to which programmes can coordinate activities from an early stage. There are clear advantages if programme management committees can liaise during the definition of annual work programmes and more specifically for studies to identify added value components of benefit to a wider audience.

External networking of the ESPON has also been established by the fact that all the project reports are posted on the website. The availability of the reports reduces the risk of a possible creation of a so-called "ESPON family" where only familiar institutes work on ESPON projects. The network approach that was adopted did create a dynamic forum which continued engaging researchers in the ESPON programme. Yet, it appears that the ESPON community, the community directly reached by the programme authorities, seems to be much smaller then other networks in the field, like EUKN.

External networking could also to be strengthened in respect to joint dissemination activities. The support networks of related programmes should be used to promote awareness of Calls and to distribute results from studies. Though some economies might be realised if support networks were merged it is impractical to pursue this path since specialist domain contacts are often needed.

More has to be done in ESPON 2007-2013 to market the initial results of the present ESPON programme. The utilisation of tools, typologies, etc developed by ESPON has significant potential value at the EU level, and might also be realistically filtered down to practitioners at national and regional levels (if not all the way to local level).

2.2.3.2.1 … with other DG Regional Policy Programmes

ESPON is one of several related programmes managed within the umbrella responsibility of DG Regional Policy. Useful collaboration has already been demonstrated between ESPON and INTERACT. This cooperation focuses on increasing the synergies between both programmes and basically consists of ESPON carrying out a series studies financed by INTERACT to review the themes covered by current ESPON and INTERREG programme projects and to provide new ideas for projects to be carried out in the future. The themes that have been or will be covered are

- Transportation and Communication
- Environmental hazards and risk management
- Spatial visions and scenarios
- Cross-border cooperation
- Polycentricism and rural-urban relations

The efforts in this respect should be encouraged and extended to URBACT and other INTERREG strands, with which no such cooperation has been established so far. As noted above this could effectively take place through joint management meetings and collaborative support networks.

2.2.3.2.2 … with other EU Programmes

Beyond the INTERREG programme there is also scope for an enhanced level of coordination and cooperation in respect to the thematic coverage of studies and use of outputs from projects. Of

particular value would be the forging of closer links with the research communities managed by DG Research under 6th Framework Programmes (e.g. possible successors of Cities of Tomorrow), and those of DG Environment (e.g. Urban Thematic Strategy).

In respect to the basic need for reliable and European wide data sets it is vital that linkages to Eurostat are developed further since they can not only be the repository for essential statistical information, but also the means by which Member State NSOs could be guided to provide harmonised data.

Utilisation of ESPON output has, so far, been limited by the programmes stage of development. In the next programme phase great effort has to be expended to actively encourage the use of ESPON results to influence policy decisions (e.g. in the fields of Agriculture, Environment and Transport). It is evident that greater coordination of EU policies could be achieved if the decision makers are fully aware of the implications of following particular paths. ESPON studies have the value of being able to highlight those choices and potential consequences.

2.2.3.2.3 … with non-EU Initiatives

ESPON must not be seen as yet another EU initiative. It will realise far more value if it can develop additional links with existing representative organisations and associations (e.g. Committee of the Regions, EUKN, Eurocities, Eurometrex, AESOP, and ICLEI). The communication strategy moves in this direction, but an opportunity now exists to take this further and cement real collaborative links for a future ESPON programme.

2.2.4 Conclusions

The current ESPON programme is very ambitious as it comes to the user it addresses. Comparing the broad thematic coverage as well as the governmental levels addressed by the objectives set in the programme with the relatively small budget of the programme it appears as if the variety of users addressed by the programme is a little too ambitious or that a proper focus or priority areas of the programme on some key-areas and key-levels are missing. A new ESPON programme should provide for more focus in this respect.

ESPON was characterised by a strong learning process, which lead to significant improvements in the course of the programme. This however also implies a lack of clarity and continuity throughout the entire period. ESPON II should therefore provide for a holistically rounded programme approach, which provides for both more clarity and continuity throughout the process.

The tendering process did experience some drawbacks in the current ESPON programme. This mainly has stepped forward in the declining number of offers received in response to Calls for Tender. Thus an ESPON II programme should try to enhance the tendering process. The quality of the tender evaluation process seems to be a good overall quality, yet the programme authorities could consider involving more external experts in the evaluation process.

As regards scientific validation of the studies and thus quality assurance, the current programme processes appear to be unclear so that no real and independent scientific validation of the ESPON results has been made. A future programme should provide for clear responsibilities in this respect.

Technical implementation and financial performance suffered from the financial control procedures imposed by the ERDF and INTERREG regulations. Very inconvenient for TPGs, this is considered to be the on of the main reasons why the current ESPON programme did not manage to attract large numbers of bidders for the ESPON programme projects. Increasing the pool of institutes involved in the TPGs would be beneficial.

The external networking system of ESPON wasn't developed thoroughly. The beginning close cooperation with INTERACT should just be the basis for stronger cooperation and coordination with other EU and non-EU initiatives.

2.3 ESPON – Content

The studies carried out under the current ESPON programme are mainly at the level of the Meta-analysis. They put existing data together and provide hereby new applied data at a European level. This is why, ESPON is not considered as a research programme but rather as an applied research programme (a fact, which was stressed by the different key actors interviewed).

2.3.1 Thematic Coverage

In the analysis of the ESPON study reports the presence or lack of horizontal integration of different themes and EU-policies or EU frameworks was assessed. The current ESPON programme mainly consists of four categories of studies: the "thematic studies", the "policy impact studies", the "co-ordinating cross-thematic studies" and the "studies and scientific support projects". The analysis of the ESPON studies has shown that the horizontal integration of themes covered varies between the different kinds of studies and between the different projects. The "policy impact studies" in general take into account more different themes (policies) than the "thematic studies" and the "co-ordinating cross-thematic studies" are, as indicated by their name, covering and integrating the different themes of the studies produced.

At the current stage, the main topics covered in the **thematic studies** are: Polycentrism, Urban-Rural relations, Demographic trends, Transport trends, Telecom trends, Information society, Natural hazards, Natural heritage and Cultural heritage. The analysis has shown that the integration of other topics in these thematic studies is existent, but nevertheless not often elaborated in depth. The topics that are taken into account are regularly close to the main subject of the study or are EU policies linked to this subject, but none the less they are in many cases not complete and not developed in an entirely integrated way. It is has to be stated that, at the current state of the programme, a 'proper integration' of various topics is neither clearly asked for in the terms of references nor are sufficient resources available to achieve this in any detailed manner (by proper integration we mean taking into account of the concrete impacts of one topic on another).

In the **policy impact studies**, on the contrary, the integration of other EU policies and EU framework topics is generally well elaborated. The main subjects of the studies in the group were the: Territorial impacts of EU Transport and TEN; Territorial impact of the research and development policies; Territorial impact of CAP and Rural development policy; Territorial trends of energy services and networks and territorial impacts of EU energy policy; Territorial impacts of European Fisheries policies; Territorial effects of the structural funds; Territorial effects of the application of the EU "Acquis" and Community Policies as well as Pre-Accession Aid and PHARE; Territorial effects of the structural funds in Urban areas; Application and effects of the ESDP in the Member States; Governance of Territorial and Urban Policies from EU to local level; Territorial trends and policy

impacts in the field of EU Environment policy; and finally a slightly different study belonging to the same group called: Integrated analysis of transnational and national territories based on ESPON results. For all these studies, one can say that the integration of other policies impacting the main theme is well done and complete. Almost each study provides an analysis of the effects of the other policies and framework topics on the main subject of the study. This integration is also asked for in the Terms of References of the policy impact studies.

The **co-ordinating cross-thematic studies** provide an integration of the results of the thematic studies as well as of the policy impact studies and are providing tools for the co-ordination between the projects. The main subjects of this group of projects are: Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development; Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in relation to the ESDP and Cohesion Policy; Territorial dimension of the Lisbon-Gothenburg strategy; Europe in the world; Territorial impacts of EU economic policies and location of economic activities. As at the moment of editing this report only the study on the Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development, which has the goal of supporting the co-ordination on technical and scientific level, is finished, it is difficult to assess entirely the level of integration of these studies. Nevertheless, it can be assumed from the topics and from the interim reports, that they contribute to an integrated view of the ESPON results. This is especially true for the most advanced project 3.1 Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development, which has provided guidelines for a common approach to be followed by the thematic projects in the form of "guidance papers". In addition, Project 3.2 – Spatial Scenarios and Orientation in relation to the ESDP and Cohesion Policy is already giving, in the interim report, an interesting overview of trends and policy recommendations which come out from the thematic studies, covering a wide span of issues: demography, transport, energy, economy, governance, enlargement, rural development, climate change and socio-cultural European perspectives.

The forth category of studies are the so called "**studies and scientific support projects**". This group includes studies on: the role of small and medium sized towns; social aspects of EU territorial development; Study on Urban Functions; Study on Feasibility on Flows Analysis; Study on spatially relevant aspects of Tourism and a study on the modifiable areas unit problem. It is not possible to make any comments on the level of integration of these studies, as at current stage only one interim report is available for one of these studies.

Finally, the data navigator has the goal to facilitate the access to the information. It is a very effective tool to find and access information sources on existing data sets at different NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) and LAU (Local Area Units) level all over Europe and beyond – MEDA countries are also included.[8] The information provided for each data set usually includes the direct contact (e.g. a member state's NSO) to gather the data available. However, this tool appears to be more useful for practitioners and scientist searching for the existing statistical evidence needed for their research activities than for policy makers. The latter need a different typology of results: not data sources, but concrete and summarised data such as indicators and trends which may provide a useful benchmark for fixing targets for local policy action.

The data-navigator should not be confused with the ESPON data-base. This data-base comprises the indicators on the topics that have been gathered or established on a European wide basis in the course of the ESPON programme projects. This data base is not publicly accessible and information

[8] The NUTS nomenclature has been established to in order to provide a single uniform breakdown of the European territorial units for the production of regional statistics for the EU; pleas see http://ec.europa.eu/comm/eurostat/ramon/nuts/introduction_regions_en.html for further information. Formerly ranging from NUTS 1 to NUTS 5, in 2003 NUTS 4 and 5 were replaced by LAU 1 and 2 respectively; http://ec.europa.eu/comm/eurostat/ramon/nuts/mainchar_regions_en.html.

on its existence is not sufficiently communicated. Referring to the user- or demand-perspective adopted throughout this study, this appears to be an inconvenience with regard to the potential, interested ESPON user.

2.3.2 Geographic Scope

Two dimensions determine the geographic scope of the ESPON programme. On a horizontal dimension, the "geographic coverage" of the ESPON studies refers to the territory covered by the ESPON programme and the particular studies respectively. On a vertical dimension, the "geographic detail" refers to size of the different geographic unit observed.

The **geographic coverage** of the current ESPON programme must be analysed on both the programme and the project level.

As regards the programme level, the current ESPON in general aims to cover an area called the ESPON space, which comprises the 25 EU Member States, the two accession countries Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the two additional paying ESPON members Norway and Switzerland.[9] This approach has been followed throughout the entire programme period lasting from 2002 until 2006, despite the 10 new EU Member States only joining the EU only on the 1st of May 2004.

The general geographic coverage pursued at the programme level has been transposed to the project level using a case-by-case logic. Whereas for most of the ESPON studies the tender specifications explicitly demanded coverage of the entire ESPON Space, in some particular cases this has not been the case. In this context, especially some of the policy-impact studies such as 2.1.3 on the Common Agricultural Policy and 2.1.5 on Fisheries have to be mentioned. The tender specification for these countries only demanded they include those countries in the observation, on which the respective EU policy may have a significant territorial impact. It is thus perceived that on the project level, the ESPON project only diverge from the general aim to cover the whole ESPON space, if there are reasonable justifications for this in relation to the topic covered by the particular study.

The **geographic detail** of the ESPON study is very important with regard to the governmental or geographic user level addressed by the ESPON programme. In accordance to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 the geographic detail level addressed by the ESPON programme and studies is expressed in NUTS-levels.[10] In general, the tender specifications for the individual studies require the studies to address at minimum the NUTS 3 level. In most cases, the ToR indicated a general preference for even greater geographic detail – NUTS 4 (LAU 1) and NUTS 5 (LAU 2) levels – which however did not have any compulsory significance. This raises the question, whether the approach of ESPON in terms of geographic detail corresponds with objective 5 of the ESPON programme, which provides for "concrete contributions and proposals to improve co-ordination of territorially relevant decisions, taken at different levels (at the Community, national, regional and local level) …".[11]

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9 In contrast to Norway and Switzerland being paying ESPON members, Bulgaria and Romania did not have to provide financial contribution to the programme.

10 Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (Official Journal L 154, 21/06/2003)

11 ESPON 2006 programme, programme on the spatial development of an enlarging European Union

2.3.3 *The Produced Output – the ESPON Study Reports*

The output of the ESPON programme is extensive with numerous studies which have been carried out. They include a great number of maps covering mostly the entire ESPON space on a specific topic as well as indicators and tools such as models. More concretely, 31 studies have been launched to which one can add the 3 new calls tenders which were issued recently, bringing the total amount of studies which will be conducted in the current ESPON programme to 34. At the time of editing this report, at the beginning of January 2006, the state of play of the progress of the studies is as follows: 18 studies have issued a final report, 10 have issued a interim report and are progressing and finally 6 studies have just started or at the stage of the call for tenders. All studies are supposed to be completed by the end of 2006.

Out of these studies one has highlight a "special" study which is the ESPON study 4.1. *Data navigator*. In the frame of this project a database was build with the results of the finalised studies. The data delivered through the ongoing studies will continuously be fed into the system. The end result is a data base allowing users to navigate and to search the territorial data and maps of the projects.

In addition to the ESPON studies itself, guidance papers based on ESPON seminars were published. Their purpose is to guide the TPGs concerning formal aspects and to play a coordination role. At the current stage four guidance papers have been issued, the first one being the Crete guidance paper of June 2003 and the most current one the Nijmegen guidance paper of March 2005.

Finally, in order to show first results and to enhance communication, several compilation documents have been issued, notably 2 synthesis reports presenting the most recent results of the studies at that stage (a first one on the preliminary results in August 2003 and a second one covering the midterm results by spring 2005) as well as a Briefing presenting a selection of key findings and maps in form of an atlas which published in November 2004.

All these outcomes of the ESPON programme have been published on the ESPON homepage http://www.espon.eu and freely accessible.

The assessment, on the form of the study being utile and aiding to the comprehension of the study, which has been carried out for the final reports of the studies produced in the ESPON programme, has analysed next to other issues the form of the studies. This has lead to first conclusions which are presented hereunder.

As regards the form of the studies, the form did add to the comprehension and the utility of the studies. A majority of reports are well structured which allows the readers to find the required information. Nevertheless, it can be noticed that the final reports are too long as most of them are between 250 and 500 pages and some of them even exceed 1000 pages (including appendixes). This highlights the importance of a clear and short executive summary. However, this is frequently not the case, as executive summaries are also often too long and not clear enough. Moreover, the form between the reports is not always coherent.

This problem was recognised and several guidance papers based on ESPON seminars were issued. These papers are in general well structured and contain valuable information. This is more than

true for the Lillehammer guidance paper which was issued in June 2004 and which provides a check list of what should be included in the final report as well as guidance on the structure which should be used in the final reports. This guidance paper notably states, that the part one of the final reports should be composed of an executive summary of the main final results of approximately 10-20 pages and in addition of a scientific summary. This proposed structure would allow a clear and quick overview of the studies, but was often not well followed, as the summaries are often either not distinct or too long.

This problem of a lack of coherence with the guidelines might be due to the fact that the guidance papers were issued quite lately in the project process, as ten final reports were published at the end of 2004 (9 in August and 1 in December). The Matera guidance paper which was published in February 2004 gave a first overview on the structure of the reports and was completed by the Lillehammer guidance paper of June 2004. In the Matera guidance paper the length of the executive summary was considered to be 30 pages which included the mention to be further discussed. In the Lillehammer paper this length was then reduced to 10-20 pages. Taking into account the great length of the reports, it appears understandable, that it is difficult to stick closely to guidance on the structure, which was only issued a couple of months before. Nevertheless, in contrast to what one could expect, no improvement in taking into account the guidance papers in later reports has been observed.

2.3.4 Conclusions

Regarding the Meta-analytical nature of the current ESPON programme's studies, a future ESPON 2 should try to go beyond the level of the Meta-analysis even though it is clear that in some areas the work of data gathering and consolidation at a European level has to be continued. This can be achieved by continuing to work on some new areas at the Meta level and by going into more vertical depths in other selected areas in which the meta-analysis has already been carried out.

Another important aspect is the integration of the ESPON content with other Community research programmes. In the context of the 6th Framework Programme, there are several research tasks concerning transport, environment and land and natural resources management that could benefit from a better integration of endeavours. For instance, in the recent call for proposal of Priority 8 – Research for policy support, there is a task for assessing inter-linkages between different priorities of the Sustainable Development Strategy, aimed to develop methods and indicators for assessing the progress towards Sustainable Development in view of developing "best-needed" indicators that require research work in order to be developed on regular basis. The connection with the potentialities of the future ESPON 2 programme are evident, especially if this will be not limited to research supporting the implementation of the ESDP but extended to include more explicitly the objectives set out in other relevant EU agenda, as the Gothenburg Agenda on Sustainable Development.

The analysis of the form of the studies has shown that they do in general add to the comprehension of the studies, but that there are some shortcomings especially regarding the length and the quality of the executive summaries. A link of these shortcomings to the ESPON guidance papers has been established in the previous analysis and conclusions for a future ESPON programme have been drawn. The three main aspects providing for room improvement concerning the guidance papers are considered to be pertinent are:

- Firstly, it would be preferable if the ensemble guidance papers had been available during the initial phase of the ESPON programme so that the first TPGs finishing their reports could have adopted the proscriptions outlines in the papers.
- Secondly, there should only be one guidance paper (instead of four separate papers), the latest version of which has binding character for all the projects the final report of which has not been published in the moment the guidance paper is issued.
- Thirdly, the ESPON authorities should by all mean assure that the guidelines provided by the guidance papers are respected by all TPGs.

2.4 ESPON –Added Value

This chapter will discuss the value of ESPON and, according the user- and demand oriented approach adopted for the whole of the study, the added value of the current ESPON programme for its actual and potential users. ESPON however addressed a large variety of different user, which can be distinguished according to

- their profession (policy makers, practitioners (territorial planners), scientists
- the policy areas they are active in (relevant sectoral and horizontal policy areas)
- and the governmental or administrative level on which they are active (EU, national, regional, local level).

For this reason, this section will approach the value added of ESPON from three different angles corresponding to the three categories mentioned above. Inverting the outline of the three categories mentioned above, the section will successively AND separately elaborate on the added value of ESPON with regard to

- the different governmental or administrative levels
- sectoral and horizontal policy (and research) areas
- different user groups

In so doing, each sub-section will refer explicitly refer to the strength and weaknesses of ESPON with regard to the dimension addressed.

2.4.1 Strength and Weaknesses – Dimensions "Governmental and Administrative Level"

The added value of ESPON in terms of the different governmental and administrative levels – European, national, regional and local level – is largely a function of five different aspects:

- the language employed in the studies and programme reports;
- the geographic coverage;
- the geographic detail/NUTS-levels (LAU-levels) addressed in the different studies;
- the thematic coverage;
- the degree to which the recommendations, formulated by the different projects, address the different levels.

All these aspect will be addressed in the following paragraphs

2.4.1.1 Language

As is common for most international study and research programmes, English has been defined the official working language of the ESPON programme. As a consequence, the ESPON programme

requires the study teams to submit interim and final study reports in English. If particular member-states wish the results to be published in their national language(s), then the translation of the document has to be financed by their own resources.

Regarding the value of ESPON for the different governmental and administrative levels, this pure availability of written ESPON outcomes in one single European language clearly constitutes a weakness of the programme. Whereas most policy-makers and administrators concerned at the European and Member-States level do presumably have sufficient English reading capacities in order to benefit from the programme, this might not be the case at the lower levels, notably the regional and local level. In fact, in the case of the ESPON User Survey, which has been carried out in the framework of this study, there were indications underlining the difficulties regional and local level administrators may have related to their English-reading capacities.

In order to overcome this shortcoming at least in part, both the transnational project groups and the ESPON national contact points (ECPs) have been identified to "play an important role when it comes to information activities in the respective" CIP countries (all ESPON countries except the non-paying Bulgaria and Romania).[12] In particular, TPGs and ECPs have been encouraged to engage in dissemination activities in their respective national languages to provide "information on the programme at the national and regional level".[13] The local is not sought to be addressed.

These activities however could be considered inconsistent. Firstly, not all ESPON countries dispose of an ESPON national contact point. Secondly, given the strong variations between the different member-states' ECP work-contracts, the ECPs' workload related to ESPON varies strongly among the ECPs. Therefore, the individual ECPs' time allocated to dissemination activities varies considerably. Thirdly, the organisation of dissemination activities is only a recommendation outlined in the ESPON Programme Complement and has not binding or obligatory character. These points might explain why ECPs indicated having engaged at quite different intensity-levels into the dissemination of ESPON information within their Member-States.[14]

Language is thus an important aspect which has to be taken into account when determining the added value of the ESPON programme with regard to the different governmental levels. Yet, whereas for the EU and national level this language aspect does not seem to imply any shortcomings, the regional and local level appear to be subject to a considerable language barrier.

2.4.1.2 Geographic Coverage

Referring to the ESPON studies as such, the horizontal geographic coverage of the actual ESPON programme appears to be good, as all ESPON studies but one cover all countries of the ESPON space.[15] This definitely delivers an added value, as maps were produced and models developed that are covering all the 27+2 ESPON countries on a specific subject by means of a transnational perspective. These tools, due to their overview of all the ESPON space countries, do provide a clear added value for actors at all levels that are interested in

- a holistic view of the European spatial dimension;

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12 ESPON 2006 Programme Complement, p. 61

13 *Ibid.*

14 While some Member-States advertise ECP posts on a full-time basis others offer only part-time contracts. Understandably, the different ECPs can only attribute corresponding amounts of time to dissemination activities. Please see the case study on ECPs in Annex B.

15 ESPON Study 2.1.5 on Fisheries does not explicitly address all ESPON countries.

- comparing their own territory with either neighbouring or other European wide territories (this aspect is also very closely related to the geographic detail to be discussed in the next chapter).

This, however, is only possible if the geographic detail of the different studies allows for an adequate identification of the own territorial unit as well as other. Therefore, the added value for the different governmental levels stemming from the geographic coverage is closely linked to the geographic detail, which is discussed next.

2.4.1.3 Geographic Detail

It has already been mentioned above, that in terms of their geographic detail most ESPON studies in general target NUTS 3. Due to the definition of the different NUTS levels and the different sizes of EU member states, the added value in relation to the geographic detail needs to be regarded in a differentiated way separately referring to each governmental level.

The geographic detail of the ESPON studies determines the added value of the ESPON programme project for user and actors at the four different governmental levels. Two aspects can be considered important for the users.

- The possibility to compare the own territory with neighbouring or non-neighbouring territories throughout Europe (possibility for comparison and benchmarking).
- The possibility to identify territorial development, trends, or differences within the own territory (possibility for internal analysis).

The following paragraphs will take these two aspects into account.

As regards the EU level, the ESPON programme undoubtedly provides a high level of geographic detail to European level policy makers and administrators. This provides EU level actors with the possibility to analyse territorial trends within the ESPON countries, and thus, the possibility to refer to the ESPON results for their future work. However, the very fact that ESPON does not cover a large number of countries outside the EU, does not allow for the EU territorial trends or policy impacts to be adequately compared to other comparative territories (In this context, however, it has to be mentioned that this has not been the objective of the ESPON programme). Correspondingly, matters of geography do not seem to be very important impediments to the use of ESPON for European policy makers and administrators.[16]

As far as the national level is concerned, determining the value of ESPON becomes more complicated, since here a distinction has to be drawn between the six big[17], the smaller[18] and very small[19] ESPON countries. Whereas, NUTS 3 can clearly provide interesting geographic detail to the six big ESPON countries/EU Members-States as well as to most of the smaller ESPON countries with regard to both aspects – the possibility for comparison and internal analysis. However, regarding the two smallest ESPON member countries (Luxembourg and Malta) as well as Cyprus, the added stemming from the NUTS 3 level appears to be negligible, especially with regard to the aspect of

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16 EU level actors have been asked why they would not use the ESPON programme. Only 11 percept of a total of 27 respondents mentioned that for them the programme results would be “too general in terms of geography”. 27 respondents constitute 21.74 percent of a total of 124 EU level respondents.

17 Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Spain, UK

18 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands,

19 Luxembourg, Malta

internal analysis.[20] In this context it is interesting that in response to the question why national level actors would not make use of the ESPON programme, the programme being "too general in terms of geography" was the most frequent of all responses.[21] Thus, the value added of the ESPON programme may be perceived rather differently in the different countries.

Similar to the size of the countries covered by ESPON, the regions within the countries vary considerably in terms of size. European regions are considered to predominantly correspond to NUTS 2. However, in the case Germany the regional level (Länder – federal states) corresponds to NUTS 1 and in some of the smaller countries, the regional level actually corresponds best to NUTS 3. Moreover, the EU member states and additional ESPON countries vary significantly in terms of their political organisation. Yet, since taking the different political systems into account would go beyond the scope of this study, this document will only refer to the first aspect. Regarding the very different sizes of European Regions, it would be understandable if ESPON was perceived to be more valuable and relevant for policy makers and administrators in countries with larger regions, providing them with the possibility for comparison with other countries and internal analysis, than for those on countries with smaller regions, which may only benchmark themselves with others, but not have the possibility for internal analysis.

Regarding the question why regional level actors would not make us of the ESPON programme, the programme being "too general in terms of geography was in fact the most frequent answer given.[22]

With regard to the added value of ESPON for the local level, the availability of information on the NUTS 3 level as the smallest territorial unit seems to confirm that ESPON generates a negligible added value for the local level. This indicates that either the ESPON programmes should address the local level more explicitly, or that Objective 5 of the programme should be revised. Regarding the question why local level actors would not make us of the ESPON programme, the programme being "too general in terms of geography was in fact the second most frequent answer given.[23]

Thus, the added value for regional/local policy makers and for practitioners is closely linked with the geographical detail, which is most often provided up to the NUTS 3 level. The potential added value for these user groups in the present programme consists mainly in the possibility of a comparison of their territory, if it is large enough to be illustrated by NUTS 3, with others for example neighbouring and to identify perhaps European trends which could impact them. The ESPON project 2.4.2 *Integrated analysis of Transnational territories based on ESPON results* clearly highlights this by providing detailed country studies covering the entire ESPON space.

The potential for improvement with regard to the value added of ESPON in related to the geographic detail, has been verified by the user survey, which has been conducted in the course of this study. The satisfaction of all subjects familiar with the ESPON programme ranked around 2.77 on a scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (not at all satisfied). The most important aspect causing inconveniences with regard to the geographic detail is considered to be the geographic detail not cover-

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[20] This is related to both – the size of the countries (regarding Luxembourg and Malta) as well as the definition of NUTS levels (in the case of Cyprus).

[21] National level actors have been asked why they would not use the ESPON programme. 25.7 percept of a total of 35 respondents mentioned that for them the programme results would be "too general in terms of geography". 35 respondents constitute 21.08 percent of a total of 166 national level respondents.

[22] Having been asked the same questions, 25.8 percept of a total of 31 regional level respondents mentioned that for them the programme results would be "too general in terms of geography". 31 respondents constitute 23.13 percent of a total of 134 regional level respondents.

[23] 19.0 percent of a total of 21 local level respondents gave this reply. 21 respondents constitute 23.08 percent of a total of 91 local level respondents. The most frequent answer to the same question has been "not relevant to me" (33.3 percent) and "too general in terms of topic" (19.0 percent).

ing NUTS 4 (LAU 1) and NUTS 5 (LAU 2). Besides that some subjects also criticised the NUTS concept as it would have shortcomings with regard to the homogeneity of the defined NUTS territories.

Regarding the geographic detail, it is important to note that the clearest limiting factor regarding the geographical detail is the data availability, which had already been discussed. This problem accentuates gradually with the geographic preciseness and is also closely linked to the countries covered, as data availability for the new Member States as well as for the accession countries is fairly low.

This view is related to the main approach of the current ESPON programme in terms of geographic scope: the approach “one size fits all” pursued in all studies. As the data availability varies considerably in the ESPON space, this approach causes major inconveniences for the TPGs carrying out the studies and challenges the scientific value of the results. Moving away from this approach in the future therefore appears to be worth considering.

2.4.1.4 Thematic Coverage

The thematic coverage of ESPON and the added value stemming from it is another aspect to be taken into account when referring to the added value of the ESPON programme for actors at the different administrative and governmental levels. Obviously, this aspect is closely related to the geographic detail of the programme, especially for those levels where the geographic detail of the programme impedes a strong value creation. Therefore, the following paragraphs will put emphasis on those governmental and administrative levels, which do not suffer too strongly from shortcomings due to the geographic detail.

The thematic coverage analysed here particularly refers to the Study Categories provided under Priority 1 (Thematic studies), Priority 2 (Policy Impact studies) and Priority 3 (Coordinating Cross Thematic Projects) of the ESPON programme. These different categories refer to both horizontal policy topics related to aspects of spatial and territorial development (e.g. urban- or rural development, demographics, or polycentrism, etc) as well as sectoral topics related to sectoral policy areas (e.g. Transport, agricultural policy, Information Society, etc). Both the separate analysis of horizontal and sectoral policy areas as well as the integrated analysis of several topics may influence the added value of ESPON for its actual and potential users at the different level.

The ESPON programme could be understood as a programme explicitly designed for EU level actors in the sense that a quite a few of studies explicitly refer to the policy impact of European level policies. In this respect, one of the major findings of this study is that the ESPON programme provides very interesting results especially relevant to EU level policy makers. At the EU level, the result of the studies could be consulted for policy development, policy implementation and policy adjustment with regard to various policy fields both sectoral and horizontal. This is explicitly shown by the fact that the objective of one major group of studies – the policy impact studies (Priority 2 Studies) - is to address and to assess the impact of policies in general and especially of EU policies.[24] For this reason, ESPON provides for a considerable added value especially for EU level actors.

[24] In this context it has to be mentioned that initially also national policies were supposed to be included into the analysis. However, due to reasons of complexity this idea has been abandoned rather quickly in order to avoid an overload of both the study projects and the TPGs.

Moreover, the results of the ESPON studies could be consulted in order to reveal problem related to the coordination of policy efforts at the European level and, if applicable, be to improve EU policy coordination. In this context, ESPON study 2.1.1 on "Transport Policy Impact" revealed that "*The scenarios studied in this project as well as the analysis of policy interactions in chapter 5 point to the risk of conflict between three fundamental political goals:*

1. *Transport*
2. *Agriculture and Fisheries*
3. *Culture, Education and Media*

These goals give rise to three types of conflicts, one between economic efficiency and spatial equity, the second between spatial equity and environmental sustainability, and the third between economic efficiency and environmental sustainability." […] "As a case in point, this study reports estimates of the spatial impact of the current TEN and TINA projects of transport infrastructure investments. It turns out, that by and large these investment plans are also in favour of a balanced spatial development in Europe, with one important exception: Some indicators point to spatial inequality within accession countries enhanced by the TEN and TINA projects. Though the picture is somewhat mixed, there is at least a risk that in these countries, where spatial inequality problems will be most pronounced during the decades to come, infrastructure development reinforces rather than mitigates a tendency of polarised economic development." […] "In our opinion, this should not be taken as a reason to revise TEN and TINA plans such that centres are favoured less. Instead, it is regarded as vital to equip these countries with financial means to develop their secondary networks in a way allowing their peripheries to gain from the spread effects of more rapid growth in the centres. As the spatial impact of investments in the secondary networks is national or local in scope, the decision should also be assigned to the national and local level. It has to be clearly understood, that these types of investments, though less visible on a European scale, are nevertheless an indispensable complement of TEN and TINA investment activities."[25]

This quotation taken from the conclusions of the study 2.1.1 clearly addresses the risks of conflicts between different sectoral policies. The study analyses these conflicts by the means of models and draws conclusions, which are leading in the end to policy recommendations. This example shows clearly the added value of the ESPON programme, which allows a spatial vision in an integrated manner of sectoral EU policies. An integration of these results in the policy shaping process could help to improve the efficiency and the utility of future programmes and policies.

In other words, ESPON results to contain a great deal of potential value with regard to policy coordination at the European level. Given the strong criticism that the EU faces to today, which among other issues also refers to the lack of policy coordination at the EU level, one could argue that the ESPON programme results could add to improving the tarnished reputation of the EU. However, after having addressed this issue it appears as if there is neither an obligation for internal policy coordination at the EU level not sufficient willingness to coordinate. Moreover, since territorial cohesion does not have a sufficiently strong legal basis at the EU level, there seems to be no binding obligation to take ESPON results and thus results regarding the territorial dimension of EU policies into account.

Hence, ESPON creates a very strong potential added value for the European level which yet awaits conversion into actual added value. More integration of study topics could be one approach to achieve this. An integration of the results in the policy shaping process to achieve greater policy

[25] ESPON 2.1.1: Territorial Impact of EU Transport and TEN Policies, 2005

coordination would require a broader recognition of the pertinence of the results as well as increase political willingness for policy coordination at the EU level.

Another interesting point related the added value of ESPON for EU policy makers in terms of the thematic coverage refers less to the topics that are covered by the ESPON programme but the question of how these topics are treated. When EU level actors have been asked why they would not make use of the ESPON programme, one of the three most frequent replies was that ESPON would not provide "sufficient integration of topics".[26] (In this context, we would like to anticipate that similar criticism concerning the thematic coverage of ESPON arose in the course of the entire study process). This problem can only be solved on the programme level and, since the current ESPON programme already advance very far, for the potential future ESPON programme.

Thus, as regards the value of ESPON at the EU level, both the people in charge of the programme as well as European level actors need to take over responsibility with regard to realising increased actual added value of the programme at the EU level.

Hence, ESPON creates a very strong potential added value for the European level which still awaits conversion into actual added value. More integration of study topics could be one approach to achieve this. Thus, both those in charge of the programme as well as European level actors need to take over responsibility with regard to realising the added value of the programme at the EU level.

As for the national level the ESPON programme projects provide ample results and information. Most ESPON countries should be able to benefit from these results for policy making purpose.

In this context it has to be noted that national interests seem to have a strong influence on the value of ESPON as it is perceived by national policy makers and administrators (a statement that can of course be applied to national policy makers active at the EU level). Both tend to relate the outcomes of the different ESPON studies to their predefined and often quite diverging national political agenda, rather than profiting from the value created by the studies irrespectively from national interests in a rational, subjective way. Therefore, national policy makers and administrators may perceive the added value of a particular study as positive, if it supports national policies or policy aspirations. Contrarily, when the outcomes of a study seem to conflict with a certain political path taken, policy makers may consider the study valueless. In this context, national interest could be understood as one of the impediments to evoke the real value of ESPON at the national level.

As for the regional level the thematic coverage, does have limited relevance. Regions may profit from the findings of some of the studies, however, this basically depends on other aspects such as the above-mentioned language and NUTS level in relation to the size of the region.

As regards regard the local level, it appears unlikely that in terms of its thematic coverage ESPON provides a considerable value added for local level policy makers and practitioners. Given that the local level is only very little addressed by the programme's configuration in terms of language as well as geographic detail, it is unlikely to obtain different results with regard to the thematic coverage of the programme. When having been asked for the reasons we local level actors would not make use of the ESPON programme, the most frequent answers had been that the programme

[26] 14.8 percent of a total of 27 EU level respondents gave this reply. Equally frequent reasons to the questions why people would not use the ESPON programme have been "too complex" and "not relevant for me". 27 respondents constitute 21.74 percent of a total of 124 EU level respondents.

would simply "not be relevant" to them or that the programme studies would be "too general in terms of topic".[27]

2.4.1.5 The Degree to which the recommendations address the different governmental and administrative levels

Obviously, a very important feature when determining the value of ESPON for potential and actual users at the different governmental levels is the degree to which the recommendations formulated by the different projects address the different governmental levels. Especially when it comes to determining the value of an individual ESPON study in this respect, this criterion seems to be of utmost importance. As has already been mentioned above, the detail level of recommendations in the different studies can be very different. With the exception of one study report, none of the ESPON studies that have been published so far formulated recommendation explicitly addressing the different governmental levels to be addressed by the ESPON studies.

When EU level actors have been asked why they would not make use of the ESPON programme, one of the three most frequent replies was that ESPON would be "too complex" for them.[28] This can be also understood as an indication for the ESPON studies not addressing the EU level concisely enough in their recommendations. Detailed recommendations (as well as appropriate executive summaries) could be one way to reduce this complexity and provide ESPON outcomes in a more user-oriented way.

In this context, it has however to be mentioned that such detailed recommendations have not been asked on the respective Terms of Reference. Instead, in the current ESPON programme, both the different administrative and governmental levels as well as the different user group are supposed to be addressed by a series of publications and actions rather than being addressed by the individual studies. These will be examined in more detail in Section 2.4.3.

2.4.2 Strength and Weaknesses – "Sectoral and Horizontal Policy" Dimension

34 ESPON study projects will be finalised in the course of 2002 to 2006. The vast majority of these projects address the following seven headlines:

1. Transport
2. Agriculture and Fisheries
3. Culture, Education and Media
4. Environment, Nature and Hazards
5. Economic and Industrial Development, New Technologies
6. Social Affaires, Employment, Health and Demography
7. Urban-, Rural- and Regional Development (Spatial Development)

While the first six categories constitute sectoral policy (or research) areas, the last category is considered to be a horizontal policy (or research) field, which may have overlapping interests with the other policy fields (see Figure 2.2 below).

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[27] 33.3 percent of a total of 21 local level respondents respondent that the programme would not be relevant for them and "to general in terms of topic" (19.0 percent).

[28] 14.8 percent of a total of 27 EU level respondents gave this reply. Equally frequent reasons to the questions why people would not use the ESPON programme have been "no sufficient integration of topics" and "not relevant for me". 27 respondents constitute 21.74 percent of a total of 124 EU level respondents.

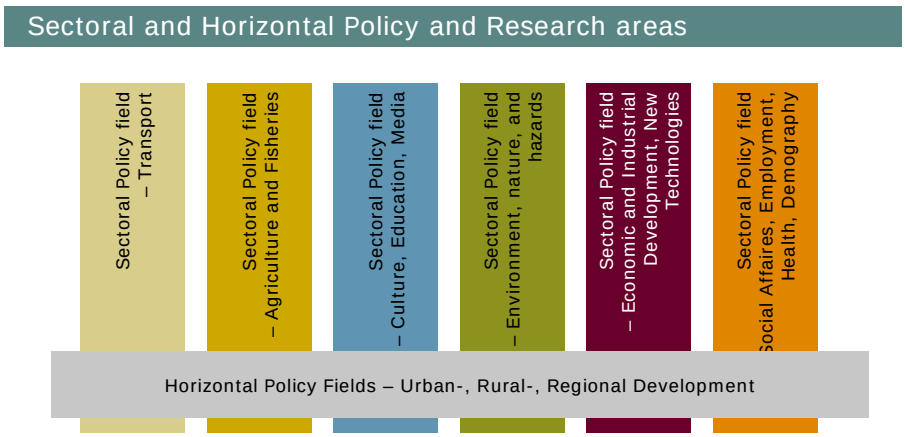

Figure 2.2 Sectoral and horizontal policy and research areas

All policy areas have mutual impacts on each other: Sectoral policy fields on horizontal policies and vice versa as well as sectoral policy fields on each other (in this context, this study will only concentrate on the first two aspect, the impact of the different sectoral policies on the horizontal policy areas and vice versa). Sectoral policy such as Transport, Agriculture, Environmental, Culture, Social or, above all, Economic Policy have undoubtedly a strong though variably strong impact on the horizontal policy dimension of urban-, rural-, and regional Development. Moreover, these impacts are mostly long-terms term impact.

As for the value of ESPON, a very interesting question in this context is whether the horizontal policy dimension has similarly strong impacts on the different sectoral policy areas and what role the ESPON programme plays in this regard.

The ESPON User survey asked the subject, in what policy field they are usual active and in relation to what policy field the subjects would use the ESPON studies. The response-frequencies as well as the percentages to these questions are illustrated in the table below (Table 2.1)

Policy Field	Count Respondents	N %	Count Work Purpose	N %	Diff. %
Transport	42	9.1 %	40	12.2 %	+3.1 %
Agriculture and Fisheries	13	2.8 %	14	4.3 %	+1.5 %
Culture, Education and Media	18	3.9 %	14	4.3 %	+0.4 %
Environment, Nature and Hazards	46	9.9 %	40	12.2 %	+2.3 %
Urban-, Rural- and Regional Development (Spatial Development)	249	53.8 %	155	47.1 %	-6.7 %
Economic and Industrial Development, New Technologies	46	9.9 %	36	10.9 %	+1.0 %
Social Affaires, Employment, Health and Demography	24	5.2 %	24	7.3 %	+2.1 %
Private Business Purpose	-	-	2	0.6 %	+0.6 %
Other	25	5.4 %	4	1,2 %	-4.2 %
Total	**463**	100 %	**329**	**100 %**	**0 %**

Table 2.1 Relation between policy field working in and policy fields that would use ESPON studies

The table contrasts the ESPON User-survey respondent pattern for both questions. It firstly becomes clear that the vast majority of subjects approached by the ESPON survey are active in the field of Urban-, Rural-, and Regional Development, whereas far less people are active in the sec-

toral policy areas. Given the nature of the ESPON programme as a spatial planning programme, notably its horizontal orientation, this is not a surprise.

The finding become more interesting when compared to the question in relation to what policy field the subjects would actually use the ESPON studies. Given the respondent pattern as well as the nature of the programme, it is again not surprising that the large majority of respondents use the ESPON programme in relation to their work in the policy field on Urban-, Rural-, and Regional Development. Yet, in comparison to the percentage of people usually working in this field (first question/column 3) the horizontal field slightly looses shares in favour of the sectoral policies fields.

One conclusion to be drawn from this: To begin with, the results of the ESPON programme projects seem to be consulted with regard to the sectoral policy fields. In this respect, the ESPON programme has the clear strength to contribute with unique transnational, Europe-wide data, information and maps, as well as its transversal approach. To continue, the outcomes and results of the ESPON programme do not seem to significantly increase the importance of the horizontal, spatial planning sector for the other, sectoral policy areas.

In addition, Table 2.1 also provides some first indications concerning the relevance of ESPON to the particular sectoral policy fields. Seemingly, the ESPON programme has stronger overlaps with policy sectors such as transportation, environmental and economic policy as with the cultural, agricultural and social sector.[29] This related to the question, whether it would not be worth reconsidering the relatively broad transversal approach of the ESPON programme, in the sense of abandoning the study of sectoral policy fields that do not seem to be the most relevant to the objectives of ESPON in favour of a more thematically focussed ESPON approach.

2.4.3 Strength and Weaknesses – Dimension "User Groups"

Corresponding to the User- and Demand orientation adopted by this study, three relatively large User Groups have been defined for the purpose of approaching the analysis of the value of ESPON from the user perspective. Irrespectively from the governmental level or the thematic orientation, these three user groups are

- Policy-Makers
- Practitioners (Territorial Planners)
- Scientists

Given the nature of ESPON being an "applied research programme", this study considers the to former User groups to be more weighty, thus it will put more emphasis on the creation of added value by ESPON for policy makers and practitioners.

The added value of the formal outcomes for the user groups depends largely on the vertical and geographic coverage. As has already been mentioned, the geographic coverage of the current ESPON programme appears to be good and to deliver a significant added value, the ESPON studies produced maps and developed models that are covering all the 27+2 ESPON countries, always in relation to a specific subject and on a transnational perspective. It is perceived that these tools, due to their overview of all the ESPON space countries, do provide a clear added value for scien-

[29] This statement is purely based on Table 2.1 illustrated above. The reader shall take into account, that the authors of the study notices relatively strong political tensions regarding the ESPON programme and agricultural sectors, which are based on the outcomes of ESPON study 2.1.3 on the Impact of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Therefore, the above mentioned statement on the overlaps of ESPON with the agricultural sector should be treated carefully.

tists interested in European trends and developments as well as for policy makers at a European and national level.

As regards the governmental and administrative level, the added value for policy makers, practitioners and scientists is closely linked to the geographical detail, which is most often provided up to the NUTS 3 level. The added value for these user groups in the present programme is the more limited the lower the level they intend to address. Depending on the country, NUTS 3 level might already be too imprecise for taking EPSON results into account on the regional or even national level.

All groups consider study projects that integration a number of horizontal and sectoral topics so far to be missing in the context of ESPON.[30]

Besides the thematic and geographic coverage as well as the geographic detail, the formal outcomes of the ESPON project strongly determine the added value of ESPON for the three User groups. Therefore, this study will now address the question whether the formal outcomes of the ESPON study projects provide an added value for the user groups addressed here.

The answer to this main question which guided the work conducted on the lessons learned from the ESPON programme is rather complex. The problem in answering that question is that one has to put oneself in the situation of the distinct user groups, which have indeed very different needs and knowledge. Moreover, on the inside these user groups are again strongly heterogenic. In the group of the policy makers for example, the user needs may differ slightly depending on the level one is working on (European, national, regional, local) and depending on the field of interest. Therefore, the answer to this question is based on a logical assumption on what in general each of the different user groups would require.

Taking this into account, the analysis of the ESPON studies suggests that an added value can mainly be identified for two of the three user groups, notably the scientists and the policy makers. The added value would appear to be the highest for scientist, followed at quite a distance by policy makers and finally the added value for practitioners is the lowest. This distribution is due to the fact that the reports are quite technical with an extensive length, which makes them mainly usable for the scientific community.

The added value for policy makers exists, even though it sometimes appears to be somewhat limited. Two aspects should be noted in this respect. Firstly, even though the great majority of reports comprise policy recommendations, these are not always entirely clear. A second aspect directly addressing the needs of the policy makers are the executive summaries, which allow them to get a quick overview on the main findings of a study. However, the executive summaries of the ESPON studies are in most cases too long and are often too technical which makes them unsuitable for policy makers and therefore clearly limits the potential added value for policy makers.

Finally, as regard the added value for practitioners to aspects have to be taken into consideration:

- The governmental levels on which the main concentration of practitioners is considered to be to be situated.
- The degree to which the programme as well as the project addresses practitioners.

[30] A number of ESPON study projects that truly integrating different topics await finalization in 2006.

Regarding the first aspect, it appears reasonable to believe that the main concentration of practitioners is situated at the regional and the local level. As already demonstrated, NUTS 3 may provide practitioners with appropriate geographic detail, so that they may derive interesting information for their work at the regional level. In addition, though practitioners as such are not directly addressed by most of the ESPON programme projects, regional level practitioners may benefit from ESPON dissemination seminars (e.g. organised by the ECP-network). In contrast, it appears unlikely that ESPON provides any value added for local level practitioners, due to both insufficient geographic detail and, thus, the fact that local level practitioners are neither directly addressed by the ESPON programme projects nor by ESPON dissemination activities.

At this stage, it has to be mentioned that the problem does not explicitly lie in the ESPON programme as such, but also in the large geographical scope of the studies as well as in the data availability at the local level in the ESPON space.

Moreover, in order to address these issues of limited added value for policy makers and especially for practitioners, ESPON has lately launched new, joint studies with INTERACT, which are adapting the results to the specific needs of distinct user groups and are integrating the results of several large studies. This seems to be a first step to make the results more accessible and to increase therefore the added value for policy makers and practitioners.

In this context it has to be remembered that the added value of the current ESPON programme for policy makers and practitioners and the different administrative levels stems from a series of publication and actions rather than from the individual ESPON study. The following illustration (Figure 2.2) transcribes this series of ESPON publications into a value chain.

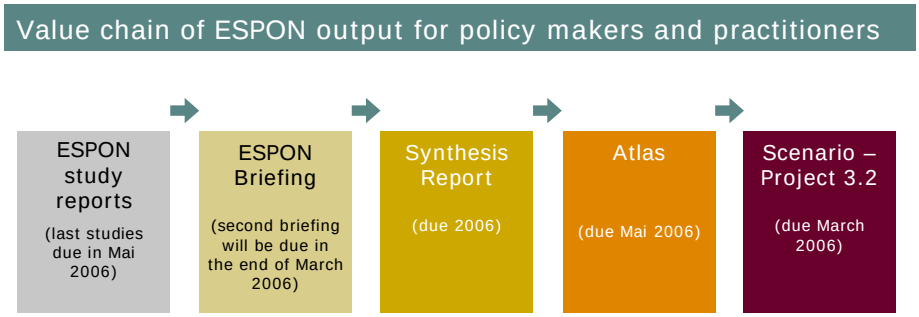

Figure 2.2 Series of ESPON publications into a value chain

In addition, policy makers and practitioners may benefits from the different dissemination activities, in particular seminars and conferences conducted in the course of the 2002 – 2006. In this context, especially national dissemination seminars conducted by the ECPs, the seminar jointly conducted with the INTERACT programme as well as the communication conference planned for June 2006 have to be mentioned.[31]

The way the ESPON programme, publications and dissemination process is designed makes it impossible to determine the added value ESPON created for policy makers and practitioners simply by adding the added value of the individual ESPON studies. Therefore, this study will understand the value of the current ESPON to stem from the ensemble of publications issued and seminars held in

the course of the 2002 – 2006. In other words, the value of ESPON can only be determined through a holistic lens.

This, however, also implies that it is necessary to examine the development of the added value created by the ESPON programme. Due to the design of the current programme, the development of the ESPON added value for policy makers and practitioners can be understood as schematically illustrated below (Figure 2.3):

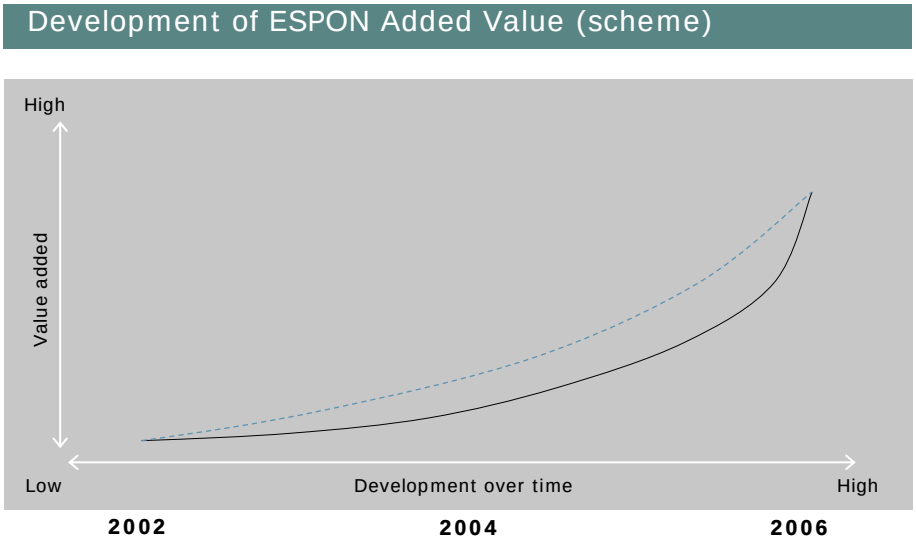

Figure 2.3 Development of ESPON added value

The programme produced rather little added value between during the initial years of the programme (2002 – 2004), as the first programme projects have been finalised and published in 2004. In 2004 and 2005 the results of further studies have been published, which added additional value to the programme. Yet, the most significant growth of ESPON added value can be expected for 2006, owing not only to the finalisation of the last studies but also to the additional publications (remaining synthesis reports, atlas, the overarching scenario project) and a major awareness raising event, which has been planned for April 2006 and which will address most major EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions) as well as regional representations (black curve).

With regard to a potential future ESPON programme it needs to be asked whether this approach should be kept or whether it would not be worth considering a new approach in which more immediate added value could be achieved stemming (more) directly from the publications of the individual ESPON II study report (please see blue dashed curve).

As for scientist on the other hand, the ESPON studies and respectively the entire programme projects create a more immediate added value, stemming directly from the ESPON studies reports. However, even in this respect, there is considerable room for improvement as the formal assessment of the ESPON study report published so far revealed shortcomings with regards to the length of the scientific summaries and scientific recommendation. In addition, scientists may benefit form additional activities on the scientific progress made by the ESPON programme. These are in particular the different ESPON conferences that have been held in the course of the project duration as well as the communication conference planned for June 2006.

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[31] For more information on the ESPON Communication Conference, please see the ESPON Communication

Scientists however appeared to be rather critical with the programme referring to two major aspects: the scientific quality of the studies and teaching. Regarding the former it was repeatedly mentioned that the quality of the ESPON study would suffer from the financially quite restricted, administratively burdensome and content wise supercharged ESPON projects. From the scientists' perspective, this is the most important explanation for the number of Letters of Intends and tenders in response to ESPON calls decreasing with increasing duration of the ESPON programme.

The aptitude of ESPON for teaching purposes was another concern. For scientists, ESPON in its current form appears to provide very little value added in terms of teaching. Three main reasons have been identified in this respect. From a technical point of view, the detail of maps publicly available would not suffice for teaching purposes. From a content point of view, the information on the methodology used in the particular studies provided in the later Final Report of ESPON programme projects would not suffice for teaching purposes. Finally, the aspect of dissemination appears to play a significant role with regard to teaching. ESPON would not always provide for interested people being well-informed about the latest programme developments and results. In this context, it has to be mentioned that the aspect of teaching does not constitute an ESPON objective. Therefore, it should only be considered a by-product of the ESPON programme rather than a direct and intended outcome of the programme.

However, some basic improve in terms of teaching, such as publicly providing more detailed maps and tools, can be achieved by means of rather limited efforts. This would also add recognition of the programme and thus the brand name of ESPON. People and especially future ESPON actors would be confronted with the programme in a much earlier stage of their career. Taking this into account, providing more material adequate for teaching (material that exists anyway) appear to be worthwhile.

2.4.4 Conclusions

The sections above discussed the value of ESPON with regard to three different dimensions:

- The Administrative or Governmental Level
- The Policy Fields addressed (sectoral or horizontal)
- The Three ESPON User Groups (Policy Makers, Practitioners, Scientists) that have been defined for this study

These three dimensions span an enormous ESPON user space (see Figure 2.4). Thus, the ESPON programme has a very large potential audience which it could reach and for which is could provide added value.

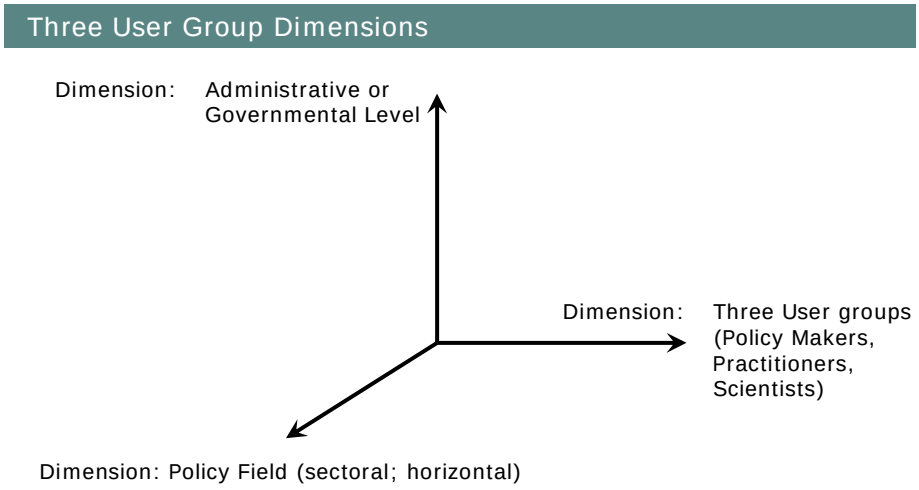

Figure 2.4 Three user group dimensions

The current ESPON programme does not appear to address this entire space. For both reasons of language and the geographic detail the current ESPON programme appears unlikely to address sub-national policy makers and practitioners in all but the six big ESPON countries. Concerning policy makers on the higher levels, the programme seems to create a considerable potential value. This potential value however appears to be unable to fully evoke its impacts due to shortcomings related to the formal outputs of some studies projects, to sufficiently focussed recommendations or policy options, to the political acceptance of the studies especially at the national level and to doubts about the scientific quality of some of the ESPON studies. Apart from the up-coming joint seminars with INTERACT, practitioners do not seem to be addressed by the programme at all especially when it comes to the formulation of recommendations.

Scientists on the contrary appear to be the main beneficiaries of the current programme though the study revealed interesting shortcomings with regard to the aspect of Teaching. In this respect, it is important to note that the aspect of teaching has not been an objective of the current ESPON, but was rather considered to be a by-product of the programme. Teaching however can also be considered as communication and dissemination activity towards prospective ESPON users. Therefore, it would be worth considering reinforcing this aspect in the framework of an ESPON II programme.

Hence, the question that arises in this context is whether ESPON needs to address such a large variety of users. Would a more focussed approach not be more effective? In order to resolve this question, it is at first important to understand where regarding the two other dimensions the three different user groups are predominantly active. Firstly, policy makers can be found on all governmental or administrative levels as well as in all policy fields. Logically the number of potential policy makers that could be addressed by ESPON increases exponentially when descending from the EU level downwards. However, this does not justify all policy makers being addressed by the programme. Secondly, practitioners in the field of spatial or territorial planning (urban planners, landscape planners, etc.) have been identified to be predominantly active at the sub-national level, which means the local and regional level. The study found hardly any practitioners at the national and European level. With regard to the policy fields, the core interest of practitioners appears to be the horizontal policy field of urban-, rural-, and regional development. Finally, scientists' interests may be situated on all levels as well as in relation to all policy fields.

Taking into consideration that ESPON is an applied research programme, it becomes obvious that the programme should address policy makers and practitioners regarding the 'application side' of ESPON, and researchers active in both the horizontal field of territorial planning and in the different sectoral fields addressed by the programme on the 'research side'. In other words, the programme should ideally address policy makers and practitioners for two purposes: the definition of topics to be studies and the application of the results into real life. On the other hand, the programme should address scientists in order to define the adequate scientific approach to a topic to be studied in order to guarantee the best possible results.

However, in order to address both user groups on the 'application side', the programme needs to address at least the regional level in most ESPON countries in order to reach practitioners. The current programme, however, appears to address the regional level especially in the smaller ESPON countries in an insufficient way.

Building on this, a number of questions appear to be relevant with regard to the possible design of a potential ESPON II programme, ideally lasting from 2007 – 2013:

1. **Focus**: Should a future ESPON programme continue to address the vast space of potential users or should it be more targeted towards certain user groups? Who should be the predefined user groups for the programme? Who should be the predefined user groups for the particular projects?
2. **Application**: How could a future ESPON programme address policy makers and practitioners more effectively?
3. **Research:** How could a future ESPON programme incorporate scientists more closely into the process of the methodological design of the ESPON studies in order to guarantee the scientific quality of the studies and thus of the programme (the tendering process is considered to be a relevant aspect in this respect)?

Part II of this study will address these questions in order to draft a coherent approach to a potential future ESPON II.

2.5 Conclusions Part I

The current ESPON programme should be viewed in a holistic way, especially in determining the value or the added value of the programme. For this reason, this conclusion intends to highlight the fact that any reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the current programme that have been outlined above should take into consideration that the current ESPON programme has not yet been finalised, that more than 10 Final ESPON Study Report are yet to be submitted and that the programmes major communication efforts are just about to begin. It is thus impossible to precisely determine the added value of ESPON.

However, it is possible to illustrate tendencies regarding the ESPON programmes value creation and, moreover, to identify the variables that determine the added value of ESPON. This conclusion will briefly recapitulate the most important variables, the emphasis of these variables for the different user groups (user group dimension) and the strengths and weaknesses related to them.

The programme created a considerable level of potential added value for the different user groups. However, it did not yet manage to fully transform this potential added value into actual value. In this context, especially the 'application-side' of the applied science programme ESPON merits to be strengthened.

Due to a number of reasons outlined in this section, the ESPON programme develops a degree of complexity that appears disproportionate to the overall size of the programme. Simplification of the entire programme seems to be highly desirable.

Variables	Strength	Weaknesses
Thematic Coverage	▪ Covers a large variety of different topics ▪ Strong potential value for higher levels	▪ Focus on key-topics appears to be missing ▪ Integration of topics appears to be insufficient – could create strong value added
Geographic Coverage	▪ Europe-wide view of spatial developments allows for benchmarks and comparison between territories concerning the different policy fields addressed	▪ Causes problems regarding data availability and data collection
Geographic Detail	Allows for territory internal analysis at ▪ European Level – strong potential and actual added value ▪ National level for most ESPON countries – adequate potential and actual added value ▪ Regional Level when it comes to larger European Regions	▪ Regional level in smaller ESPON countries and Local level inadequately addressed due to NUTS levels included and language – no internal analysis possible ▪ NUTS approach appears to be challenging due to the definition of the NUTS ▪ Problems in terms of data gathering
Programme Approach and Management	▪ The overall approach of ESPON shows a strong learning process	▪ Process does not always provide for ultimate clarity and focus ▪ Objectives define extensive ESPON user-space ▪ No visible client- or demand orientation
Project Administration and Management	▪ CU provides support to TPGs in order to decrease administrative burden for TPGs	▪ The administrative procedure related to ESPON appear to be too burdensome ▪ Project management occasionally seemed to suffer from interventions and new demands in the course of the study process
Quality	▪ Overall scientific quality appears to be high	▪ Formal quality of studies could be improved, especially with regard to the Clients ▪ Process of scientific validation and quality assurance. ▪ Seemingly sporadic shortcoming in terms of scientific quality
Tendering	▪ The tendering processes provide for good quality in terms of tender evaluation	▪ Seemingly, ESPON does not provide for the involvement of stakeholders in the process tender design ▪ Dissemination and administrative burden related to the conduct of studies seem to be causes for insufficient numbers of submitted tenders ▪ Inequality of geographical representation of successful bidders
Communication	▪ The communication strategy corresponds to the creation of content	▪ More awareness raising activities in the initial phase of the programme would have been an asset
Dissemination	Large variety of dissemination means ▪ events ▪ publications ▪ website	▪ Direct dissemination could be improved ▪ Contents not always edited/translated towards certain User-groups

Variables	Strength	Weaknesses
Networking and Cooperation with other Initiatives	▪ Creation of a European wide scientific community in spatial planning ▪ Good level of cooperation with Interact	▪ Networks could be bigger ▪ Little overall coordination with other programmes apart from Interact
ECP		▪ No homogeneity in terms of Profile, Numbers, Terms of Employment, Performance ▪ No direct accountability to ESPON authorities ▪ Workload of ECPs ▪ Lack of clarity about ECP responsibilities ▪ Shortcomings in key-tasks
TPG	▪ Involvement of recognised institutes and organisations	▪ Strong concentration of TPG leaders in North Western Europe ▪ Little Involvement of Private Actors

Table 2.3 Variables / Strengths / Weaknesses

3. Part II – Recommendations for a future ESPON II Programme

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Part I of this study examined the added value the current ESPON programme created for its different user groups. In this context, it identified a number of variables that carry an essential weight in terms of value creation and outlined strength and weaknesses for each of these variables (Table 2.3).

Part II of this study intends to elaborate recommendations related to each of these variables. Moreover, promising overall configurations referring to the ensemble of variables will be identified for future ESPON II programme taking into account two different budgetary scenarios. Taking into consideration the ensemble of recommendations aims on

- providing for more client- and demand orientation
- providing for simplification of the programme
- turning the potential added value of EPSON into actual added value for the ESPON user groups
- tackling the shortcomings of the different variables impeding their capacity to contribute to the creation of added value
- developing the strengths related to each of the variables.

In order to approach these tasks effectively, the variables have been regrouped under the three following headlines:

- ESPON II Content – Thematic and Geographic coverage
    - Thematic Coverage (also referring to the integration of topics)
    - Geographic Scope (Geographic Coverage and Geographic Detail)
- ESPON II Administrative and Managerial Processes
    - Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance
    - Tendering
    - Programme Approach and Management
    - Project Administration
- ESPON II Communication, Dissemination and Networking
    - Dissemination
    - Communication Strategy
    - Networking, Coordination and Cooperation with other Programmes
    - TPGs
    - ECPs

The following Sections 3.2 to 3.4 will reflect this structure. Each section will present a short introduction to the variables discussed in its course. Subsequently, the different variables will be discussed separately and recommendations regarding each variable will be developed. As it will become clear, all variables have potential, more or less strong interrelations with others. This is why each of the Sections will be concluded with an integrated presentation of the recommendations that have been discussed before in a separate way.

Building on Sections 3.2 to 3.4, Section 3.5 will refer to all previously mentioned recommendations in an integrated way. It intends to draw two complete and coherent pictures of the future ESPON II programme with regard to two different scenarios. Therefore, this section will firstly present gen-

eral recommendations that in any case should be implemented in the framework of ESPON II. Secondly, it will outline specific recommendations referring to two different ESPON II budget scenarios. These two scenarios will ultimately be quantified in two very basic draft budgets.

Finally, Section 3.6 intends to outline a guide to implementation of the recommendations with regard to a two years transition period starting in mid-2006 and ending in mid-2008.

3.2 ESPON II Content – Thematic Coverage and Geographic Scope

3.2.1 Introduction on Relevant Variables

By thematic coverage, this study understands the horizontal and sectoral policies fields to be covered by ESPON as well as the study approach employed in order to address there topics. The term geographic scope incorporates two sub-concepts: The (horizontal) geographic coverage, referring to the area covered by the ESPON programme or by a particular ESPON project, as well as the (vertical) geographic detail, referring to the NUTS and LAU levels addresses by the programme as a whole or the individual study respectively.

3.2.2 Individual Recommendations on Variables

3.2.2.1 Thematic Coverage and Integration of Topics

Part I of this study illustrated that ESPON refers to a number of sectoral and horizontal policy areas. In this respect, especially the width of sectoral policy areas covered by the programme has significant influence on the amount of potential addressees of the programme. The more sectoral policy areas ESPON covers, the more potential users has the programme. Yet, Part I also raised doubt about the effectiveness of such an approach, as "the results of the ESPON programme projects seem to be consulted with regard to the sectoral policy fields" … but that they "do not seem to significantly increase the importance of the horizontal, spatial planning sector for the other, sectoral policy areas".[32] Subsequently, it was asked whether a future ESPON II programme should not decide on a more thematically focussed approach, for instance by referring only to those sectoral policy areas that have the most intense impacts on spatial and territorial development.

Since the thematic coverage of the current programme seems to be overall satisfying, this study suggests that ESPON II should address all policy issues already targeted by the current programme in order to provide for continuity, and may even address additional policy areas that have not yet been sufficiently addressed. However, ESPON II should also define some priorities especially with regard to the sectoral policy fields. Sectoral policy areas with more intense impacts on spatial and territorial development (e.g. transport, economy, social affaires, the environment) as well as more horizontal topics (e.g. Urban Sprawl) should be given priority in comparison to those policy areas that seem to have comparatively weaker impacts on spatial planning (e.g. fisheries, culture, media) and, in this way, to provide ESPON II with a more focussed approach than its predecessor.

Moreover, taking into account the preferences of a large sample of survey subjects, it is suggested that a future ESPON II programme should not only comprise studies referring to the spatial dimension of one single sectoral policy fields, but also studies integrating a feasible selection of sectoral

[32] p. 30

policies into one single study.[33] In this way, reciprocities between the different sectoral policy areas would be taken into account, providing all user groups with results much closer to reality. Thus, such an approach would deliver results that appear much more effective than the results of the current programme, creating additional added value for all ESPON user groups.

Another type of thematic study that appeared to interest the actual and potential ESPON user would be 'reactive studies' or 'studies addressing policy-driven demand at short-notice'. This type of studies would be ESPON's response to criticism about the current programmes delays and value creation.

In this context, it is also important to refer to the permanence of the current ESPON programme's outcomes and results. Some of the first studies of the current programme were tendered in 2002 and published in 2004. This implies that they partly relied on data that has been gathered before 2002. Given the fast changing nature of today's economy, society, environment, etc. this data will be outdated in the beginning or shortly after the beginning of the potential second ESPON period 2007 – 2013. Thus, in order to guarantee the future usability of the current ESPON programme's results, the update of some of the current studies seems to be more than feasible.

The thematic coverage of ESPON II should be predefined at both the programme and the project level, taking a clear demand- and client oriented approach. A predefinition at the programme level would allow to orient the work programme of ESPON II on the user-demand and avoid the programme to explore ever new potential subjects (as it seems to be the case in the current programme with the "Preparatory study on spatially relevant aspects of tourism (ESPON Study 1.4.5)) and provide each topic with sufficient funds to guarantee for both adequate focalisation on the topic and quality of the respective studies.

Predefinition of the thematic coverage at the project level would prevent from extensive intervention and additional demands in the course of the study project and thus increase the attractively of the study projects for potential study teams (See 3.2.2.2).

ESPON II should:

- With regard to the topics to be covered at the same time provide for
  - continuity with regard to topics covered by ESPON I
  - user-oriented definition of topics
  - address additional, relevant topics when this deems necessary (especially from the user perspective)
  - more focus or priority areas
  - studies that integrated several policy topic in one single study
  - studies addressing policy-driven demand at short-notice
  - joint projects with URBACT II and INTERACT II

Figure 3.1: Recommendations on the Thematic Coverage and the Integration of Topics in ESPON II

[33] This study will refer to this aspect in the remainder of this Chapter, especially be creating a future study type 3.

3.2.2.2 Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of the future ESPON II programme is crucial to the budget of the individual ESPON studies. The definition of both geographic coverage and geographic detail to be covered by a study have a major impact on the costs a TPG has to face with regard to data collection, data consolidation and adjustment. The larger the geographic coverage of a study the larger the risk the TPG faces with regard to data availability in for example accession or neighbouring countries. The higher the geographic detail of a study or, in other words, the lower the NUTS or even LAU level an ESPON project is supposed to study, the higher will be the risks for the TPG in terms of data availability and the costs related to data gathering, data consolidation, data adjustment and data processing.

The future ESPON II programme should predefine geographic coverage and detail on both the programme level and the project level. On the programme level, ESPON II requires a precise definition about which countries should be included into the future ESPON space for the entire programme. In this respect there appear to be the following hierarchy of priorities:

1. The EU accession states, Bulgaria and Romania as well as paying members (currently Norway, Switzerland and Iceland would fall within this category).
2. Countries with candidate status – Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey – as well as the so-called 'black whole' comprising all countries in the Balkans that have not been covered by the current ESPON programme.
3. The neighbouring countries such as the MEDA countries.

Regarding existing problems the TPGs had to face in terms of data-availability in the CEEC and accession countries an enlargement of the ESPON space beyond Priority one does not seem recommendable.

As for the geographic detail, ESPON II needs to define on the programme level which NUTS level the future programme should cover. In this context, it appears that the majority of ESPON stakeholders are in favour of deeper geographic detail. Hence, a future ESPON should at least cover the NUTS 1 – LAU 1 (NUTS 4), though this should not be understood in the sense that all future EPSON studies should refer to all these levels. Already a number of studies including NUTS 1 to LAU 1 (NUTS 4) would provide for a stronger added value for policy makers and practitioners situated on the regional level, yet it would probably not suffice for policy makers and practitioners at the local level.

Including LAU 2 (NUTS 5) could provide a strong potential added value for policy makers and practitioners on both the regional and local level. However, as it has been shown in Part I of this study addressing the local level is not just a matter of geographic detail but also of language. If ESPON II intends to provide an added value in terms of geographic detail, the programme also needs to provide a solution with regard to language; otherwise the effort made to obtain LAU 2 (NUTS 5) detail would not address a sufficiently large target group and thus not correspond to the principle of proportionality.

It is very important that the definition of the geographic coverage and detail on the programme as well as on the project level will be done jointly. Taking into consideration the problems in terms of data availability, etc. related to both dimensions, it would not be advisable to increase the coverage and the detail at the same time. An ESPON project covering a wider ESPON space and providing LAU 1 (NUTS 4) detail does not appear to be feasible at all. Therefore, it should be defined at the programme level that in the future ESPON II may of course cover a larger ESPON space and

refer to a higher geographic detail, but that the particular ESPON studies should either address the entire ESPON space or include the LAU levels – higher geographic detail deeper than NUTS 3 – but never both at the same time.

On the project level, the exercise of defining the geographic coverage and detail has to be repeated separately for each individual study. Section 3.3 will elaborate in this respect.

ESPON II should:

- Provide for studies that cover
  - either the entire ESPON space – the EU 25, the EU accession countries and the three paying members (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland) –
  - or refer to LAU levels (higher geographic detail than NUTS 3 can provide)
  - develop the complementarity of ESPON with INTERACT II and URBACT II
- In case that NUTS 5 is targeted, also provide for a solution to the 'language' problem

Figure 3.2: Recommendations on the Geographic Scope of ESPON II

3.2.3 Integrated Recommendations

Taking the abovementioned into account, this study identified eight different types of studies, which refer to the thematic coverage and the geographic scope and which should be employed in the framework of the future ESPON II programme. These eight study types are:

Study Type	Characteristics
1	Projects on a particular topic with a broad geographic coverage (entire ESPON space) – the 'traditional' ESPON study project
2	In-depth studies on a particular topic with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
3	In-depth studies on integrated topics with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
4	Reactive, short-term studies that address contemporary problems related to territorial policy making – studies addressing policy-driven demand with short-notice
5	Up-dates of current ESPON studies (data, new policy developments, etc.)
6	Filling in the black hole (Balkan region) or adding new ESPON countries data to existing studies (and thus continue the work of the ECP projects targeting this area)
7	Projects compiling the results of the current ESPON study projects for specific user-groups (These projects would correspond with the current programme's projects 3.1 'Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development' and 3.2 'Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in Relation to the ESDP and EU Cohesion Policy' and should not be confused with the series of compiling reports that has been issued by the ESPON Coordination Unit.)
8	Pilot and Experimental Projects focussing on the experimental implementation of ESPON policy options on a quite low-scale level

Table 3.1 Proposition of 8 future ESPON study types

Besides these nine ESPON II project types, ESPON could envisage some funds for Joint Projects with URBACT II and INTERACT II. Yet, given the latest developments in relation to these future configurations of these three programmes, this appears quite unlikely.

The following table illustrates opportunities and threats, which have been identified with regard to these studies.

Type	Opportunities	Threats
1	Valuable to many different types of actors ▪ allow benchmarking of regions and ▪ act as a starting point and basis for other, subsequent studies	Problems related to data availability – however data issues should not dictate these studies
2	The sectoral approach will produce ▪ better links to specific areas and ▪ create higher value to sectoral actors and specific areas	▪ Creates 'spoilt for choice' situation with regard to the variety of sectoral policy fields that have been covered by current ESPON programme and could be covered by in-depth study, yet do to likely budget restraints not all subjects can be covered – need to choose subject carefully ▪ Need to define them carefully to avoid risk of unbearable project burdens ▪ Representativeness and comparability
3	Integrated topics are important as they allow for ▪ studying new phenomena in depth ▪ investigating links between causes and effects of problems	▪ Need to think carefully over the selection of such studies ▪ 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 ▪ Potential to generate (political) support for ESPON	▪ Problems related to the selection of adequate contemporary policy challenges ▪ Could affect the independence of ESPON ▪ Diversion from ESPON's main tasks
5	▪ Necessary to make use of what already exists ▪ May provide for identifying trends and thus create a dynamic view of developments	▪ Risks to create excessive tasks – thus there is the 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) ▪ Risks not to be attractive to TPGs
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 for the production of knowledge prior to integration (can assist with identification of problems)	▪ Problems related to data availability – since data availability especially in the CEEC and the accession countries has bee a problem in the course of the current programme there is a risk with regard to the new programme ▪ Countries would probably be non-paying ESPON countries – will affect the financial situation of ESPON ▪ Risks not to be attractive to TPGs, especially due to reasons of data-availability

Type	Opportunities	Threats
7	Important for ▪ disseminating and awareness-raising of ESPON – allows for the valorisation of results and can serve as a focus for integration of ESPON with other programmes ▪ addressing the needs of end-users	▪ Budget: regarding the range of study types envisaged the programme has to arrange for respective budget in advance ▪ Time: should not jeopardise the creation of immediate end-user oriented results and the permanence of other studies' results to be compiled should be taken into account – risk to compile 'outdated' information
8	▪ The possibility to test ESPON recommendations and policy option in terms of they applicability, relevance, practical value, through implementing them in a real life	▪ Only sporadic possibilities to use ▪ Time-constraints ▪ Limitations related to geographic scale

Table 3.2 type of studies with opportunities and threats

The different study types outlined above vary in terms of their important to the objectives of the ESPON programme. Therefore, the following paragraphs will outline arguments on the priorities concerning the inclusion of these different study types in the future ESPON II programme.

As regard study of the **Type 1** – the 'traditional' ESPON programme projects – a continuation of ESPON without this type of studies appears to be unthinkable (This type of study refers to all "thematic project", "policy impact projects", "coordinating cross thematic projects", "studies and scientific support projects" of the current ESPON programme). Thus, the work programme of ESPON II should provide for Type 1 studies. However, given the large number of different policy areas that has been already been covered by Type 1 studies in the course of the current ESPON programme, the budget envisage for this type of studies in the ESPON II programme could be significantly lower. In other words, irrespectively of the total ESPON II budget, ESPON II should allocate a certain budget minimum for the 'tradition ESPON programme project'. Type 1 project shall are considered to be large-scale projects.

Type 2 studies would create in-depth information regarding a single sectoral policy field and, thus, could be valuable to policy makers in this particular field. Given the large variety of possible policy sectors to be addressed by the studies and the budget implications related to covering this variety this study 2 appears to be disadvantageous and hence less attractive than Type 3 studies, which *ceteris paribus* provide for in-depth studies integrating different sectoral policy areas. Type 2 project shall are considered to be large-scale projects.

Type 3 studies appear to be advantageous as they seem to address and provide added value to a large audience of players while employing less financial resources (as opposed to type 2 studies). In addition, they would provide lower level actors with integrated and this valuable information for policy making. This study type appears to be suitable to become another main pillar of a future ESPON II programme. Type 3 project shall are considered to be large-scale projects.

Due to the ability of providing useful and adequate information in reaction to contemporary policy challenges at short notice, **Type 4** studies appear to have a strong and obvious value added for policy makers and thus for the user groups that is considered to be the main beneficiary of the

ESPON.[34] As a result, these comparatively small study projects seem to be indispensable for a future ESPON II programme.

The major problem related to this kind of study is related to defining, which contemporary political problems should be covered by the programme. This however is a function for multiple aspects such as

- The policy field to be addressed
- The ESPON countries' interests: since the ESPON countries are differently far advanced in terms of their economic, technological and societal developments
- The governmental level to be addressed.

The selection of study topics therefore appears to be rather delicate.

Since a major feature of this study type in terms of value creation is the aspect of "short notice", another critical point in relation to this study type would be the duration of the study. The duration of the study is a function of

- The selection process
- Thematic coverage
- The geographic coverage and detail and
- The demands to the TPGs in terms of output.

In other words, in order to respect the 'aspect' of short notice, the outline of the study needs to be defined very carefully as well as relatively quickly.

In this context, the question arises whether this can be put into practice given the rather political decisions-making procedures of the current ESPON programme. Thus, it shall be suggested here, that if type 4 studies are to be included into the potential ESPON II programme framework, this framework has also to provide for an uncomplicated, quick and just decisions making process with regard to these studies. In contrast, remaining with the current decision making framework is likely to create delays which would jeopardize the potential value-added stemming from this special type of 'short notice' study projects.

Update of the current EPSON studies (**Type 5**) seems to be crucial with regard to 'preserving' the predominantly potential value that the current ESPON programme has created so far. Therefore, ESPON II should engage in activities of this kind. However, it is important to avoid the updating process getting out of hand and, in this way, create disproportionate burden for the budget of the future ESPON II programme. In order to do so, the predefinition of the ESPON II work programme, taking into account the total ESPON II budget, needs to clearly define in which areas ESPON II should provide for updates and in which not. Based on this predefinition, the work programme should allocate a budget corresponding to the tasks outline in the work programme. Thus, ESPON II should provide for a certain updating of ESPON results, but unlike traditional ESPON studies (type 1) the minimum budget allocated to these activities should not be irrespective of the total amount of the ESPON II budget. Type 5 project shall are considered to be large-scale projects.

The Balkan-region has not been covered by the ESPON programme since, at the launch of the programme; none of the Balkan countries except Slovenia had accession or candidate status. Since today both Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been granted the status

[34] Having been asked the question about who should be the main beneficiaries of the ESPON programme 49.1 percent of the subjects opted for policy makers, 23.4 viewed practitioners to be the main beneficiaries and 10.9 % opted for scientists.

of candidate country, closing the 'black-hole' in the Balkans has been brought on the agenda of the ESPON programme. On the grounds of data availability and institutional infrastructure it seems unlikely that the inclusion of the two candidate countries as well as the remaining Potential Candidate Countries in the region would provide for any effectiveness in terms of the principle of proportionality. Therefore, the inclusion of these countries into the ESPON space respectively the update of the current programme's studies (**Type 6**) does not seem to be economical. This study type could take for of both, large-scale or small projects.

However, the final decision in this respect is likely to be taken on political grounds. This study will therefore abstain from formulating recommendations with regard to closing the gap of ESPON in the Balkan-region.

Besides the traditional ESPON studies, studies compiling ESPON results (**Type 7**) with regard to different user-groups have been the second most important pillar of the current ESPON programme. Given the relatively diversified audience that the future ESPON programme is likely to have, it appears feasible to envisage this type of studies in the future. However, it depends on the general approach chosen for ESPON II, how much compiling effort ESPON II should provide for. The more the individual future study addressed the diversified ESPON audience by means of diversified recommendations, the less effort needs to be made for compiling the findings of the studies. On the contrary, the less the future ESPON studies provide for diversified policy recommendations, the larger the need to subsequently compile the information created. Type 7 project shall are considered to be large-scale projects.

The potential value-added of **Type 8** pilot or experimental projects is quite obvious. By means of implementing recommendations and policy options brought about in the course of the various ESPON programme projects into practice, one could test the validity of these recommendations in terms of its applicability in real life, its relevance and value added to solving contemporary problems (experiment). However, given the nature and configuration of the ESPON programme there seem to be only limited possibilities for conducting this type of projects. Firstly, the implementation of ESPON recommendations may imply quite heavy investment (e.g. as regards transport, telecom). This strongly limits the possibilities for implementation given the comparatively small size the ESPON II budget is likely to have. Secondly, type 8 projects would also be a subject to time constraints, since the time it would take to develop measurable impacts resulting from the implementation of ESPON recommendations is likely to exceed the programme period 2007 – 2013. Measuring these impacts, however, would constitute the most important outcome of type 8 projects. Thirdly, type 8 studies would be subject to limitations resulting from a geographical scale. So far the most ESPON recommendations are derived from study projects referring to NUTS 3 as the most detailed geographical level. The implementation of these recommendations should thus take place on this geographical level. This again would imply rather strong budgetary constraints.

Despite these limitations ESPON II should not refrain from this promising type of studies. Taking into account the arguments above, it could be interesting to conduct ESPON II type 8 studies in two different ways:

- Firstly, ESPON II should directly take on this type of studies and test less "budget-intensive" recommendations on a small level.
- Secondly, as regards more "budget-intensive" recommendations, these could be tested in cooperation with another DG Regional Policy or European Commission programmes. Associating with these programmes could contribute to the funds available and thus add to overcoming the budgetary constraints related to the conduct of pilot or experimental projects, which have been outlined above.

In both cases, the time constraint would remain the same.

The arguments and recommendations that have been outlined above will be renewed in Section 3.5, which will integrate the finding of the Sections 3.2 to 3.4. In so doing, Section 3.5 will also indicate the preferences of ESPON stakeholder with regard to the eight studies, referring at the same time to two different ESPON II budget scenarios.

3.3 ESPON II Administrative and Managerial Processes

3.3.1 Introduction on Relevant Variables

Some of the shortcomings identified in Part I of this study originate from the configuration of the current programme regarding the four subjects summarised under this headline.

- Programme Approach and Management
- Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance
- Tendering
- Project Administration and Management

To give an example, the configurations of ESPON with regard to all four abovementioned aspect have an impact on the overall quality of the individual ESPON study for the ESPON user. Therefore, increasing internal ESPON system for to improve the programmes quality assurance capacities need to take all four aspects into account.

The following sections will outline recommendations on all four aspects.

3.3.2 Individual Recommendations on Variables

3.3.2.1 Programme Approach and Management

Some of the shortcomings of the current ESPON programme identified in Part I of this study can only be addressed on the programme level. This requires adjustments of the approach of the ESPON programme.

As regards the programme objectives, a future ESPON II programme should be based on a coherent defined set of objectives. Firstly, the objectives of ESPON II should adopt a demand- or client-driven approach for the programme.

Secondly, the future ESPON's set of objectives should answer to two major concerns of the future ESPON programme: Which overall approach should ESPON II adopt with regard to the creation of added value? Should the programme continue the 'holistic' approach of the current ESPON programme or should is adopt a new approach, which provides for continuous and more immediate creation of added value? In this respect, this study suggests to pursue the second approach.

This would also impact the aspect of 'recommendations' or 'policy options' to be provided by the future ESPON II programme projects. In order to properly address the different user groups, recommendations have to be formulated that take into account the different interests of the user groups. In addition, in order to provide user – and especially policy with a certain choice of options – recommendations should take the form of policy options; this means alternative policy recom-

mendations on a certain topic, which a policy maker may adopt according to both the specific situation they face and their preferences. Given the suggestion on this study to provide for more immediate value, the formulation of detailed policy options needs to be made compulsory by means of respective obligations in the Terms of References of the particular programme projects.

Thirdly, the objectives should delimit the future ESPON user space to be addressed in order to grant ESPON II a clear focus and limit the risk of becoming too board. Taking into account the three dimensions outlined in Figure 2.4, the objectives of the future ESPON programme should clearly states

- which governmental levels should be addressed by ESPON II, and respectively, which NUTS level should be included and in which context they should be included,
- which especially sectoral policy fields should be covered by the future programme, and
- which user-groups (policy-makers, practitioner, and scientist) the programme should address and by what means.

These aspects are already developed and recommendations are made in section 3.2

The precise definition of objectives concerning the three dimensions outlined above would create a three-dimensional matrix, engirding various new and very precise user groups, for instance

- Policy makers in the field of transport policy on the European level,
- Practitioners on the field of landscape (rural) development at the regional level, or
- Scientists with research focus on the impact of environmental regulations on the regional and national territories.

Such a user-matrix or user-grid would be advantageous for ESPON II in a number of respects.

1. It would allow for precisely targeting the specific user-groups to be addressed by an individual ESPON II study.
2. The grid could provide guidance during the dissemination of Call for Proposals (while at the same time providing neat respect for the relevant public procurement regulations).
3. The grid could serve as a guidance to select experts for the sounding board accompanying an individual study from a previously established pool of experts.[35]
4. It would be a helpful tool for TPGs in terms of explicitly addressing these predefined groups with recommendations or policy options in the Final Study reports
5. It could provide guidance in terms of disseminating the results of particular studies to the user groups addressed within a study
6. The grid could also be employed to facilitate the elaboration of future compiling reports.

For these reasons, this study strongly suggests the establishment of such a matrix.

Parallel to the above mentioned, ESPON II should dispose of a coherent, predefined work programme from the very beginning. This work programme should

- taking into account and refer to the programmes objectives,
- define the different ‘types of studies’ as well as ‘study categories’ to be conducted, their purpose and contribution to the overall value creation of the programme, their quantity of and/or budget share attributed to each individual study type.
- provide for a rough but logic and balanced schedule
- endow the programme with maximum flexibility when this deems necessary (especially with regard to type 4 studies).

[35] Please see Section 3.3.2.2

Ideally, EPSON II has to involve ESPON stakeholders in the process of defining its new work programme, emphasising the demand- or client driven approach of ESPON II. Policy-makers and practitioners could give significant input regarding the demand side. Scientists could provide information concerning both desired outputs (demand-side) and methodology feasible to the projects (supply-side). Practically, this could be achieved through a preparatory study at the very beginning of the ESPON II programme period.

Building on this, the work programme of ESPON should be elaborated in close cooperation with other relevant EU programmes, such as INTERACT II and URBACT II of DG Regional Policy or the relevant Research Programmes of the Research Framework Programme 7 of DG Research. This would allow for coordination of the different programme's work programmes and, in this way, establish to opportunity for increasing the mutual benefit for all.

The ESPON authorities (as well as the authorities managing the other abovementioned programmes) should by all means be committed to stick to this work programme throughout the entire duration of ESPON II.

Since some of the causes for shortcoming related to the attractiveness of ESPON to potential TPG members appear to be situated on the programme level, the approach of ESPON II should also, if this is possible in the framework of the relevant European Regulations, [36]

- provide for reduced administrative burden for the TPGs by means of adjusting the relevant regulations
- increase the efficiency of the ECP network by clearly defining the ECP's responsibilities in terms of
    - the mediation of potential TPG members
    - the support of the TPGs with regard to data collection and consolidation
    - the dissemination of ESPON results via different media (mailings, events).[37]
- reduce the risk of interventions in the ongoing study process by means of establishing a sounding board accompanying the TPGs and through adequate regulations ruling out activities of that kind.

In the context of TPGs, ESPON II should try to respond to another shortcoming of the current programme: The relatively strong weight of North-Western Europe in the Transnational Project Groups, and especially in terms of TPG leaders. As to be seen in the Case Study on TPGs in the Annex C, most of the ESPON programme projects so far were lead by institutes or organisations from the North-Western Europe, whereas Southern Europe and the CEEC are fairly little represented. This reflects the rather strong traditions in spatial and territorial development practice in most of the North-Western European countries and shows that the other European Regions have a strong backlog demand in this field. In fact, some CEEC member states are considerably weak developed institutions or even non-existent infrastructure in this field. Therefore ESPON II should encourage capacity building in this respect. For the programme level, this implies that ESPON II should formulate the medium- and long-term objective to contribute to the capacity building particular in EU member states in terms of spatial and territorial development.

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[36] At the current stage of the EU budget negotiations (1st Feb 2006) it appears as if the successors of the INTERREG programmes, could face rather inconsistent regulations related to the financial administration of the programmes and projects covered by these regulations. Among other reasons, this is related to different phasing out periods applicable to the old and new EU Member States. To old member-states would continue to be subject to an N+2 phasing-out, whereas the new Member-States would benefit from an N+3 phasing-out provision.

[37] The aspect on the ECPs are outlined in further detail in Section 3.4.2.3

Regarding the transition of ESPON I to ESPON II, the work programme should provide for a smooth transition from the former into the latter. This includes building the entire work programme – the studies to be conducted and results to be produced, the dissemination activities, the networks and cooperation to be established, etc. – on already existing bases established throughout the current programme. Reciprocally, the current ESPON programme could already refer to the future programme, especially through its intense communication strategy envisaged for 2006.

ESPON II should:

- Adopt a client- or demand driven approach
- Create more immediate added value for users
- Delimit future ESPON user space – provide for focus
- Dispose of a coherent and predefined work programme from the very beginning
- Involve users and other stakeholders in the process of predefining the work programme
- Closely cooperate with INTERACT and URBACT where possible
- Increase the attractiveness of the programme for potential TPG members
- Formulate the objective to contribute to EU wide capacity building in territorial and spatial planning
- Clarify the role of ECPs to improve ECP performance

Figure 3.3: Recommendations on the Programme Approach and Management of ESPON II

3.3.2.2 Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance

This study revealed shortcoming of the current ESPON with regard to the scientific validation and quality assurance of the ESPON programme projects. Moreover, it identified a number of causes for quality shortcomings of the ESPON study projects.

A future ESPON II programme needs to address these problems in order to increase the scientific feasibility and practical relevance of the studies. Both will add to increasing the added value of the individual studies and the programme as a whole.

The four following aspects have been identified as crucial to the future ESPON's capacity for scientific validation and quality assurance:

- The creation of a sounding board
- Data Validation
- Dissemination
- Tendering, Terms of References, Guidance Papers

Sounding Board

The idea of a sounding board is close to the idea of a scientific board, whose mission is to accompany an ESPON TPG in scientific terms by means of verifying, commenting and approving the scientific approach of a TPG to a particular study. The sounding board, however, would go beyond the idea of a scientific board, as it would also consist of policy-makers and practitioners. Incorporating these three different types of potential user groups would not contribute to improving the scientific quality of a study but, applying the idea of ESPON being an "applied science programme", which implies providing adequate added value for policy makers and practitioners.

Being external to the TPG, the sounding board should be endowed with sufficient competences to assure a very high quality level for the future ESPON programme project. However, giving the sounding board too many powers risks the board becoming a hindrance for the TPG conducting the studies. In other words, the sounding board should cooperate with the TPG leaders as far as the TPG's approach and methodology are concerned and not engage in competing activities.

As for the practical establishment of the sounding board, it would be ideal to establish a 'pool of experts', a database containing a large number of scientists, policy-makers, practitioners, from which the members of a particular sounding board could be drawn. After the publication for a Call for Expressions of Interest at the beginning of the ESPON 2007 – 2013 period, any interested experts could apply for being included in this database. According to the study focus of a particular future ESPON study, the Coordination Unit could then directly approach the scientists with regard to their availability for a sounding board.

The intervention of the sounding board should be process oriented. That means that the scientific validation should not take place after a particular ESPON II project, but parallel to the study process. The validation process should start as early as possible in order to give the board the chance to accompany the study process and provide, if necessary, for redirection at the earliest possible moment.

Scientific validation may cause small delays in order to give the sounding board the chance to appropriately assess the methodologies, study progress and results. However, relatively long waiting times that occurred in the current ESPON programme should be avoided.

The members of the sounding board would be remunerated for their activities. This implies that the establishment of a sounding board would increase the budget for any individual ESPON study. Yet, taking into account that in the current ESPON programme the CU in cooperation with the MC is responsible for quality assurance, a scientific board could also imply a reduction of workload for the ESPON CU.

In order to assure smooth internal coordination as well as smooth coordination with the ESPON CU, each sounding board should have one secretary in charge of steering the board's activities.

The concept of creating a "Sounding Board" in ESPON II may be perceived as difficult to realise within the contract models and funding mechanisms available to INTERREG. Ideally, the experts should be funded through standard service contracts which specify the tasks to be undertaken within a fixed number of billable days (e.g. 10 days work following a project over a 2 year period at €850 per day). If this contract type is not available then ESPON might consider the following:

- Initiate a Call for Tender to establish a Framework Contract for the Sounding Board (based on a conventional INTERREG Contract).
- Set aside the global budget for that activity against this Framework Contract.
- Require the Contractor to issue a Call for Expressions of Interest to build up a large pool of experts, scientists, practitioners, etc., who are willing to work as sub-contractors under the Framework contract at fixed rates.

It is also possible to conceive of the Framework Contract having a wider remit to include responding to small scale reactive studies (say under €50,000 budget) by the contractor putting forward appropriately composed teams from the expert pool in response to ToR set out by the MC.

The advantage of this approach is that it requires only one Call for Tender, has considerable flexibility to provide varied skills and support to the MC, CU and ESPON Projects.

Data Validation

Besides improved scientific validation and quality assurance through the establishments of sounding boards, ESPON II could also envisage engaging in data validation facilities. Verifying the reliability of data gathered and user for ESPON II studies is considered to increase the confidence in the ESPON studies and in the programme as a whole.

The tasks related to data validation could be performed by the ECP and the sounding board. However, this would additionally require both statistically skilled people involved and thus significant additional funding.

Dissemination

Dissemination with regard to quality assurance should take place on different levels

- dissemination of tenders
- dissemination of results in scientific journals
- dissemination of results by means of seminars and conferences

This aspect will be discussed in further detail in Section 3.4.2.2.

The aspects of **Tendering, Terms of References and Guidance Papers** will be discussed in the following paragraph and also refer to the aspect of scientific validation.

ESPON II should:

- Provide for sounding boards to be in charge of the individual study's scientific validation and quality assurance
- Provide for quality assurance by means of effective dissemination of tenders and results
- Provide for a tendering process in favour of these aspects

Figure 3.4: Recommendations on the Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance of ESPON II

3.3.2.3 Public Procurement Procedures

The mid-term evaluation of ESPON already identified the weaknesses of the ESPON tendering process. This study confirms these shortcomings and, moreover, wants to draw attention to the relationship between the tendering process and the current ESPON programme's scientific quality.

In particular, it has been revealed that the number of tenders for the ESPON programme projects has been consistently low and, moreover, decreasing with the increasing duration of the programme. In some cases the number of tenders submitted in response to a Call for Tenders seemed to be too low to still speak about a competitive process. Competition, or better, competitive pressures, however, are the essential element of any public procurement procedure with regard to the quality of the tenders submitted.

The ESPON authorities explained especially the decreasing numbers of tender with the success of ESPON in terms of creating a European-wide scientific network in the domain of spatial development and planning. Scientists and TPG members, however, used a different argumentation for this phenomenon. They explained this decreasing number of tenders with the TPG's discontent stemming from repeated interference and new demands in the course of the study process, from the very high administrative burden related with ESPON studies, a complex and burdensome tendering process and, as a consequence, from very low or even non existent profitability for the institutions involved. A considerable number of TPGs seemed to subsidise the ESPON studies they conducted. According to the latter argumentation, the decreasing number of tenders appears to be the results of a learning process within organisations, which already participated in ESPON studies and for which the programme studies became less and less attractive.

As regards the procurement process, a future ESPON II programme thus needs to tackle the related problems. Increasing the number of tenders to be submitted and increasing the overall attractiveness of ESPON study projects in the eyes of the scientific community. In order to achieve this ESPON should provide for an approach taking the following aspects into account:

- The tendering process needs to be simplified and requires more flexibility for the tenderer.
- The tendering process needs to provide for the best tender to be awarded.
- The form of the Terms of References needs to be adjusted accordingly.
- ESPON II needs to in more proactive dissemination of tenders in order to reach a larger audience.
- ESPON II needs to tackle the shortcoming related to the administrative burden for TPGs.
- ESPON II needs to guarantee less interference or additional demands in the course of the study process.

In general we suggest that the ESPON II programme fully exploits the procurement procedures provided under the relevant regulations.[38] To be more precise, the following paragraphs will suggest a possible reorganisation of the ESPON II procurement procedure, refer to the respective adjustment of the Terms of References and outline a more aggressive concept of tender dissemination.

Reorganisation of the ESPON public procurement procedure

The reorganisation of a future ESPON programme's tendering process proposed here is considered to add to the attractiveness of the ESPON study projects as well as to contribute to assuring the scientific quality of the tenders and, eventually, improving the added scientific and practical value of the ESPON studies.

Discussion the public procurement procedures of ESPON II requires a distinction between procurement for

- large-scale ESPON II projects
- small projects
- the ESPON II preparatory study
- the establishment of a pool of experts for the ESPON II sounding board (the proposed process of which has outlined above).

[38] Commission Regulation No 1261/2005 amending Regulation No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities; Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contacts; Commission Regulation 2342/2002, transposing the rules of Council Directive 92/50/EEC on the award of public service contracts.

Large-scale Projects

Instead of employing Call for Tender procedures as it has been the case in the current ESPON programme, the future ESPON programme should ideally employ Call for Proposals procedures combined with a 'negotiated public procurement procedure'.[39] This would give future TPGs the opportunity to

- actively contribute with their knowledge and experience to the elaboration of methodologies appropriate to the respective topics to be studies rather than just responding to tender specifications, and
- to comment at the earliest possible stage on the feasibility and problems related to the demands in the Terms of References of the respective Call (e.g. aspects of approach, methodology, data availability, data quality).

As for the ESPON CU such a solution could imply a decrease of workload, since the workload related to the formulation of methodology would partly be 'outsourced' to the TPGs.

Smaller Projects

The current ESPON programme employed simpler 1-Step model Calls for Tender where time constraints existed and the budget for individual studies has been limited to €100,000. The ESPON II programme will also consist of smaller project, especially when it comes to demand-driven projects at short notice, which by definition require very short procurement procedures, and particular studies on the Balkans. This study proposes two new approaches for the procurement of Type 4 and Type 6 studies:

At the beginning of the ESPON II programme period, ESPON should issue open Call for Expressions of Interests for framework contracts to which organisations can respond by offering entire sets of experts in certain and/or different fields From the LoI received, the ESPON II authorities could then shortlist the most interesting organisations and ask for detailed methodologies that the organisations would employ in order to respond to the demands for Type 4 projects. The best proposals could then receive a framework contract.

Alternatively, the Call for Expression of Interest could be issued in order to establish an AMI list of organisations to which the particular Call for Tenders could be issued directly. This however would imply that the organisations that have been short listed after the Call for Expression of Interest still need to respond to the Call for Tender, which could imply the loss of valuable time.

Preparatory Study

Given the particular nature of the preparatory study, a Call for Tender should suffice to attain the Preparatory studies objectives. The Call should be issued at the earliest possible stage of the second ESPON programme, which could require the preparation of the Call falling within the current programmes period.

Pool of experts and sounding board

As suggested in Section 3.3.2.2 the pool of experts, from which members of the individual ESPON study are to be drawn, should be established by means of a continuous Call for Expression of In-

[39] Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council defined negotiated procedures as follows: "'negotiated procedures' means those procedures whereby the contracting authorities consult the economic operators of their choice and negotiate the terms of contract with one or more of these." Official Journal of the European Union, 30 April 2004, p. L 134/128

terest. The ESPON CU would be in charge of evaluation the LoI and of approaching the most appropriate experts for the individual studies.

Adjustment of the Terms of References to the New Procedures

Obviously, reorganising the ESPON procurement procedure would also impact the form of the Terms of References to be issued in the future. In order to allow for negotiated procurement the future Terms of References of the ESPON programme should

- clearly and strictly outline the demands to the study in terms of the added value to be created for policy makers, territorial planners, and scientists, yet emphasising the first two user groups,
- provide for largest possible flexibility with regard to the methodology to be employed, so that the TPGs applying for a project can together with the ESPON guidance paper establish a strict framework of formalities to be followed when elaborating an ESPON study report in general, and executive summaries and recommendations/policy options in particular.

As for the complementarities of the Term of References and the Guidance Papers, the Guidance Papers should outline the basic procedural and formal requirements to be followed by all studies. It should be made clear that all TPGs have to strictly follow the provisions laid down in the Guidance Papers. As regards quality aspects, the Terms of References should refer to the guidance paper as a general outline of provisions to be strictly followed and outline additional requirements to be followed by the individual study team on a 'case by case' logic, depending on the subject to be treated by a study.

Hence, in order to provide for tendering framework aimed at improving the quality and added value of the future programme project, the ESPON II programme requires

- the reorganisation of the Tendering Process employed by the current ESPON programme,
- the reconceptualisation of the Terms of Reference
- the reconceptualisation of the interplay between the Guidance Papers and the Terms of Reference.

Proactive Tender Dissemination

Reaching a larger audience of potential tenderers could be an additional way to provide for increased quality of the future EPSON programme projects. Targeting an increased number of stakeholders by proactive dissemination of tenders could increase the number of tenders submitted and, thus, improve the competition or better competitive pressures necessary to assure a certain quality of the tenders submitted.

In order to reach more stakeholders and achieve a wider dissemination, ESPON II should adopt a proactive dissemination approach, which in addition to ESPON's traditional channels of tender dissemination (Official Journal of the European Union, ESPON website) should employ the dissemination tools (email lists, websites, newsletters, etc.) of other, existing organisations and networks with similar interests.

In this respect, it is suggested to approach the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and the European Council of Town Planners (ECTP). All theses organisation have comparatively large numbers of members or adherent and dispose of extensive email lists. Since these organisations share interests with the ESPON pro-

gramme, there might be possibilities to employ the organisations' email boost facilities.[40] Thus, using other organisations' email lists appears to be a very effective and cheap way to proactively reach a larger audience of potential bidders.

The founding documents of the future ESPON II programme should include detailed provisions on the different aspects of the procurement procedures in order to provide for conditions that fit better to the needs of the programme.

ESPON II should:

- Provide for more competition in the procurement procedure by means of
  - More proactive and direct tender dissemination actively addressing a large audience
  - A More attractive, less complicated procurement procedure that at the same time provide for more flexibility for the bidder – Call for Proposal procedure combined with 'negotiated public procurement procedure'
  - Projects, that are more attractive as regards both the administrative burden and financial incentive
- Adjust the form of Terms of Reference and of the Guidance Papers to the Call for Proposal procedure.
- Contribute to guarantying less interference or additional demands in the course of the study process.
- Provide for detailed provisions on public procurement in the founding documents of the ESPON II programme.

Figure 3.5: Recommendations on the ESPON II public procurement procedure

3.3.2.4 Project Administration and Management

The possible future ESPON II programme should pay attention to the study project administration and management in order to improve the outcomes of the programme because study projects will stay the core business of a future ESPON programme.

Regarding to the administrative part of project administration it was identified in this study that the institutes involved in ESPON projects had numerous remarks on the administrative burden and the Subsidy contract type. In an ESPON II programme the administrative burden for the project partners should be significantly decreased.

The relevant financial regulations which govern the ESPON II programme do not provide for much room for improvement in this respect. A reduction of the administrative burden could not be achieved by simply changing the contract type from subsidy to service contract. In general, such a change would be possible, yet the since the administrative burden related to the ESPON projects is essentially related to the co-funding principle of the ERDF funds and the future ESPON II projects will remain to be subject of the ERDG - objective 3 (former INTERREG III C) provisions, a simple change of the contract type is unlikely to have the intended effect.

[40] According to the information of Ramboll Management, the EUKN network is very interested in close cooperation with the ESPON programme. Moreover, Ramboll Management was offered to use the email boost facilities of AESOP in the framework of this study for a rather minor amount.

A global demand by the scientist, who worked on ESPON study projects in the past, is to increase the budget for the ESPON II projects. Some institutes invested their own money in the study projects. This is surely not an option for all institute in particular organisations of the private sector. An increase of budget per ESPON II project could encourage additional organisations to participate in the ESPON II programme projects and thus decrease the global percentage of universities and national research institutes involved in the ESPON II programme. However, increasing the average budget of ESPON II programme projects is rather delicate as this could imply profit for the participating institutions. Profits would be desirable from the institutions' perspective but are not eligible under the financial regulations on which the ESPON programme is based. In the following we would like to present a number of ideas that might provide a possible solution to this problem.

Idea 1: In order to provide for possible better financial incentives for potential contractors, the ESPON II programme should include in its financial provisions on tendering, project selection and eligible expenditure a specific arrangement, which considers extensive overheads if they have been included in the respective contract.

Idea 2: A certain share of the current ESPON programme did neither stem from the ERDF funds nor from co-funding (special contributions of Luxembourg, contributions of the ESPON partner countries Norway and Switzerland). Provided that ESPON II will continue from such additional funds, a specific provision could state that these funds to not fall within the financial regulations usually governing the ESPON programme and could be used to increase the attractiveness of the ESPON II programme projects in financial terms. This possibility, however, should first be check with regard to the relevant audition regulations within the European Commission.

Idea 3 (long-terms perspective): The ESPON programme could be turned into a permanent independent autonomous structure, for example an international institute financed by the EU member states or the. Without being complete detached from the European Commission, such an institution would no longer be subject to the quite restrictive ERDF regulations and could thus provide for improvement in various ways. Given the radical changes that this idea implies for the ESPON programme, the implementation of this idea would require a profound and thus long preparation. Therefore, it seems unrealistic to propose anything alike for ESPON II, which is supposed to start at the beginning of 2007. However, for a potential continuation of ESPON beyond 2013 this idea could be taken into consideration.

The plea for clear requirements for the TPGs regarding the envisaged research issues was heard several times throughout this study. An ESPON II programme should try to make an effort on this issue. Changes in the demands towards the TPGs on delivery of results or envisaged research issues should be kept to a minimum. This should benefit the scientific quality and coherence of the reports.

The data availability and facilitation problem should be also tackled by an ESPON II programme. The scientists involved in the current ESPON continuously stressed this point throughout the interviews and Delphi questionnaires. The ESPON programme of course can't fix data-availability when no data is available but it should be focussed on trying to facilitate the data gathering as much as possible.

The ECP network provided data facilitation in the current ESPON programme. This data facilitation proved to be not always done in a consequent and coherent manner. Two possible options to solve

this problem seem feasible: improving the ECP network's performance in this regard or establish a new way for data facilitation.

The first option should look at the ECP network and possibility to enhance this network in terms of data facilitation. In order to have good data facilitation by the ECP network in an ESPON II programme, the ECP should be more coherent in terms of resources. The ECP network should by obligation be composed of people with a scientific background in spatial development in order to achieve a higher degree of homogeneity in profile and performance. This is considered to improve the ECPs' competence of gathering data for projects as they can better incorporate themselves in the specific scientific demands of data required by the project team. Moreover the ECP network should funded in a more consistent way. ECPs should more or less receive the same funding and resources in every country. This has surely to be seen in perspective of the size of their country of origin and thus of the size of the territory where data has to be gathered. This option has as a consequence that, if the ECPs don't receive enough resources, a choice will have to be made between the different task allocations to the ECP network.

The second option would imply the removal of the data facilitation task out of the ECP network's package. A possible solution mentioned on this issue is to incorporate an institute of every country covered by the ESPON study into the TPG. Not all of the institutes involved should get full project partner status but some institutes' task would only be data gathering. The main advantage of this option would be to establish a direct accountability between the leading TPG body and the respective partners in charge of data facilitation and data collection and thus to decrease delay periods and at the same time provide for high quality of the data. Another possible advantage of this option could be that institutes for new member states and accession countries will be more integrated in the ESPON II programme and thus provide for a certain degree of capacity building in terms of spatial development in countries with only little tradition in this field. Nevertheless this option has the drawback that the link to the ESPON programme in the TPGs could become less strong as this is now assured by having an ECP in the TPG. This option implies that proportionally, the budget allocated to the TPGs should increase because they have an extra task in comparison with the current ESPON programme.

The composition of TPGs in an ESPON II programme should also be closely looked at. Institutes originating from new member states and accession countries should be encouraged to participate and even to lead ESPON study projects. An incentive towards practitioners and policy makers could also be given to enhance their collaboration in ESPON study projects. This could benefit the user-orientation of an ESPON II programme. Moreover, an ESPON II programme should find the right balance between giving incentives to these two categories and assuring that the, in scientific terms, best and most capable institutes work on the ESPON II study projects.

ESPON II should:

- Endow TPG with responsibility of data facilitation (the ECPs being no longer responsible for this tasks)
- Oblige TPGs to become active with regard to the dissemination of results
- Provide for more attractiveness of ESPON programme projects in financial terms
- Provide for increased average projects budget for large scale projects in order to support the above-mentioned points and to provide for a sounding board accompanying each ESPON II programme project

Figure 3.6: Recommendations on Project Management and Administration in ESPON II

3.3.3 Integrated Recommendations

Given the specific of the subjects treated, the previous sections' recommendations could not be formulated in a separate way. The interweavement and interrelation between the different aspects discussed under the four headlines are too significant to be simply ignored. Therefore, this section will avoid repeating the point stated above.

3.4 ESPON II Communication, Dissemination and Networking

3.4.1 Introduction on Relevant Variables

Communication and Dissemination are two terms that are often used interchangeably. This document understands both terms to refer to related but still distinct concepts. Communication is understood as a technique referring to any means of broadcasting a message to a targeted group. Dissemination refers to the communication of explicit or 'tangible' products. According to these definitions, Dissemination is a slightly narrower sub-concept of the broader concept of Communication.

Networking, in this context, is understood to be one of the means contributing to achieving the objective related to communication and dissemination. In other words, networking is a means of communication and dissemination.

Translated into the context of the ESPON programme this implies that ESPON communication is the technique of raising awareness about the programme and increasing the recognition of its brand. ESPON dissemination is understood as the communication of explicit ESPON products such as

- ESPON Call for Tenders, Call for Proposals, Call for Expression of Interests, Terms of Reference or Tender Specifications,
- ESPON Outcomes and results – Interim and Final Reports of EPSON programme projects,
- ESPON content – Data, Maps, Tools
- ESPON publications other than the ESPON programme projects.

In the context of ESPON II, networking should be understood as one of the means for communicating and disseminating and refers to all activities related to the development and management of a network contributing to ESPON II communication and dissemination.

The following sections will refer to ESPON II in terms of dissemination, communication – especially the ESPON II communication strategy and networking and outline recommendations with regard to these different aspects.

3.4.2 Individual Recommendations on Variables

3.4.2.1 Dissemination

As has already been mentioned in the previous section, this study understands dissemination in the context of ESPON II as the communication of explicit ESPON products such as

- ESPON Call for Tenders, Call for Proposals, Call for Expression of Interests, Terms of Reference or Tender Specifications,

- ESPON Outcomes and results – Interim and Final Reports of EPSON programme projects,
- ESPON content – Data, Maps, Tools
- ESPON publications other than the ESPON programme projects.

In this context and taking into account recommendations outlined in previous sections, it shall be suggested that ESPON II objective regarding the dissemination, and thus also the communication of the programme, should define the targets to

- increase the number of potential bidders reached'
- establish an extensive 'pool of experts', from which the individual studies scientific boards may be established
- increasing increase the number of potential users reached
- reinforce results to be jointly disseminated by a number of programmes.

Dissemination, and thus the communication strategy, also needs to take into consideration

- how the different users in the vast ESPON user space should be addressed and
- for what purpose these users would predominantly use ESPON outcomes.

Thus, ESPON II does not only need to develop different ways about how to address the different user groups, but also needs to provide the adequate information to each of these user groups.

These aspects need to be taken into account when formulating the overall Communication Strategy of ESPON II.

The ESPON II dissemination approach should:

- Reach a larger number of potential bidders
- Contribute to establishing a extensive 'pool of experts'
- Reach the largest possible audience within the predefined ESPON user space
- Provide for joint dissemination of ESPON results with other complementary programmes, especially URBACT and INTERACT
- Not only take into account who should be reached and how, but also what should be disseminated to the particular

Figure 3.7: Recommendations on the ESPON II dissemination approach

3.4.2.2 Communication Strategy

The Communication efforts of ESPON are outlined in the ESPON Communication Strategy. The overall Communication Strategy of the current ESPON programme put emphasis in terms of communication on 2006, the last year of 2002 – 2006 programme period. Communication efforts in previous years (before 2006) have been considerably lower. This explains why, in comparison to other, similar initiatives, the current ESPON programme is perceived to address

- a considerably lower, though slightly increasing cumulated number of institutions and organisations that have already been active in ESPON TPGs and thus, taking into consideration the decreasing number of organisations willing to participate in ESPON TPGs, a rather small number of potential TPG members,
- a relatively small number of potential users.

Initiatives similar to ESPON, such as the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) proved that a different communication approach can create a wider, interested audience even without too many

contents yet elaborated and establish a comparatively stronger 'brand name' than ESPON. This appears to be advantageous in terms of the total number of stakeholders that can initially be addressed.

In any case, the preconditions that the ESPON II programme has to face are very different to those of its predecessor:

- Content has been created by the current ESPON programmes so that ESPON II will right from the beginning have content to advertise.
- A certain though comparatively weak brand has been established.
- A corporate identity/image has been established throughout the past five years.
- The current ESPON programme's communication strategy provides for the loudest communication to happen in the end of the programme, in 2006, which may result in a considerable communication effect to subsist until the end of the first or second year of the ESPON II programme period lasting from 2007 to 2013.

The communication strategy has to take advantage of these altered preconditions and, at the same, time needs to provide for continuity concerning the transition of ESPON I to ESPON II. In particular the ESPON II Communication Strategy should

- Establish clear objectives to be achieved
- Establish a clear set of communication means to be employed
- Provide possibilities to measure the communication effect and thus steer the communication efforts.

The following paragraphs will outline a number of suggestions for the future ESPON communication strategy.

Suggestion 1: The Communication Strategy should be designed in accordance to the ESPON II objectives and work programme.

Similar to the entire ESPON II, the ESPON II Communication Strategy will adopt a demand- and client driven approach. Thus, the clients' perspective will always be the point of departure when defining both the entire communication strategy as well as individual communication measure.

The Communication Strategy of the future programme will evoke the greatest effect and thus contribute to maximising the ESPON II added value, if it is developed parallel to the ESPON work programme, reflecting the work programme in its own approach. Given the enduring and coherent nature that the future work programme of ESPON II should have as well as preconditions prevailing for the future ESPON programme, this also implies that the ESPON II Communication Strategy should provide for continuity. Understandably, this again has implications on the ESPON budget in terms of more regular expenses related to communication.

In this context it has been suggested that the work programme of ESPON II should be coordinated with the work programmes of other, predominately DG Regional Policy programme such as URBACT II and INTERACT II. The communication strategy should take this into account and provide for joint communication activities with the respective programmes and initiatives. Taking into consideration that these cooperating programmes produce overlapping content and address overlapping stakeholders and user groups, this appears to be especially promising.

In practical terms this could for example means a joint internet presentation of three programmes on the InfoRegio webpage of DG Regional Policy, joint publications on complementary outcomes and results in the specialised press or joint dissemination events.

In short, it shall be suggested that the future Communication Strategy provide for more continuity and terms of efforts and costs.

Suggestion 2: The Communication strategy should envisage to significantly increasing the number of stakeholders address and reached by direct communication and marketing means.

Direct communication and marketing in considered being more efficient than other form of communication or marketing. With regard to ESPON direct form of communication could be 'direct mailing activities' and a 'newsletter'.

Direct mailing activities consist of targeted and purpose oriented approach of stakeholder through internal or external email boost facilities. As regards such facilities the current ESPON programme disposes of an email list of slightly more than 500 email addresses available for direct communication purposes. In order to significantly increase the number of stakeholders directly targeted, ESPON II either develop the own data base of email contacts or make use of other organisations' mailing boost facilities. The former approach, actively developing ESPON own email database could cause considerable costs in terms of human resource consumption. In addition, it would not guarantee an immediately increased reach. The latter approach would imply an immediately increased reach since the email boost facilities of other organisations are already developed and cause costs in terms of utilisation fees (per boost).

A newsletter could be a tool for regularly informing the ESPON stakeholders about the latest developments of the ESPON II programme. Newsletters however have the disadvantage of being rather costly. With regard to the ESPON programme a newsletter would imply two cost categories: Firstly, the programme would have to develop its own email database. In addition to that, the development and maintenance of a newsletter does imply considerable human resource consumption necessary for the preparation of each newsletter.

Thus, it shall be suggested here that in order the increase the number of directly addressed stakeholders ESPON II should opt for the direction communication approach that corresponds best with the budget restraints of the future programme.

Suggestion 3: The Communication strategy should provide for stakeholder involvement

It has already been illustrated that participation of involvement of ESPON stakeholders at different stages of ESPON II would be essential with regard to establishing a clearly demand- and client driven programme. Firstly, policy makers and practitioners could participate or be involved in the process of defining the work programme of ESPON II. Secondly, the definition of an individuals ESPON study should provide policy-makers and practitioners concerned by the study topic with the opportunity to clarify the demand on the particular topic and scientists with the opportunity to contribute to the elaboration of the methodology to be employed.

In order to achieve this, the Communication Strategy needs to allocate a considerable amount of funds to the realisation of the stakeholder involvement.

Doing so, could result in a potential positive communication effect, since involving the ESPON stakeholder could render the programme more attractive to these stakeholders. Hence, by means of involving policy makers and practitioners the programme could increase its added value for these groups. Involving scientists more closely could increase the quality of the programme projects, their outputs and results and this additionally adding to the value of the programme for all user groups.

Suggestion 4: The Communication Strategy should be supported by a need driven approach

A need driven approach (not to be confused with the demand driven approach) refers to creating the obligation to use ESPON and ESPON II results. The use of ESPON results could for instance be made an awarding criterion when it comes to the evaluation of applications for EU funding (throughout the different ERDF objectives). Regarding other, especially non-DG Policy funding programmes, it could also be made an obligation to base the creation of project on ESPON results.

In accordance to this idea, the Communication Strategy should provide for lobbying activities targeting other EU level programmes. Priorities should be given to other DG Regional Policy Programme in the framework of the future Objective 1, 2 and 3 Structural Funds. This would not only increase the importance of the ESPON programme but could also contribute to the effectiveness of all these programmes. On a larger scale, lobbying activities could cover the entire EU policy range. Given this current state of EU affaires however, this latter proposition seems to remain a utopia.

Suggestion 5: The Communication Strategy should consider using the communication capacities of stakeholders.

This suggestion refers to the idea that TPG leaders (or entire TPGs) could be 'obliged' to engage in communication activities aiming on disseminating their outcomes and results of their ESPON project. This is considered to be interesting to the TPG leader, since he would engage communication his 'own study project'. In addition, this could be advantageous, since the obligation to communicate the results of a study could serve as an incentive providing for increased quality.

However, TPG leader are not necessarily experts in communication. Therefore, following this suggestion requires ESPON to empower the TPGs in terms of communication. Practically, this means that the programme must either offer a 'communication tool-box' consisting of tools and methods for professional dissemination (Variant 1), or it must adopt the requirement that at least one member of a TPG should be specialised in communication (Variant 2). The first solution would certainly provide for more uniformity of the dissemination methods and quality, while the second would allow for more flexibility and maybe innovation in this regard. However, also a combination of both alternatives could be envisaged.

Before following this suggestion, the budgetary implications resulting from each of two variants should be assessed.

To conclude this section, it shall be mentioned that if the future ESPON programme implements most of the suggestions brought about in this document, this is likely to contribute to developing ESPON into a strong brand.

The ESPON II Communication Strategy should:

- Be designed in accordance to the ESPON II objectives and work programme, thus provide for client-orientation and continuous communication efforts
- Envisage to significantly increase the number of stakeholders addressed and reached by direct communication and marketing means
- Provide for stakeholder involvement
- Be supported by a need driven approach (the obligation to use ESPON results)
- Consider using the communication capacities of stakeholders

Figure 3.8: Recommendations on the ESPON II Communication Strategy

3.4.2.3 Networking, Coordination and Cooperation with other Programmes

An ESPON II programme should be complementary with other EU programmes. Collaboration with other EU programmes could benefit both sides. The networking could take place at two levels: complementarities of ESPON products and resource sharing.

Firstly, ESPON should especially look a possible linkage with INTERACT II and URBACT II. These links could be seen as a sharing of experts, dissemination through each others networks and exploration of possible interlinked projects which could benefit both programmes.

However, the potential complementarities with other EU programmes are wider than those involving resource sharing and cooperation with the INTERACT II and URBACT II programmes and networks.

The obvious starting is to consider what ESPON has to offer in terms of methodologies, data and tools which can be delivered or used for the sake of other programmes implementation or policy evaluation. At the same time, other complementarities may be established on the input side, searching for those programmes and initiatives which can help to solve the problem of the lack of spatial data.

Briefly, the ESPON applied research so far was focused on three mainstreams:

- Trend analysis for several aspects, including urban system and polycentric development, urban-rural relations, small and medium size cities, accessibility and transport networks, telecommunication, demography, enlargement, natural and technological hazards, natural heritage, governance, cultural heritage, information society.
- Territorial impact analysis of several policies, including structural funds, pre-accession aid, EU infrastructure policy, EU R&D policy, EU Agricultural policy, EU energy policy, EU fisheries policy, structural funds in urban areas.
- Cross-thematic projects, focusing so far mainly on integrated tools for spatial development, spatial scenarios and orientations and the realisation of the Lisbon process.

The focus here is <u>not</u> on the results of these mainstreams activities, but on the main problems encountered, and the potentialities to overcome at least some of them in the future ESPON activities by establishing effective linkages with other EU programmes.

The main results and tools provided or being provided by ESPON I projects are:

- Concepts of territorial cohesion and polycentric development

- ESPON data base and core indicators
- GIS orientated instruments
- Regional Classification of Europe
- Spatial analysis tools
- Territorial Impact Analysis (TIA)
- Macroeconomic, Sectoral, Social and Territorial Model (MASST)
- Know Trans-European Networks (KTEN)
- European Territorial Cohesion Index (ETCI)
- Long-Term Database (LTDB)
- ESPON Data Navigator

As described in the ESPON strategy case study (see Appendix), the progress of these tools is still very uneven, partly due to the fact that the research on some of these tools will be finalised in 2006 and partly due to structural problems of lack of reliable spatial information, which hindered the full development of some tools (e.g. the ETCI).

Indeed, a general problem which reduces the potentiality of all the above mentioned ESPON tools and methodologies is the shortage of detailed data. After a careful analysis of the available data in Eurostat, ESPON and in the OECD statistics, the authors of ESPON Project 3.2 concluded that:

- the most disaggregated territorial level which can be achieved without incurring in unmanageable gaps of data is NUTS 2 level;
- the first year of analysis that can be taken into account for a consistent time series analysis is 1995: before that year, NUTS 2 data for the Eastern Countries are not available.

Available data cover the economic and environmental dimensions, but the social dimension is missing. In fact only 4 of the 103 ESPON core indicators can be considered as social: pupils by educational level; educational level of population; unemployment rates; impact of accessibility changes on unemployment. There are other indicators indirectly related to the social dimension, for instance the diffusion of Internet or cellular phones, or the proportion of households with PCs. But what are missing are truly social indicators, as for example: wages disparities, share of teen-agers leaving the school without any qualification, life expectancy.

This lack of social indicators has to be seen also as an unintended consequence of the focus of the Lisbon Strategy on the economic dimension. The situation is not so critical for the environmental dimension as for the social dimension, because the European Environmental Agency and the EC Joint Research Centre are able to deliver regular environmental information of good quality which can support policy orientations concerning the European environment. In the social field, instead, adequate statistical information is not available, and it is impossible to develop a policy without good indicators for ex-ante and ex-post evaluation.

Therefore, the ESPON strategy case study presented in the Appendix focuses on the potential complementarities of the ESPON programme with other EU programmes which can help to improve the situation because they:

- can provide important spatial data inputs for ESPON activities (INSPIRE, GEOSS, GMES);
- will develop methodologies and tools for impact assessment (SIA – Sustainability Impact Assessment; SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment) which are strongly related (and partially overlapping) with the territorial impact assessment methods developed in ESPON (EU Environmental Research);
- can help to disseminate and share the knowledge of ESPON results with end users beyond the scientific community – policy makers, practitioners – at regional and urban level (IN-

TERACT II, URBACT II). In the context of these programmes the ESPON methods and tools could be also applied to deliver territorial assessments of the thematic co-operation programme activities focusing on Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities;

Besides the complementarities with other EU programmes, there are several EU policies whose spatial impact would be better understood if the new ESPON methodologies and tools are consistently applied.[41] These policies include sectoral policies as well as overarching EU strategies, such as the European Spatial Development Strategy, the EU Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies for competitiveness and sustainable development, and the EU cohesion policy at regional and urban level. In addition, ESPON could provide a specific support to some of these strategies, as for instance in the development and maintenance of Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) to monitor the implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. ESPON should to a considerable extent focus on its support functions for these EU strategies and larger EU policy programmes.

The complex system of complementarities and potential interactions between ESPON and the mentioned programmes and policies is illustrated in the diagram below.

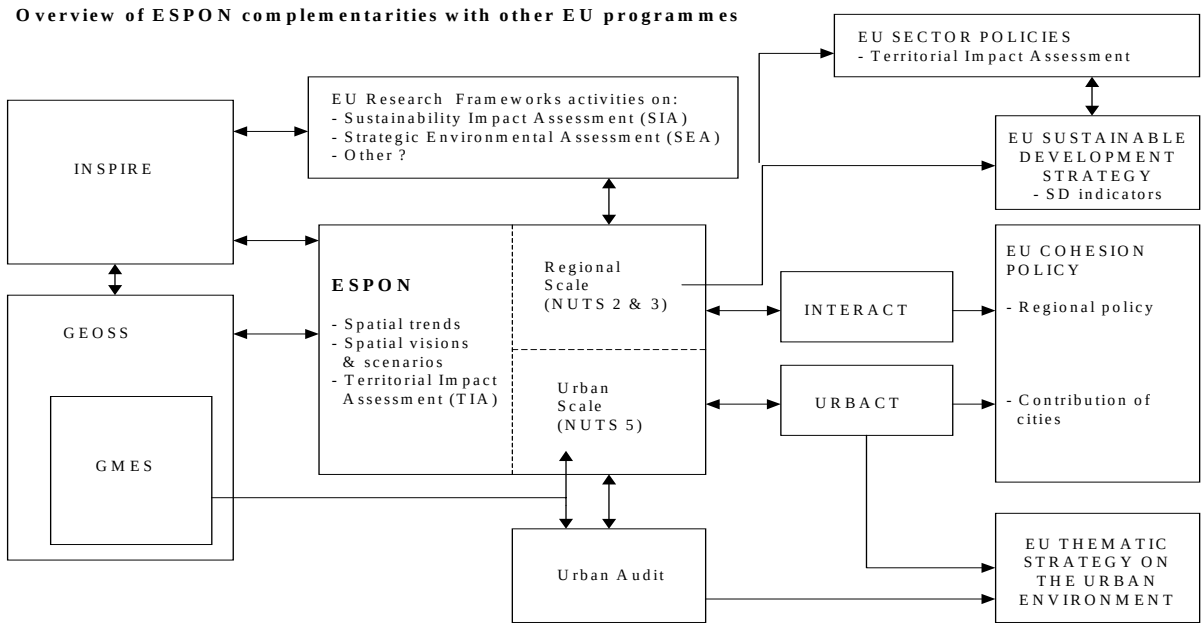

Figure 3.9: Overview of ESPON complementarities with other EU programmes

This diagram may appear controversial and raise various questions. The ESPON strategy case study in the Appendix D describes the single components of the diagram and discusses the potential linkages with ESPON. This may answer some of the questions that will pop-up yet not all of them. The remaining question should be put on the agenda of the relevant actors with the aim to best exploit the complementarities between the different EU programmes.

The table below give an overview of the potential interactions of the ESPON products with the other EU programmes. More detailed statements about some of these interactions are included in the tables of the ESPON strategy case study.

[41] The mid-terms evaluation of the ESPON II programme could then examine whether the ESPON results and recommendations are actually employed for practical purposes.

ESPON Products	Potential complementarities of ESPON products with:								
	Data Infrastructure Programmes			Research Framework Projects			Territorial Cooperation Programmes		
	INSPIRE	GEOSS	GMES	SIA	SEA	Other[42]	INTERACT II/ INTERREG	URBACT II	URBAN AUDIT
Territorial cohesion / polycentrism				✓	✓		✓		
ESPON database/ core indicators	✓					✓			✓[43]
GIS orientated instruments	✓								
Regional Classification of Europe									
Spatial Analysis Tools	✓								
Territorial Impact Analysis				✓	✓				
MASST				✓					
KTEN					✓	✓			
ETCI				✓		✓	✓		
Long-Term database	✓								
Data Navigator	✓								

Table 3.3 Potential complementarities of ESPON products

Given the institutional character of the European Commission, it would appear an obvious step to encourage a rapprochement between ESPON II, INTERACT II and URBACT II. Completely integrating the three programmes is not considered to be an option since all three have rather distinct purposes and address quite different final user groups. The rapprochement should thus be understood as a closer coexistence, coordination and cooperation between the programme as well as joint approaches and activities where they may be applicable, yet without effectively merging the three programmes into one. It is considered to be an indispensable basis for effectively exploiting the programmes complementarities.

This rapprochement of the three programmes could be structured as follows.

In the view of this study, the rapprochement of the three programmes, which is the basis for successful coordination and joint initiatives in the future, should start now, in the course of the negotiations for the EU budget for the period 2007 to 2013. In the meeting of the Working Group "Spatial and urban development" on the 21st of February 2006 in Brussels, during which the next steps towards territorial cooperation Programmes 2007 – 2013 have been discussed, the three programmes were given the opportunity to express their visions for the upcoming budget period. All programmes proved to be in favour of a stronger coordination and joint initiatives, in areas where

[42] This column has been included to add any other EU Research activity that will be deemed relevant to connect to ESPON, besides those already identified in the ESPON Strategy case study.

[43] Given the problems related to the availability of Urban Audit Indicators, ESPON could help to specify and enlarge the types of indicators for the Urban Audit.

the programmes are complementary. The following pages will suggest how this demonstrated willingness for cooperation could be put into practice in a structured way.

The redefinition of the programmes' objectives should be considered the first and most important phase. Based on the findings of this study, it has been suggested to revise the ESPON programme's objectives in order to provide for even more coherency of the programme framework and endow the programme with more focus or priority areas. It us assumed here that also the two other programmes may require a similar revision of the programme objectives, simply for adapting them to the evolved EU context. A parallel, if not joint definition of objectives should be seen as essential for closing eventual gaps between the three programmes, to avoid overlaps in the programmes' actions, and thus enable a more effective exploitation of complementarities between the programmes as well as the valorisation of synergies. Only if the projects objectives are well harmonised, it makes sense to consider further coordination on the level of work-programmes, joint communication and actions.

If this has been achieved, the second phase of the rapprochement of ESPON II, URBACT II and INTERACT II should refer to a joint elaboration of the three work programmes. This should serve the purpose to coordinate and harmonize the three work-programmes in order to provide for the more practical dimension of the exploitation of complementarities and synergies. As regards ESPON II, it has been suggested to base the elaboration of the ESPON II work programme on a preparatory study assessing the needs in terms of territorial cohesion, territorial development and spatial planning for the 2007 – 2013 programming period.

The output of this second rapprochement phase should be a common work-programme laying down joint efforts in terms of general coordination, and defining both approaches and topics for joint communication, events and projects. Joint Milestones should be fixed to establish a common time-frame for the three programmes. Moreover, in this context it seems important to mention that all three programmes reserve a certain share of their individual programme budgets for the joint activities laid down in the common work programme.

The third rapprochement phase should subsequently refer to the project level. Each of the three programmes should be given the chance to contribute to the elaboration of the joint projects (and events) in order to assure that their particular needs are covered by the individual project.

A forth phase or aspect of the rapprochement between the three programmes should be addressed in the course of the different programme evaluations. The evaluation of the three programmes' joint efforts could provide for adjustment of the joint approach and thus allow for improvement of the rapprochement as such.

However, at the current state of the development of the new 2007 – 2013 programming period, it appears as if the three programmes are going to be even more independent than this has been the case over the course of the previous programming period 2000 – 2006. As regards the relation between ESPON and INTERACT for example, joint projects appear quite unlikely since the INTERACT programme will no further conduct projects. Altogether this limits the possibilities for joint efforts quite significantly yet not completely; Joint dissemination will still be possibility that should be taken into consideration when elaborating the projects individual Operational Programmes.

ESPON II should:

- Build upon and develop the complementarities with URBACT II and INTERACT II
  - by means of coordinating objectives and work programmes
  - by means of joint communication and dissemination efforts
  - by means of joint projects
- Develop stronger cooperation with other non-DG Regio and non-EU programmes where possible

Figure 3.10: Recommendations on the aspects of Networking, Coordination and Cooperation with other Programmes

3.4.2.4 Transnational Project Groups

This section will refer to all aspects related to the Transnational Project Groups in the framework of a future EPSON programme. It is a collection of some aspects that have already been mentioned in previous sections and some additional remarks that have not yet been made. The purpose of this section is thus to draft a holistic image of the future TPG.

Regarding TPGs three different dimensions have to be observed. The first dimension refers to all aspects that are demanded from future TPGs, notably the tasks or new tasks of a TPG in the future programme. The second dimension addresses all aspects that are related to what is required to form a TPG. In this regard, the following paragraphs will refer to on the future TPG composition and country distribution. The third dimension incorporates all aspects that are offered to the TPGs, notably more attractive contracts, thus less administrative burden as well as more attractive reimbursement for conduction the studies.

As regards the tasks of the TPGs, its has been suggested above that the TPGs in addition to their traditional tasks take over new responsibilities in terms of data-collection as well as communication/dissemination of the results of the studies they will have conducted. Given the difficulties related to the ECPs gathering data for TPGs throughout the current programme, it deems necessary to establish a more direct link and accountability of those in charge of collecting the data and those responsible for the study as it has been the case in the current programme. In other words, providing for the TPGs taking over the tasks of data collection is the simplest solution to the problem.[44] The second new tasks of the TPGs would be to engage by obligation in communication and dissemination, for which the ESPON II programme would provide a comprehensive, consistent and understandable 'communication tool-box'.

The second dimension – the future offer to TPGs – addressed to shortcomings of current ESPON programme projects for potential TPGs members due to heavy administrative burden and this little or non-existent financial incentives or, in the worst case, financial losses for the TPGs. It has already been suggested that ESPON II should tackle this problem by offering less burdensome projects and larger financial incentives in order to increase the number of bidders and bids for ESPON II programme projects.

Referring to the nature of ESPON (and ESPON II) of being an applied study programme, as well as the point that the applied-side of ESPON should be strengthened, a new condition for TPGs eligible

[44] It appears as if the TPG leaders would be in favor of such a solution.

in the framework of ESPON II should be the requirement to comprise scientists, practitioners and policy-makers (or at least experts with experience in translating scientific findings into useable policy recommendations or policies). This would certainly add to the value creation of the future ESPON programme.

In order to achieve a more equal dispersion of TPG partners and TPG leaders throughout the entire ESPON space, ESPON II should engage in a more proactive marketing approach to find organisations that are interested in leading TPGs. Ideally, this proactive marketing approach should build on most advantageous (administrative and financial) conditions as they have been outlined above. In case that ESPON II would comprise an objective of 'contributing to capacity building in the field of spatial and territorial development', the ESPON authorities could – given all other things being equal – opt for proposals that do best correspond to this objective.

As for the requirements to form a TPG, the current ESPON programme foresaw at least three institutions or organisation from three different ESPON countries as the minimum requirement to form a TPG. Since the EU enlarged and the ESPON space will enlarge with and ESPON II it might be reasonable to request at least four institutions from four different ESPON countries as a minimum requirement. However, another question is whether this is necessary, since the new TPG task of data collection will most likely results in TPGs that consist of a multitude of organisations.

The achievement of a more equal distribution of lead partners in an ESPON II programme should be a long term objective by promoting capacity building in all ESPON countries. Being a lead partner in an ESPON project requires experience and managerial skills that have to be built up. Imposing measures for leading partners could negatively influence the scientific value of an ESPON II programme. This is why we strongly recommend selecting the tender that provides the most value for money.

Furthermore, capacity building could also take place on the project level. ESPON II could define (type 3 and type 4) that require particularly strong involvement of TPGs from the territories covered. Interesting study topics in this respect could for instance concern the spatial dimension with regard to the MEDA countries (and at the same time develop capacities in terms of territorial development in the target region) as well as with the neighbouring countries at the EU's eastern boarder.

ESPON II TPGs should:

- Carry out the additional tasks of
  - Data collection and
  - Communication/dissemination of the results of their respective study projects employing a standardized communication/dissemination tool-box
- Be offered more advantageous conditions in
  - Administrative and
  - Financial terms
- be formed in correspondence to new, adapted requirements, notably that
  - at least three to four major project partners should come from three/four different countries
  - TPGs could comprise scientists, practitioners and policy-makers/advisors
  - the formation of TPGs should correspond to the new ESPON II objective of contributing to building capacity in terms of territorial and spatial planning in all countries within the EPSON II space.

Figure 3.11: Recommendations on ESPON II TPGs

3.4.2.5 National Contact Points

This study reveals a number of shortcomings related to the current ESPON programme's ECP network. On of the most important aspects in this respect has been the lacking homogeneity within this network with regard to a number of aspects:

- Profile
- Number of ECPs per country
- Terms of Employments
- Performance

Since it is considered unlikely that ESPON II will be able to establish a more homogenous ECP network in order to perform all the ECP tasks of the current ESPON programme, the ECPs should in the future concentrate on activities related to

- Networking – bringing together actors in the field of territorial development as well as contributing to the establishment of TPGs, and
- Communication/Dissemination – spreading the results and knowledge created by the ESPON II programme projects within the countries they are representing.

As already mentioned, the ECPs should not longer be responsible for data-facilitation or data-collection as this task can be more effectively performed by the TPGs. As indicated in the case studies on the ECP-network and the TPGs, the ECP-network did not always perform their tasks on data-facilitation and data-collection as good and fast as the TPG-members wanted to. The difference in time spending, resources and sometimes the unaccountability of the ECP's towards TPG-leader are to blame for this. The TPG-leaders clearly stated that they would find it an improvement for the ESPON II programme if they could organise the data-facilitation and -collection within the TPG structures.

The task of the scientific validation of the ESPON study projects was also accorded to the ECP-network in the current ESPON programme. The ECPs gave comments on the reports, concerning the national representation as well as on the scientific quality in general. The main disadvantage of

this system was that it was non-interactive as the comments only came when the study reports were already finished. As the idea of sounding boards is developed, the scientific validation could fall out of the working package of the ECP-network. However, individual ECPs should be able to be included in the sounding boards.

The more limited role for the ECP-network in an ESPON II programme does not imply that ECP can no longer perform other tasks within the ESPON II-programme. ECPs should be given the opportunity to participate in TPGs as normal project partners in their field of competence. ECPs with the appropriate professional background should also be able to perform the task of data-validation. ECPs could also be involvement in the sounding boards. With the extentive knowledge of the programme and their involvement in the spatial planning community they could provide an added value for the sounding board as they already performed that task to some extent in the current ESPON programme.

Thus, the ECP-network in an ESPON II programme could become more homogenous as the academic skills become less wanted and ECPs can be selected on their communication and networking skills. However, ECPs should remain closely involved in the spatial planning community. In an ESPON II programme the tasks and requirements should be clearly stated and defined in the CIP.

ESPON II ECPs should:

- Concentrate on major tasks
  - Networking and
  - Communication/Dissemination

Figure 3.12: Recommendations on the ESPON II ECPs

3.4.3 Integrated Recommendations

The aspects of Communication, Dissemination and Networking are strongly related concepts. Therefore, all three should be addressed by one overall Communication Strategy. This Communication Strategy again needs to be consistent with the work programme of the entire ESPON II.

Both the ESPON II work programme as well as the ESPON II Communication Strategy should provide for closer cooperation with other programmes in general, and the INTERACT II and URBACT II programmes in particular. This also implied that all bodies of the ESPON programme should enhance their network efforts.

3.5 Integration of Recommendations & Scenarios

3.5.1 Chapter Introduction

In the course of the abovementioned sections quite a few recommendations have been formulated for a future ESPON II. This section will now integrate all these recommendations in order to create a coherent outline for the future ESPON programme. In doing so, two types of recommendations shall be distinguished:

- General recommendations, which should, by all means, are incorporated into an ESPON II programme. These recommendations will mostly have a regulatory nature and should not depend on the size of the ESPON II budget.
- Specific recommendations: The viability of implementing these recommendations is considered to depend on the size of the future ESPON budget.

The following table refers to the different aspects for which this study has outlined recommendations and shows whether or not these recommendations should be regarded in dependency of the ESPON II budget.

Aspect	General / priority recommendation	Scenario Specific recommendation
Thematic Coverage	✓	✓
Geographic Coverage	✓	✓
Geographic Detail	✓	✓
Programme Management	✓	
Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance	✓	✓
Tendering	✓	
Project Management and Administration	✓	
Dissemination	✓	
Communication	✓	✓
Networking	✓	
ECP	✓	
TPG	✓	

Table 3.4: Dependence of Recommendations on the future ESPON budget

In this respect, it has to be mentioned that the future ESPON budget has not yet been decided. Taking this into account, it appears viable to establish two different budgetary scenarios with regard to the specific recommendations. These two scenarios are:

Scenario 1: The ESPON II budget remains (more or less) constant vis-à-vis the current programme budget

Scenario 2: The ESPON II budget increases significantly

The following section (3.5.2) will refer to the general recommendations that should be implemented in the future ESPON programme. The subsequent sections will then refer to the specific recommendations to be implemented in case of Scenario 1 (Section 3.5.3.1) and Scenario 2 (Section 3.5.3.2). **The scenarios have been drawn in order to show tendencies in the pattern of preferences that strongly dependent on the size of the future ESPON budget.**

Assumptions concerning both general and specific recommendations will be explicitly outlined in the beginning of each section, thus, before the elaboration of recommendations. **The budget amounts assumed for both scenarios should not be understood as recommendation.**

3.5.2 Integration of Recommendations

General assumption

- **There will be an ESPON II programme** as part of the future territorial cohesions funds (Objective 3)
- **The duration of ESPON II will be 7 years, lasting from 2007 to 2013**. However, taking into account the very late accord on the EU 2007 – 2013 budget (17th December 2005), the recent rejection of this budget by the European Parliament and, moreover, the administrative tasks related to the commencement of the ESPON II activities, is seems reasonable to believe that the start of the ESPON II activities will be considerably delayed. There it shall be presumed here that the workload will occur between 2008 and 2013.
- **The ERDF contribution will be 85 percent**
- **The individual total contribution of Luxembourg will remain constant**
- **The contributing countries will be CIP countries (EU 27, hence already including Bulgaria and Romania), three ESPON Partner Countries** (Norway, Switzerland and, in addition to the current programme, Iceland)
- **Non-paying members will be the three accession countries Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey**. Yet, due to constraints related to data availability in these countries the inclusion of the countries into any particular project should be decided by a case-by-case logic.
- **The average amount for large-scale ESPON studies should be increased** in comparison to the average study budget in the current ESPON projects and lay between 550.000 and 600.000 Euros.

General Recommendations

This section will not provide for any recommendations with regard to the different study type and the scope and number of studies as well as the budget allocated to these studies strongly depends on the total budget available for ESPON II.

With regard to the programme approach and management all recommendations outlined in Section 3.3.2.1 should be adopted and coherently developed.

ESPON II should incorporate the idea of a sounding board in order to provide for highest possible scientific and practical quality and added value. The approach to the establishment of the sounding board that has been outlined above, which refers to the establishment of a pool of experts via a call for expression of interest, should be adopted. However, the composition and number of board members as well as the range of its tasks will depend on the budget size of ESPON II.

As far as the tendering process is concerned, the three following recommendations should by all means be followed.

1. The future ESPON programme should ideally employ Calls for Proposals combined with a 'negotiated public procurement procedure' for the majority of studies.
2. The ToR needs to be adjusted accordingly, means that the future ToR should
   - clearly and strictly outline the demands to the study in terms of the added value to be created for policy makers, practitioners, and scientists, yet emphasising the first two user groups,

- provide for largest possible flexibility with regard to the methodology to be employed, so that the TPGs applying for a project can together with the ESPON guidance paper establish a strict framework of formalities to be followed when elaborating an ESPON study report in general, and executive summaries and recommendations/policy options in particular.

3. ESPON II should engage in a proactive dissemination approach to increase the possibility for competition and hence the quality of the tenders provided.

As far as the project management is concerned, three general recommendations should be followed by ESPON II.

1. To overcome the problems related to data facilitation ESPON II should adopt option 2 suggested in Section 3.3.2.4, which implies that the ECPs would no longer be responsible for data-facilitation.
2. ESPON II should plan for an increased average budget for the large-scale projects in order to
   - make ESPON programme projects more attractive to all kinds of organisations but especially to private and profit-oriented institutes and companies,
   - provide for appropriate funds for the quality assurance by means of a sounding board,
   - enable TPGs to perform the tasks or data collection themselves without the help of ECPs, and
   - enable TPGs to engage in dissemination activities.

Regarding the aspect of communication and dissemination, the future ESPON Communication Strategy should

- be designed in accordance to the ESPON II objectives and work programme.
- envisage to significantly increasing the number of stakeholders address and reached by direct communication and marketing means.
- provide for stakeholder involvement
- be supported by a need driven approach
- Consider using the communication capacities of stakeholders.

3.5.3 Scenarios

3.5.3.1 Scenario 1: The Future ESPON Budget Remains Constant

Scenario-specific Assumptions

- **The General Assumptions outlined in Section 3.5.2 are valid.**
- **The total budget of ESPON II will increase slightly**. This slight increase is related to the inclusion of one further paying, non-EU ESPON country (Iceland).
- **The total estimated budget amount will be 18 Mio Euros**. This amount has been calculated on the basis of
  - the total budget of the current ESPON programme: approx. 17.4 Mio Euros
  - Additional contributions from Bulgaria (€ 100.000), Romania (€ 100.000) and Iceland (€ 345.000 – corresponding to the average contribution of Norway and Switzerland for 2002 – 2006)
  - Facilitation: the total amount has been rounded up to 18 Mio Euros.
- **The geographic coverage of does not include any further countries than those mentioned in the general assumptions**. Following the example of the current ESPON

programme, ESPON II will basically address all EU candidate countries, having a special option on geographic coverage with regard to Turkey, for which strong lack of data are assumed.

- **ESPON II will allow for 24 large scale programme projects plus a small number of minor projects**. This is a careful estimation that in part responds to need for comparatively larger project budgets.

Thematic Coverage and Geographic Scope

The following paragraphs will recommend, which of the eight potential ESPON study types that have been discussed in Section 3.2.3 should be included in the future ESPON II programme corresponding to the assumptions of this scenario.[45]

ESPON programme projects on a particular topic with a broad coverage (**Type 1 study**) have been defined the typical or traditional ESPON study project as they accentuate the objective of providing for European-wide analysis of topics relevant to spatial planning and territorial cohesion. The conducts of these studies have established a broad basis, on which different studies of a different type could build in the future. This is why the necessity for this study type appears to be reduced in comparison to the other study types. Yet, they cannot be fully abolished as ESPON II has to retain its conceptual basis represented by these studies. Therefore it shall be suggested that ESPON II reserves a reduced but still considerable budget amount for the conduct of Type 1 studies.

In-depth studies on integrated topics with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas within the ESPON space (**Type 3**) studies appear to be most crucial missing element in terms of added value creation in the current ESPON programme. There studies play an important role for ESPON II in two respects. Firstly, they would provide for geographical depth, which the current programme is lacking. Secondly, they would provide for the strong requested integration of especially the sectoral policy areas covered by the

[45] To recapitulate the eight study types, please find below a copy of table 3.1 of page 48 outlining a proposition of future ESPON study types:

Study Type	Characteristics
1	Projects on a particular topic with a broad geographic coverage (entire ESPON space) – the 'traditional' ESPON study project
2	In-depth studies on a particular topic with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
3	In-depth studies on integrated topics with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
4	Reactive, short-term studies that address contemporary problems related to territorial policy making – studies addressing policy-driven demand with short-notice
5	Up-dates of current ESPON studies (data, new policy developments, etc.)
6	Filling in the black hole (Balkan region) or adding new ESPON countries data to existing studies (and thus continue the work of the ECP projects targeting this area)
7	Projects compiling the results of the current ESPON study projects for specific user-groups (These projects would correspond with the current programme's projects 3.1 'Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development' and 3.2 'Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in Relation to the ESDP and EU Cohesion Policy' and should not be confused with the series of compiling reports that has been issued by the ESPON Coordination Unit.)
8	Pilot and Experimental Projects focussing on the experimental implementation of ESPON policy options on a quite low-scale level

ESPON programme. For this reason, ESPON II should reserve a considerable amount of the funds for Type 3 studies, yet taking into accounts the budget related to this scenario.

Well selected updates to the current ESPON's outcomes, results or entire studies (**Type 5**) appear to be essential in terms of preserving the actual and potential added value that has been created by the current programme in the future. ESPON II needs to take this into account and define a budget share for the update that provides for effective and economic updating.

The current ESPON programme knows two different ways of compiling information produced by the ESPON programme projects: The way refers to the Compiling reports issued by the CU, the second way are actual study project compiling and integrating the information produce throughout the programme (**Type 7**). Since the future ESPON programme will provide for much more clarity in terms of recommendations or policy options within the individual study projects, the need for compilation seems to be reduced but not redundant. Therefore, ESPON should remain to be engaged on compilation activities to be performed by the CU. It should also reserve a rather limited share of the project budget, in case there is a need for any scientifically demanding compilation.

Studies addressing policy-driven demand with short-notice (**Type 4**) seem to be strongly demanded by ESPON stakeholders and especially policy makers. Including this type of studies into the ESPON programme is therefore considered highly desirable. However, taking into consideration the limited budget available in this scenario and the difficulties related to these studies in Section 3.2.3, it is questionable whether ESPON II should provide for this study type at all. Taking a proactive but still careful stance, it shall be suggested here, that ESPON II should reserve a very limited amount for this type of study.

In this scenario, ESPON II should neither provide for studies addressing the non-candidate countries in the Balkan Region (**Type 6**), nor envisage in-depth studies on a single policy field (**Type 2**). Given the rather limited fund available in this scenario the Balkan region and all the problems related to doing research in this area would constitute a too high financial burden for the ESPON budget. For economical reason this Region should not be examined. Type 2 studies; however, do not seem to create sufficiently high added value, especially in comparison to the rather similar type 3 studies.

In case of a politically driven decision on favour of studies referring to the remaining countries in the Balkan Region, considerable fund must be reallocated from other study types to **Type 6** studies. This could imply the deathblow for both **Type 7** and **Type 4** studies.

ESPON should envisage a small budget for some small scale **Type 8**. The conduct of larger projects of this type should be foreseen by DG Regional Policy, yet finance them independent from the rather small ESPON II budget.

Administrative and Managerial Processes

As for the Programme approach and management, all recommendations on regulatory aspects not having an impact on the ESPON budget shall be the same in both scenarios.

The **Programme Approach and Management** level predefines both the geographic detail as well as the sectoral policy fields to be addressed (thematic coverage) by the ESPON II programme – both aspects that are considered to impact the ESPON II budget. In case that ESPON has a more or

less constant budget, the feature characteristics of these aspects need to be adapted to the budget restraint. Concerning the geographic detail this implies that ESPON II will not be able to provide for studies allowing the highest geographical detail – LAU 2 (NUTS 5). In general, Type 1, 5 should remain to provide the geographic detail of the current programme – NUTS 3 – and Type 3 studies should provide a deeper geographic detail by means of including LAU 1 (NUTS 4) level into the analysis (LAU 2 (NUTS 5) could be envisaged in an individual case).

As for the thematic coverage, this scenario should clearly prioritise the policy fields that the ESPON Project 2.4.2 "Integrated Analysis of Transnational and National Territories based on ESPON Results" highlighted as being especially relevant to the spatial dimension in the future. This policy fields are the Environment, Accessibility (Transport), Polycentric Development, and the Lisbon Strategy; given the changing political priorities within the EU, the last aspect is likely to prioritise economic aspect).[46]

Regarding the aspect of **Project Administration and Management**, only the aspect of data-collection and –consolidation has been identified as potential impacting the ESPON II budget. Section 3.3.2.4 suggested two options to resolve this problem. According to Option 1, the ECPs should no longer be responsible for gathering and consolidating data. This task should be performed by the TPGs incorporating partners in all countries covered by the study. This option is considered to viable in terms of both, quality of the data delivery and costs.

Option 2 suggests that the ECPs should remain responsible for data delivery. To enhance the performance of the ECPs in this context, the option identifies the need to increase the ECPs' accountability vis-à-vis the ESPON authorities. The ESPON programme employing the ECPs appears to be the only realistic way to achieve greater accountability.

Since Option 2 is obviously the more expensive of the two solutions outlined above, this scenario for ESPON II should make use of Option 1. In order to assure the quality of the data delivered by the different TPG partners, the programme should repeatedly use random examinations of the data.

In order to provide for increased **Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance** in the framework of ESPON II this study discussed the concepts of a Scientific Board or Sounding Board. This study suggests that ESPON should, in any scenario, establish one of these two quality assurance bodies. Taking into account the comparatively limited budget of this scenario and the extra costs related to the establishment of such quality assurance bodies, this ESPON II should envisage the creation of small sounding boards in case that the ESPON II budget remain more or less constant in the future.

For this case, it shall be assumed that a scientific board would be composed of at least one scientist, who would accompany an individual analysis process for an average of four days, and one expert in the field of policy-advisory or –making and one practitioner each accompanying the process for two days.

The tasks of the sounding board in this scenario to only refer to the quality assurance of the study as such. Only the 24 large scale ESPON study projects shall be accompanied by the sounding board.

In this context, ESPON II should additionally provide for TPGs to be also composed of policy or political advisors (or any other expert with experience in the field of policy making) and practitioners, in order to additionally assure that the programme projects create added value for these two user groups.

Communication, Dissemination and Networking

Section 3.4.2.2 suggested that the ESPON II Communication Strategy should provide for more continuity and terms of efforts and costs throughout the entire programme period. As for the ESPON II budget, this implied that annual communication budget should be relative stable maybe having a slight increase towards the end of the programme period in 2013.

It shall be presumed at this stage that the ESPON II would not require a similarly high amount of initial investments (e.g. in the development of a website or the establishment of a Media Bureau). However, it shall be suggested here, that in this scenario, the total amount allocated of ESPON II budget reserved for communication should remain as high as to the communication budget of the first ESPON programme.

3.5.3.2 Scenario 2: The Future EPSON Budget Increases Considerably

Scenario-specific Assumptions

- **The General Assumptions outlined in Section 3.5.2 are valid.**
- **The total budget of ESPON will increase considerable**.
- **The total estimated budget amount will be 27 Mio Euros**, which corresponds to a 50 percent increase of the total ESPON budget vis-à-vis the budget of the scenario previously discussed. Given the total ESPON II budget of 30 – 40 Mio Euros, which has been demanded by the ESPON authorities, this assumption is considered to be carefully chosen.
- **The geographic coverage of does not include any further countries than those mentioned in the general assumptions**. Following the example of the current ESPON programme, ESPON II will basically address all EU candidate countries, having a special option on geographic coverage with regard to Turkey, for which strong lack of data are assumed as well as all potential candidate countries in the Balkan Region.
- **ESPON II will allow for 36 large scale programme projects plus a considerable number of small scale projects**. This is a careful estimation that in parts responds to need for comparatively larger project budgets.

Thematic Coverage and Geographic Scope

A considerably increased budget, as in this scenario, would strongly alter the allocation of budget to the different study types. This will be illustrate in the following paragraphs will illustrate.

ESPON programme projects on a particular topic with a broad coverage (**Type 1 study**) would remain to be crucial to the ESPON II programme. This conceptual basis should be retained; however,

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[46] ESPON Project 2.4.2 "Integrated Analysis of Transnational and National Territories based on ESPON Results", Final Report, pp. 317 – 319

it must not necessarily be significantly increased. It shall be suggested here the in this scenario, the ESPON II programme should reserve a budget amount equal to the amount in the previous scenario for studies of this type.

This would allow for a far higher budget available for **Type 3** studies - in-depth studies on integrated topics with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas within the ESPON space. Given the potentially strong added value created by this kind of studies, the budget share of type 3 studies in this scenario could even be higher that that of type 1 studies. A higher budget would not only allow for more studies of this kind, but also for deeper geographic detail.

A higher budget would also increase the possibility for **Type 4** studies. This study is characterised by a potentially strong added value for policy makers – the user groups that is supposed to be the main beneficiary of the ESPON programme – and procedural difficulties. A larger budget would allow to tackle there difficulties and thus evoke the potential value stemming from these studies.

Updates (**Type 5** studies) remain to be very important under this scenario; however they become relatively less important with regard to their relative budget share. Similar to type 1 studies, the absolute amount should remain more or less the same as in the previous scenario.

Given both the larger budget amount available and, moreover, the larger number of studies and increased geographic coverage, this scenario should provide for a slight absolute increase of budget reserved for compiling studies (**Type 7**).

As it has been defined that in this scenario ESPON II will address all countries in the Balkan region, the programme should envisage a small amount of money for particular studies (**Type 6**) focussing only on this regions. Instead, filling in the 'Black Hole' should be achieved in the framework of new Type 1, Type 5, and Type 3 studies.

Given the comparative disadvantage of **Type 2** studies vis-à-vis Type 3 studies, this scenario of ESPON II should not envisage Type 2 studies.

ESPON should envisage a small budget for some small scale **Type 8**. The conduct of larger projects of this type should be foreseen by DG Regional Policy, yet finance them independent from the rather small ESPON II budget.

Administrative and Managerial Processes

As for the Programme approach and management, all recommendation on regulatory aspects not having an impact on the ESPON budget shall be the same in both scenarios.

As for the **Programme Approach and Management** in this scenario, both the geographic detail and the thematic coverage remain to be issues relevant in terms of the budget. Regarding the geographic detail the larger budget will allow ESPON II to include NUTS 5 more often in the analyses of Type 3 studies. It could also be envisage conducting a limited number of type 4 studies that include this policy level. However, Type 1, 5 should remain to provide the geographic detail of the current programme – NUTS 3.

The larger budget would allow for more flexibility of ESPON II with regard to the thematic coverage. Nevertheless, it shall be suggested here to keep the priorities mention in this context in the previous scenarios. This would provide for more focus of the entire programme and avoid lavish management of public funds.

As far as the **Project Administration and Management** in this scenario is concerned, this study suggests opting for the same modus of data-collection, –consolidation and validation as the previous scenario. This option (Option 1) appears to be more promising and less expensive, and therefore seems to correspond much better to the principle of proportionality than Option 2.

Given the larger budget available, **Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance** in the scenario should be conducted by a sounding board. A sounding board would be composed of at maximum two scientists working for an average of five days, one expert in the field of policy-advisory or –making and one practitioner, both being reimbursed for and average of 3 days.

In this scenario ESPON II should also provide for TPGs to be also composed of policy or political advisors (or any other expert with experience in the field of policy making) and practitioners.

The tasks of the sounding board in this scenario to would comprise the support of the sounding board with regard to the elaboration and evaluation of the tenders as well as the quality assurance of the study as such. The sounding board will accompany the 36 large scale ESPON study projects.

Communication, Dissemination and Networking

Given the increased budget in this scenario, this paragraph will suggest to increase the funds allocated to the ESPON II communication budget. This would for instance allow to engage in more proactive Communication Strategy putting emphasis on direct marketing activities, and thus, thus to improve the efficiency of the ESPON communication strategy in this respect.

3.5.3.3 Comparison of Scenarios

The following table (Table 3.3) confronts the ESPON II budget for the both abovementioned scenarios with an indicative budget breakdown of the current ESPON project.[47] The different amounts are explained below the table.

[47] The figures for the current ESPON project have been derived from an indicative budget breakdown provided by the ESPON CU and MA.

			Scenario 1		Scenario 2		ESPON I budget	
ESPON study projects								
	Estim. No large scale projects		22		34			
	Estim. No of study projects		5		15			
	Average size large-scale proj.		588.618 €		593.012 €			
	Average size small proj.		60.000 €		66.667 €			
Variables Sounding board								
	Mandays Scientist		4		5			
	Number of Scientists		1		2			
	Mandays Expert/pracitioner		2		3			
	Number		2		2			
			Euros	%	Euros	%	Euros	%
ESPON study projects								
		Type 1	6.000.000	33,3%	7.500.000	27,8%		
		Type 2	0	0,0%	0	0,0%		
		Type 3	4.000.000	22,2%	8.000.000	29,6%		
		Type 4	200.000	1,1%	600.000	2,2%		
		Type 5	2.000.000	11,1%	3.000.000	11,1%		
		Type 6	0	0,0%	200.000	0,7%		
		Type 7	800.000	4,4%	1.200.000	4,4%		
		Type 8	100.000	0,6%	200.000	0,7%		
	Joint projects (urbact, interact)		365.000	2,0%	565.000	2,1%		
		Total	**13.465.000**	**74,8%**	**21.265.000**	**78,8%**	**12.134.326**	**69,7%**
Scientific validation								
	Sounding board		**149.600**	**0,8%**	**462.400**	**1,7%**		
	Sounding board / large project		**6.800**		**13.600**			
ECP			**200.000**	**1,1%**	**250.000**	**0,9%**	**565.000**	**3,2%**
Tools and Scientific Coordination			**410.000**	**2,3%**	**500.000**	**1,9%**	**609.500**	**3,5%**
Communication			**610.400**	**3,4%**	**797.600**	**3,0%**	**488.500**	**2,8%**
Staff			**2.000.000**	**11,1%**	**2.450.000**	**9,1%**	**2.305.850**	**13,2%**
Travel			**515.000**	**2,9%**	**575.000**	**2,1%**	**565.500**	**3,2%**
Overhead			**650.000**	**3,6%**	**700.000**	**2,6%**	**746.500**	**4,3%**
GRAND TOTAL			**18.000.000**	**100,0%**	**27.000.000**	**100,0%**	**17.415.176**	**100,0%**

Table 3.5: Comparison of ESPON scenario budgets

Budget Explanation:

The following paragraphs intend to explain the different positions in the above budget. In so doing, it will in particular refer to the changes between the different budgetary scenarios. Following the recommendations above, the average amount for large-scale projects is considerably higher than that of the current ESPON programme (approximately € 588.600 for scenario 1 and approximately € 593.000 Euros in Scenario 2 (both inclusive the costs for the sounding board)).

- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 1**: As it has already been mentioned, this type 1 refers to the traditional or classic European-wide large scale study project. This study perceives the type 1 projects to be essential for ESPON II. This is why in the first scenario type 1 study should receive the by far largest budget share so that ESPON II can continue to provide for European wide large scale projects in spatial planning – the main reason for which ESPON has been created. As for the second scenario, type 1 studies are still considered to be very important, which is why the absolute amount of fund allocates to this type has been in-

creased by 1.5 Mio Euros vis-à-vis scenario 1. However, this larger budget scenario provides ESPON II with the possibilities to significantly increase its portfolio with additional project types that may notably contribute to the added value of the programme. This in why in terms of its relative weight type 1 studies loose some budget shares in the second scenario vis-à-vis scenario 1.

- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 2**: As explained above, this project type does not provide for any value added and thus should not be taken into account in the future.
- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 3**: This study revealed that within the spatial development community there is a very strong demand for this third project type. This is why we propose a considerable amount of funds to be allocated to type 3 studies in the first scenario in order to provide for a more diversified ESPON II offer and additional added value, while respecting the importance of the typical. For the second scenario, we propose to significantly double the absolute budget amount allocated to this type of studies, in order to better satisfy the demand for such projects. In relative terms this implies a budget increase of about seven percent.
- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 4**: The demand for demand-driven study projects at short-notice, which has been identified in the framework of this study, appeared to be almost as high as the demand for type 3 studies. Given the difficulties related to the tendering of these projects (as outlined in Section 3.2.3) we propose to offer only a relatively small number of these small scale projects in the first scenario, because the overall budget in this scenario does not provide for a number of projects. Given the much larger funds in the second scenario, the number of type 4 studies can be significantly increased.
- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 5**: Updates of already existing ESPON projects serves to maintain the added value created throughout the first programme period and thus another means to sustain the 'classical' ESPON basis of European wide large scale projects in spatial planning. Given the limited funds of the first scenario, not all projects or information provided within the projects can updated. Therefore, the selection process needs to be quite selective in terms of identifying the most essential information within the different ESPON I projects to be updated in the course of ESPON II. The second scenario leaves slightly more room for updates, yet the programme should keep the same selectiveness, since ESPON II should not predominantly consist of repeating or updating the first ESPON's tasks.
- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 6**: As regard the gap in the Balkan-region, it has been mentioned above that this appears to be a rather difficult task as the countries in the region are not perceived capable to provide adequate data and information in the field of spatial development due to the relatively recent armed hostilities in the region and thus, the individual countries backlog in terms of spatial development. For this reason, in the first scenario ESPON II should cover at least the two candidate countries in the region during the elaboration of the type 1 studies, but should not issue particular studies covering these countries. In the second scenario, a limited amount should be spent on closing the 'black whole' was this deems necessary. Any effort to be made should strictly respect the principle of proportionality.
- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 7**: Besides the compiling efforts of the CU, the current ESPON programme brought about two own projects and a number of projects in the framework of the cooperation with INTERACT, which reuse information from other, previous ESPON projects and edit this information for particular user-groups. Though it cannot yet be measures, the added-value stemming from these projects appears to add a large share to the overall value creation of the programme. Therefore, ESPON II should continue the activity of compiling projects. However, given this studies recommendation to provide for more detailed recommendations and policy option within the individual ESPON II programme project, the amount spend on type 7 projects should in both scenarios be consid-

erably less than the amount spend during the first programme period. The increase in budget for type 7 projects in the second scenario is related to the far larger overall number of study projects in this scenario.

- **ESPON Study Projects – Type 8**: Following the proposition to have some small scale experimental projects, we propose to provide for some budget allocation to type 8 studies in both scenarios. The height of the allocation depends on the size of the budget.
- **Joint projects with URBACT II and INTERACT II**: In order to underline the intensification of the cooperation of ESPON II with URBACT II and INTERACT II, ESPON II to should provide for an own budget designated for joint study projects targeting the cut surfaces between the three programmes.
- **Scientific Validation**: This study considers Scientific Validation to be desirably irrespectively of the size of the budget. However the extent to which the Sounding Board is practices – the tasks included into the contract of the experts – are dependent on the size of the budget. As for the first scenario, the costs for the sounding board take the following aspects into account.
    - 1 Scientists, working four days per sounding board for a daily rate of 850 Euros.
    - 2 Experts/Practitioners, working two days for a daily rate of 850 Euros.
    - 22 or equivalent (calculatory) sounding boards (for 22 large scale studies)

  The budget reserved for the Sounding Board in the second scenario is based on the following calculation
    - 2 Scientists, working five days per sounding board for a daily rate of 850 Euros.
    - 2 Experts/Practitioners, working 3 days for a daily rate of 850 Euros.
    - 34 or equivalent (calculatory) sounding boards (for 34 large scale studies)
- **ECP**: The budget estimation for the ECP network is based on the budget of the current ESPON programme, which comprised funds for the ECPs travelling to the ESPON meetings and seminars as well as the ECP projects and amounted to a total of approximately 565.000 Euros.[48] This study's recommendations do not foresee any funds allocated to be allocated to particular ECP projects, so that the travel costs are the only remaining matter of expense related to the ECP. Yet, given the slightly increased number of ESPON countries that will be addressed by ESPON II as well as the slightly longer programming period, we propose to slightly increase the amount allocated to ECP travels vis-à-vis the old budget. In scenario 1 this increase amounts for 25.000 Euros whereas in scenario 2 we propose a less tight travel budget for ECPs (increase of 75.000 Euros), which might be used to increase their effectiveness and efficiency in terms of their networking activities.
- **Tools and Scientific Coordination**: In the framework of the first scenario this amount has been reduce in comparison to the current ESPON programme. This is based on the argument firstly that the ESPON II programme can build on the investments of the previous programme. Secondly, ESPON II should be more effective in terms of budget allocation to projects. Thus, fewer funds for initial investments are required. The second scenario's amount increases in comparison to the current ESPON programme due to the larger amount of studies that will be conducted.
- **Communication**: The communication budget of the current ESPON programme amounted for 488.500 Euros, which included costs for the programme evaluation, the website, publications, strategy development, the Media Bureau and events. This study suggest a more continuous communication effort, which opposes the current ESPON programmes communication approach, which focuses on marketing the programmes outcomes in the last year of the programme period between 2002 and 2006. ESPON II should be able to strongly build on the impacts of these communication efforts. However, taking into account the rela-

tively longer programming period of ESPON II and corresponding to the recommendation that communications efforts for ESPON II should be reinforced this study proposes to increase the communication budget of the ESPON II programme.

- **Staff**: As it has been recommended above, the Sounding Board will take over quite a few tasks of the ESPON CU. In Scenario 1, the Sounding Board will be in charge of accompanying the ESPON TPGs throughout the studies, which is supposed to reduce the need for scientific capacity within the ESPON CU. Moreover, ESPON II should be able to benefit from experiences made in the course of the first programme and thus be able to realise some rationalisation potential. Therefore, the budget allocated to the staffing of the ESPON II programme has been reduced in the first scenario despite the longer programming period. Scenario 2 suggests that the sounding board will additionally contribute to the procurement of the ESPON II studies. This will further reduce the workload of the ESPON CU and thus allow for a further decrease of staffing. The fact that the absolute amount of budget allocated to staffing in Scenario 2 is higher than in the current ESPON programme is based on the much bigger total number of studies to be administered in this scenario for ESPON II.
- **Travel**: The costs for travel in the current ESPON programme appear quite high in relation to the programmes overall budget. CU and MC should jointly find solutions to significantly decrease these travel costs, for example by means of reducing the number of MC meetings during the year. Therefore, the amount in scenario 1 is significantly lower. The amount indicated in scenario two increases due to the larger amount of studies in this scenario, which is considered to have an impact on the workload of the MC and the duration of the MC meetings.
- **Overhead**: Similar to the travel costs, the overhead costs for the current ESPON's programming period appear to be quite high. Therefore a slight increase might add to the overall value for money of the ESPON II programme. However, the overhead costs are considered to be related to the workload of the programme, which is why the budget allocated to overhead in the second scenario is considered to be higher than that in the first scenario.

3.6 Guidelines and Timeframe for Implementation

3.6.1 Guidelines for Implementation of Recommendations in Terms of User Orientation

The following paragraphs will outline some basic guideline the respect of which will facilitate the implementation of the abovementioned recommendations in terms of the demand- and client- oriented approach defined for ESPON II.

The ESPON authorities should provide for a smooth transition from ESPON I to the future ESPON II. This requires early planning of the transition period in order to prepare both, the users and the authorities in charge of the programme. Ideally, the planning of transition period should have started already, so that the implementation of the transition strategy can start as soon as the ultimate decision on ESPON II has been taken.

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[48] An indicative overall budget provided by the ESPON Coordination Unit served as a foundation for the calculation of the different budget amounts of the current ESPON programme.

The future ESPON programme should closely stick to the recommendations laid down in this report in order to guarantee the strictly demand- and client oriented approach. This should occur on both

- the programme level, this means that via the preparatory study, the user and stakeholder should be consulted to analyse their detailed expectations on the future programme and topics to be covered;
- the project level, which means that the user groups and stakeholders should be represented or be given the opportunity to participate throughout the entire study process (from tendering to elaboration of recommendations) of large-scale study projects.

This requires a very detailed work programme providing for sufficiently long delays preparation periods.

Recommendations and policy options, the direct outcome relevant to the end-user, should be subject to quality control in order to provide for user-friendly recommendations. This however requires preparing a programme and projecting framework supporting this recommendation. As already stated above the preparations for ESPON II should start as soon as possible.

3.6.2 Proposed Timeframe for Transition form ESPON I to ESPON II and Implementation of Recommendations

The Figure (Figure 3.1) below outlines a quite ambitious plans for the first implementation and initial actions in the transition period from ESPON I to ESPON II. This plan is based on the information that has been available to the study team in moment of the submission of this document.

Activities	2nd Quarter 2006	3rd Quarter 2006	4th Quarter 2006	1st Quarter 2007	2nd Quarter 2007	3rd Quarter 2007	4th Quarter 2007	1st Quarter 2008	2nd Quarter 2008
ESPON I Comm. Strategy									
Finalisation ESPON I									
Staff ESPON covered by Luxembourg									
Preliminary preparation activities									
Elaboration Operational Programme									
New Communication Strategy									
1st Round Call for Proposals									
1st Evaluation Round									
Launch and Conduct of studies									

Figure 3.13: Timeframe for Transition Period

4. Summary of Recommendations

In comparison to the existing ESPON programme, a future ESPON II programme would have the advantage that it can build on the outcomes and results of the existing ESPON programme. This means the future ESPON programme will not need to start at "zero" as it has been the case for the existing programme.

Generally, taking a client- and user oriented approach, ESPON II should provide for a larger range of products – of actual ESPON II programme projects. In this context, eight different types of programme projects have been identifies on this part of the study, which are considered to provide value added to the rather diversified ESPON user space. The following table outlines these eight different study types.

Study Type	Characteristics
1	Projects on a particular topic with a broad geographic coverage (entire ESPON space) – the 'traditional' ESPON study project
2	In-depth studies on a particular topic with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
3	In-depth studies on integrated topics with a deep vertical geographic coverage NOT covering the entire ESPON space but focussing on selected case areas in the ESPON space
4	Reactive, short-term studies that address contemporary problems related to territorial policy making – studies addressing policy-driven demand with short-notice
5	Up-dates of current ESPON studies (data, new policy developments, etc.)
6	Filling in the black hole (Balkan region) or adding new ESPON countries data to existing studies (and thus continue the work of the ECP projects targeting this area)
7	Projects compiling the results of the current ESPON study projects for specific user-groups (These projects would correspond with the current programme's projects 3.1 'Integrated Tools for European Spatial Development' and 3.2 'Spatial Scenarios and Orientations in Relation to the ESDP and EU Cohesion Policy' and should not be confused with the series of compiling reports that has been issued by the ESPON Coordination Unit.)
8	Pilot and Experimental Projects focussing on the experimental implementation of ESPON policy options on a quite low-scale level

Table 3.6 Proposition of 8 future ESPON study types

The following table outlines the entire recommendations that have been developed in Chapter 3 of this study by means opposing them with the strength and weaknesses that have been identified in Chapter 2.

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	General Recommendations ESPON II
Programme Approach and Management	▪ The overall approach of ESPON has been subject to a strong learning process	▪ This process does not always provide for ultimate clarity and focus ▪ The programme objectives defined extensive ESPON user-space ▪ No visible client- or demand orientation	▪ Adopt a clear client- or demand driven approach ▪ Create more immediate added value for users ▪ Delimit future ESPON user space – provide for focus ▪ Dispose of a coherent and predefined work programme from the very beginning ▪ Closely cooperate with INTERACT II and URBACT II where possible ▪ Increase the attractiveness of the programme for potential TPG members ▪ Formulate the objective to contribute to EU wide capacity building in territorial and spatial planning ▪ Clarify the role of ECPs to improve ECP performance
Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance	▪ Overall scientific quality appears to be high	▪ Formal quality of studies could be improved, especially with regard to the value for clients ▪ Process of scientific validation and quality assurance. ▪ Seemingly sporadic shortcoming in terms of scientific quality	▪ Establishment of a sounding board in charge of the scientific validations and quality assurance of the individual ESPON programme projects[49] ▪ Provide for quality assurance through competition. Therefore, provide for effective dissemination of Calls for Proposals

Public Procurement	▪ The tendering processes provide for good quality in terms of tender evaluation	▪ Seemingly, ESPON does not provide for the involvement of stakeholders in the process tender design
		▪ Dissemination and administrative burden related to the conduct of studies seem to be causes for insufficient numbers of submitted tenders
		▪ Inequality of geographical representation of successful bidders
			▪ Provide for more competition in the procurement procedures by means of
			  ▪ More proactive and direct tender dissemination actively addressing a large audience
			  ▪ A More attractive, less complicated procurement procedure that at the same time provides for more flexibility for the bidder – e.g. a Call for Proposal procedure combined with 'negotiated public procurement procedure'[50]
			  ▪ Where possible, projects that are more attractive with regards to both the administrative burden and financial incentive
			▪ Adjust the form of Terms of Reference and of the Guidance Papers to the Call for Proposal procedure.

[49] A sounding board is based on the idea of a scientific board, the purpose of which is to accompany a study team in scientific terms by means of verifying, commenting and approving the scientific approach of a particular study. Going beyond the concept of the scientific board, the sounding board would also provide for input from policy makers and practitioners.

[50] Negotiated Public Procurement Procedures are procurement procedures whereby the contracting authorities consult the economic operators of their choice and negotiate the terms of contract with one or more of these. Please see Section 3.3.2.3 for further detail.

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	General Recommendations ESPON II
			▪ The procurement procedure should contribute to guarantying less interference or additional demands to the TPG in the course of the study process.
Project Administration and Management	▪ CU provides support to TPGs in order to decrease administrative burden for TPGs.	▪ The administrative procedure related to ESPON appears to be too burdensome. ▪ Project management occasionally seemed to suffer from interventions and new demands in the course of the study process.	▪ Endow TPG with responsibility of data facilitation (the ECPs being no longer in charge of this tasks) ▪ Encourage TPGs to become active with regard to the dissemination of results (Incentives to do so could be an adequate means) ▪ Where possible provide for more attractiveness of ESPON programme projects in financial terms ▪ Provide for increased average projects budget for large scale projects in order to support the above-mentioned points and to provide for a sounding board accompanying each ESPON II programme project
Dissemination	Large variety of dissemination means ▪ events ▪ publications ▪ website	▪ The means appear to be not fully exploited to their limits. ▪ Direct dissemination could be improved	ESPON II dissemination efforts should ▪ Reach a larger number of potential bidders ▪ Contribute to establishing a extensive 'pool of experts' ▪ Reach the largest possible audience within the predefined ESPON user space ▪ Provide for joint dissemination of ESPON results with other complementary programmes, especially URBACT II and INTERACT II ▪ Not only take into account who should be reached and how, but also what should be disseminated to the particular
Communication Strategy	▪ The communication strategy corresponds to the creation of content	▪ More awareness raising activities in the initial phase of the programme would have been an asset	▪ Be designed in accordance to the ESPON II objectives and work programme, thus provide for client-orientation and continuous communication efforts ▪ Envisage to significantly increase the number of stakeholders addressed and reached by direct communication and marketing means ▪ Provide for stakeholder involvement ▪ Be supported by a need driven approach (the obligation to use ESPON results) ▪ Consider using the communication capacities of stakeholders

Networking and Cooperation with other Initiatives	▪ Creation of a European wide scientific community in spatial planning
	▪ Good level of cooperation with Interact
		▪ Networks could be bigger
		▪ Little overall coordination with other programmes apart from Interact
			▪ Build upon and develop the complementarities with URBACT II and INTERACT II
			  ▪ by means of coordinating objectives and work programmes
			  ▪ by means of joint communication and dissemination efforts
			▪ Develop stronger cooperation with other non-DG Regio and non-EU programmes where possible

ECPs		▪ No homogeneity in terms of Profile,	▪ Concentrating on major tasks

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	General Recommendations ESPON II
		Numbers, Terms of Employment, Performance ▪ No direct accountability to ESPON authorities ▪ Workload of ECPs ▪ Lack of clarity about ECP responsibilities ▪ Shortcomings in key-tasks	▪ Networking and ▪ Communication/Dissemination
TPGs	▪ Involvement of recognised institutes and organisations	▪ Strong concentration of TPG leaders in North Western Europe ▪ Little Involvement of Private Actors	Future ESPON II TPGs should: ▪ Carry out the additional tasks of ▪ Data collection and ▪ Communication/dissemination of the results of their respective study projects employing a standardised communication/dissemination tool-box ▪ Be offered more advantageous conditions in ▪ Administrative and ▪ Financial terms where possible ▪ Could be formed in accordance to new, adapted requirements, notably that ▪ at least three to four major project partners come from three/four different countries ▪ TPGs should consist of scientists and could be complemented by practitioners and/or policy-makers/advisors ▪ the formation of TPGs should correspond to the new ESPON II objective of contributing to building capacity in terms of territorial and spatial planning in all countries within the EPSON II space.
Thematic Coverage	▪ Covers a large variety of different topics ▪ Strong potential value for higher levels	▪ More awareness raising activities in the initial phase of the programme would have been an asset	With regard to the topics to be covered at the same time provide for ▪ continuity with regard to topics covered by ESPON I ▪ user-oriented definition of topics ▪ address additional, relevant topics when this deems necessary (especially from the user perspective) ▪ more focus or priority areas ▪ studies that integrated several policy topic in one single study ▪ studies addressing policy-driven demand at short-notice ▪ develop the complementarities of ESPON with INTERACT II and URBACT II in terms of thematic complementarities (joint projects)

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	General Recommendations ESPON II
Geographic Coverage	▪ Europe-wide view of spatial developments allows for benchmarks and comparison between territories concerning the different policy fields addressed	▪ Causes problems regarding data availability and data collection	▪ Provide for studies that cover ▪ the entire ESPON space – the EU 25, the EU accession countries and the ▪ develop the complementarities of ESPON with INTERACT II and URBACT II in terms of geographic coverage (joint projects)
Geographic Detail	Allows for territory internal analysis at ▪ European Level – strong potential and actual added value ▪ National level for most ESPON countries – adequate potential and actual added value ▪ Regional Level when it comes to larger European Regions	▪ Regional level in smaller ESPON countries and Local level inadequately addressed due to NUTS levels included and language – no internal analysis possible ▪ NUTS approach appears to be challenging due to the definition of the NUTS ▪ Problems in terms of data gathering	▪ Provide for studies that cover ▪ or refer to a geographic detail deeper than NUTS 3 ▪ develop the complementarities of ESPON with INTERACT II and URBACT II in terms of geographic detail (joint projects) where possible ▪ In case that LAU 2 (NUTS 5) is targeted, also provide for a solution to the 'language' problem

Table 3.7 Opposition of Strengths / Weaknesses ESPON I with General Recommendations for ESPON II

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	Scenario Specific Recommendations ESPON II	
			Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Thematic Coverage and Geographic Scope	▪ Covers a large variety of different topics ▪ Strong potential value for higher levels ▪ Europe-wide view of spatial developments allows for benchmarks and comparison between territories concerning the different policy fields addressed Allows for territory internal analysis at ▪ European Level – strong potential and actual added value ▪ National level for most ESPON countries – adequate potential and actual added value ▪ Regional Level when it comes to larger European Regions	▪ Focus on key-topics appears to be missing ▪ Integration of topics appears to be insufficient – could create strong value added ▪ Problems regarding data availability and data collection ▪ Regional level in smaller ESPON countries and Local level inadequately addressed due to NUTS levels included and language – no internal analysis possible ▪ NUTS approach appears to be challenging due to the definition of the NUTS ▪ Problems in terms of data gathering	▪ All general recommendations ▪ Deepest NUTS level = NUTS 4 ▪ Number of Studies: ▪ Large Scale Studies: 22 ▪ Small Scale Studies: 5 ▪ Total Budget for Studies: 13.465.000 Euros	▪ All general recommendations ▪ Deepest NUTS level = NUTS 5 ▪ Number of Studies: ▪ Large Scale Studies: 34 ▪ Small Scale Studies: 15 ▪ Total Budget for Studies: 21.265.000 Euros
Scientific Validation and Quality Assurance	▪ Overall scientific quality appears to be high	▪ Formal quality of studies could be improved, especially with regard to the Clients ▪ Process of scientific validation and quality assurance. ▪ Seemingly sporadic shortcoming in terms of scientific quality	▪ All general recommendations ▪ 3 sounding board[51] members ▪ 1 scientists for 4 man days ▪ 2 practitioners/policy experts for 2 man days each ▪ Tasks: ▪ Scientific validations and quality assurance of study	▪ All general recommendations ▪ 4 sounding board members ▪ 2 scientists for 5 man days each ▪ 2 practitioners/policy experts for 3 man days each ▪ Tasks: ▪ Scientific validations and quality assurance of study

[51] A sounding board is based on the idea of a scientific board, the purpose of which is to accompany a study team in scientific terms by verifying, commenting and approving the scientific approach of a particular study. Going beyond the concept of the scientific board, the sounding board would also provide for input from policy makers and practitioners.

Variables	Strength ESPON I	Weaknesses ESPON I	Scenario Specific Recommendations ESPON II	
			Scenario 1	Scenario 2
				▪ Contribute to Elaboration of Calls for Proposal ▪ Contribute to Evaluation of Calls for Proposals
Public Procurement	▪ The tendering processes provide for good quality in terms of tender evaluation	▪ Seemingly, ESPON does not provide for the involvement of stakeholders in the process tender design ▪ Dissemination and administrative burden related to the conduct of studies seem to be causes for insufficient numbers of submitted tenders ▪ Inequality of geographical representation of successful bidders	▪ All general recommendations	▪ All general recommendations ▪ Support to Evaluation of Call for Proposals by Sounding Board
Communication and Dissemination	The communication strategy corresponds to the creation of content Large variety of dissemination means ▪ events ▪ publications ▪ website	▪ More awareness raising activities in the initial phase of the programme would have been an asset ▪ Direct dissemination could be improved	▪ All general recommendations	▪ All general recommendations ▪ Strongly increased Communication and Dissemination Budget

Table 3.8 Opposition of Strengths / Weaknesses ESPON I with Scenario Specific Recommendations for ESPON II

5. Conclusions and Open Questions

5.1 Conclusions

Although a certain number of shortcomings have been identified, the ESPON I programme has proven its potential to create value for the different ESPON user groups. The programme has created a strong potential value for all users especially at the higher administrative and governmental levels.

The ESPON authorities should try to fully transform the potential value of the current programme into actual value in the future. The recommendations outlined above have been defined with regard to this objective and could thus help to fully 'realise' the added value of the ESPON programmes for its user groups.

Moreover, the ESPON authorities should try to enlarge user groups that could benefit from the ESPON outcomes by means of explicitly addressing lower governmental levels in the future, which should have been addressed in the course of the current programme.

This requires both new and innovative ESPON products, such as those which have been outlined in this paper, as well as increased efforts to address these user groups.

All measures to be taken in the course of the future ESPON II programme should be part of a coherent, strategic demand- and client driven approach. The European Commission, the ESPON authorities as well as the ESPON member and partner countries should be committed to provide for and implement such an approach.

5.2 Open Questions

This study does not claim to provide answers to all the questions that have been raised throughout the study process. In some cases, the information for these answers has not yet been available. In other cases, this study can only provide deliberations on the question as such, but without being able to answer them, as this does not lie within the competences of the consultant. In fact, most of these competences rest with the European Institutions, in particular the European Commission, the EU member-states and the of course the ESPON authorities.

In order to incite to discussion within these different bodies, this section will conclude this study by illustrating some of the most significant open questions that have been identified in the course of the studies process.

- What role will the future ESPON II play?
  - What role should the programme play within the DG Regional Policy of the European Commission?
  - What role should the programme play within the entire European Commission? How should the complementarities between ESPON and other EU level programmes be exploited?
  - Given the large potential value added of the programme with regard to the integration of EU policy making, should ESPON been given a more strategic role within the entire European Commission? Should it be made a strategic tool that fulfils the criteria of the “scientific governance”? What improvements does the programme need to gain the confidence of the relevant actors?

- What should be the future geographic coverage of the ESPON II programme?
  - Could ESPON be used to speed up the pre-accession development of accession and candidate countries? How big would the value added of the programme be in this context?
  - The coverage of accession and candidate countries obviously bear certain shortcoming, which are notably related to the availability of data. How could this be overcome more effectively in order to realise a value added as it has been mentioned above?

- What should be the future thematic coverage of the ESPON II programme?
  - If ESPON II becomes a strategic tool of the Commission, will the needs of the different Directorate Generals in terms of thematic coverage be taken into account?
  - How should the thematic coverage be chosen in order to best refer to the Lisbon and Goteborg Agendas?

- How could in general the interests of stakeholders – in the case of ESPON for example the TPG members – be taken into consideration in the future?

- How could a more equal dispersion of TPG members and the respective scientific competences be achieved?

6. Appendix

Appendices

A	Methodology
B	Strategy Case Study
C	Case Study on ECPs
D	Case Study on TPGs
E	Result Minutes of ESPON Expert Panel
F	Survey Evaluation and Conclusions