

## **4. Priority 3: Scientific Platform and Tools**

The scientific platform and analytical tools represent a core element in the knowledge base of ESPON for the preparation of effective territorial policies. In this sense it is important to maintain, develop and expand the existing scientific platform and the analytical tools set up in the framework of the ESPON 2006 Programme. In addition, new actions shall be undertaken to make use of the indicators, data and tools provided by ESPON, to continue to deliver new ones and to make them accessible to the public.

It is of particular importance that harmonised European wide data is robust and reliable, and has as high a geographical detail as possible. Comparable regional data shall be ensured through statistical quality control and data validation that shall respect European standards for spatial referencing and storage of data and metadata.

Analytical tools and methodologies shall support the implementation of the ESPON 2013 Programme as well as be a delivery of the programme operations. This will include typologies of regions and cities, modelling tools and techniques for forecasting and scenario development.

The development of the scientific platform and tools shall make it possible to continuously assess and monitor territorial development dynamics in relation to territorial policy objectives at European level.

Networking with other European and relevant bodies in the field of territorial development (such as spatial observatories dealing with national and cross-border territories) should be ensured in order to enhance the European added value of these projects.

Four types of actions are foreseen to be financed within this priority:

- ESPON Database and data development
- Territorial Indicators/Indices and Tools
- Territorial Monitoring System and Reports
- Targeted Actions for Update of Indicators and Maps

The first three actions will be mutually supportive and carried out in a sequence with close cooperation among the transnational project groups (TPGs) concerned. In this context, the implementation of the actions shall ensure mutual support and effective communication between the research teams involved in order to promote synergies and consistency of results.

The following sub-chapters deal with the four types of actions, explaining the respective objectives as well as the deliveries and outputs expected. In addition, the procedures relevant for the calls for proposals respectively call for tenders are described.

## **4.1 ESPON Database and Data Development**

### **4.1.1 Objectives**

The improvement of the data situation, in particular the further development of territorial indicators and of the ESPON 2013 Database, is a central task for the ESPON 2013 Programme. The aim is to gradually enlarge the availability of data and indicators relevant for territorial development and cohesion, covering Europe, its regions and cities.

Availability of comparable, reliable and useful regional data with a European coverage at a detailed geographical scale has been a challenge for the ESPON 2006 Programme and even before.

The main European provider of data for ESPON will remain to be EUROSTAT. However, the thematic and territorial content of ESPON 2013 projects will require data collection by the project teams from other data sources, including the OECD Territorial Database and national statistical offices.

European and international standards for spatial referencing, storage of data and metadata shall be fully respected in order for ESPON to contribute to the European process of improving European wide spatial data. ESPON shall become integrated in the European networking on geo-referenced data and in particular comply with the INSPIRE initiative of establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community.

The project on the ESPON 2013 Database will be carried through in two subsequent actions during 2008-2014. It shall support the internal consistency and synergy between ESPON actions undertaken being it applied research or targeted analysis. Here, the general objective is to create and manage a geo-referenced information system within the ESPON 2013 Programme, considering the ESPON themes of applied research and targeted analysis and the geography to be covered.

In general, the project shall provide for data storage and statistical validation as well as transformation of data into information, and the management of data/metadata and information. In doing so, the team behind the ESPON Database project shall ensure that further data development and territorial indicators created within different projects can be included in the ESPON 2013 Database. For the management of the geo-referenced data, a spatially enabled database is appropriate. Output methods for geo-referenced data should be compliant with open standards (and the INSPIRE Directive), to enable a transparent access to the data by all members of the ESPON community and beyond.

The project on the ESPON 2013 Database and the related data development shall provide, maintain, update and further develop the most relevant data and indicators made available by both the ESPON 2006 and 2013 Programmes, including new data and indicators provided by new ESPON projects.

The ESPON 2013 Database shall be regularly updated and improved in terms of time-series and relevant data for territorial analysis of the European territory, its regions and cities and in support of policy decisions at a European level.

Robustness of data, data quality, flexibility and usability are the main key words to be considered in the development of the ESPON 2013 Database. The project shall ensure standard quality control procedures and, if needed, undertake some actions (such as statistical estimation methods) to complete datasets or metadata. In particular, quality control shall be ensured in a two-step system:

- (1) Lead Partners will be obliged to carry through a statistical validation of data and indicators used in their project based on recommendations made in the ESPON Handbook for Data Collection, Harmonisation and Quality Control.
- (2) A final validation in relation to quality control procedures shall be undertaken by the TPG responsible for the ESPON 2013 Database before new data sets and indicators from applied research and targeted analyses projects are included in the ESPON 2013 Database.

In addition, the project should also be able to give advice and recommendations in relation to data issues to researchers involved in applied research projects under Priority 1 or targeted analysis under Priority 2, if requested.

Access to the ESPON 2013 Database should be ensured for the general public, and the service offered should comprehend several ways of interaction, such as discovery, view and download service.

The TPG should further ensure the updating and further development of a map kit tool which could enable the production of maps for the entire ESPON territory, based on the regional datasets included in the ESPON database and considering the three level approach (i.e. addressing the European/global, national/transnational and regional/local level) used in applied research projects under Priority 1. Moreover, the integration of the data included in the ESPON database into the ESPON cartographic tools such as the ESPON web-GIS, the ESPON HyperAtlas and the ESPON map kit tool shall be supported by the TPG responsible for the ESPON 2013 Database.

Finally, the ESPON 2013 Database project shall be able to provide - upon request - special data deliveries and maps related to activities by the ESPON MC, MA and CU based on the data included in the database. It shall also be capable of supporting the elaboration of ESPON publications with underlying data, indicators and maps.

#### **4.1.2 Deliveries and outputs expected**

The following deliveries are expected from the project on the ESPON 2013 Database:

- A **well-maintained database for external use** (main delivery) including robust and statistically validated indicators and data for European regions and cities, which should comprehend different ways of interaction: discovery service, view service and download service.
- An **internal database** including the data used and produced by the research teams involved in ESPON projects under Priority 1 and 2, comprehending also raw data from third parties to be used only internally. The ESPON 2013 Database will gradually develop over the programme period. As a result, at least **20-30 new European wide, comparable indicator sets** shall be available in 2013, duly validated and updated, giving information for all regions of Europe.

Further, the ESPON 2013 Database will provide **updated indicators** and **time series on a number of territorial indicators**.

- A **map collection** (vector format) from projects under Priority 1 and 2, which should be provided by the respective Lead Partners developing the projects.
- An **updated ESPON Map kit tool** with the latest information in relation to administrative boundaries and respective codes, which should be compatible with the ESPON 2013 Database.

- Special deliveries of **data, indicators and maps for ESPON reports, ESPON publications, press releases, presentations.**
- Close integration and **networking between ESPON and European and international organisations** dealing with relevant data for analysing the territorial development of Europe.
- **Presentations of the status-quo of the project at ESPON seminars** which will be organised twice a year.
- **Dissemination of project results** in the framework of international conferences and seminars, e.g. transnational activities of the ECP Network, events organised by the CU. Dissemination activities should be foreseen in the project proposal and be included in a specific work package “Dissemination”. However, project teams should consider that their core activity is the development of the ESPON database. The allocation of resources across all work packages shall consequently reflect this aspect. In addition, to ensure the consistency of a project’s dissemination activities with respective activities organised at Programme level, the project team should take into consideration the objectives and actions of Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme “Capitalisation, ownership and participation: Capacity building, dialogue and networking”, make use of these facilities and opt for complementarity.

The implementation of the ESPON 2013 Database will be split in two: A first project running from 2008-2011 and a second project covering the period 2011-2014.

The first project is envisaged to include the following main components:

- An ESPON Database **strategy**;
- The **database design**;
- A **test** of the strategy and the design;
- **Implementation** of the ESPON 2013 Database structure;
- **Maintenance, evolution and deliveries**;
- **Evaluation** of the functionality and deliveries.

In addition to the deliveries mentioned above, the following outputs are expected from the project team working on the ESPON 2013 Database during 2008-2011:

- An **Inception report**, based on the approach outlined in the project proposal to be submitted twelve weeks after the Kick-off Meeting. The Inception report consists of two parts. In its content part it should provide a more detailed overview of the approach to be applied, the objectives envisaged, the database design proposed, as well as the work plan until submission of the first interim report. In addition, it should reveal the distribution of work packages among partners. Furthermore, in its financial part - with the completion of the template provided by the Programme - the Inception report should as well detail the breakdown of the project’s budget on the individual partners per budget line. It should be demonstrated by the TPG how the individual work packages are going to be synthesised to produce a coherent project report. The inception report should throughout the lifetime of the project serve as a basis for assessment of project development. Whenever progress reports or interim report(s) are submitted they should be checked in relation to the inception report to see whether progress is being made on the content within the timeframe foreseen.

- Two **Interim reports**, presenting the progress of work on the internal and external parts of the ESPON 2013 Database and the related mapping tools, the integration in the European cooperation on geo-referenced data, etc. The Interim reports shall consist of an executive summary, a presentation of main results achieved so far, and a work plan towards the next report.
- **A Draft final and a Final report**, including all aspects of the evolution of the ESPON 2013 Database provided, as well as a proposal for the further development of the ESPON 2013 Database and data development, as well as ideas for a possible work plan for the period 2011-2014.

Results presented in the second Interim Report and the entire work developed until then will be the basis for the elaboration of the project specification for launching a call for proposal for the continuation of the ESPON 2013 Database project in 2011-2014. For the second phase of the project, further outputs will be expected in a similar rhythm as the one outlined for the first project phase.

All above mentioned reports will have to be delivered both as a printed version via mail directed to the postal address of the ESPON Coordination Unit (CU) as well as digitally by e-mail (or the most adequate media) directed to the ESPON CU (in case the size of the files does not allow for sending by e-mail, the reports can be delivered by upload on the dedicated programme intranet). Deadlines for the submission of the above mentioned reports will be specified in the project specifications as well as in the subsidy contract and will coincide with the deadlines for the submission of progress reports whose approval will allow for the release of the reimbursement of the incurred costs.

## **4.2 Territorial Indicators/Indices and Tools**

### **4.2.1 Objectives**

The configuration of territorial indicators and indices supporting the objective of territorial cohesion will be a major area for improvement in order to meet policy demand. The ESPON 2006 Programme did make some progress in filtering indicators that could be considered core indicators for territorial development. However, more systematic and selective work shall be undertaken with the involvement of policy makers to reach an operational level.

Territorial cohesion as an aim in the Lisbon Treaty for the European Union calls for further scientific and political reflection on synthetic/combined indicators and indices that can inform the policy process related to territorial cohesion.

Indicators used by national territorial observatories shall be considered in the further development of the scientific platform for the ESPON 2013 Programme.

Besides indicators, tools for territorial analysis are necessary for the application and use of data for policy and strategy formulation as well as for planning. This includes a wide range of different analytical tools such as mapping facilities, models and methodologies. Actions will include the further development and update of existing tools, such as the HyperAtlas, the Web-based GIS, the basic methodology for Territorial Impact Assessment as well as the development of new applications such as forecasting models and innovative types of cartographic presentation to further develop the scientific platform.

Addressing more basic research questions, partly from the ESPON 2006 Programme, will also be considered. This may include further progress on definitions and methodologies.

Further development of tools for territorial analysis will reflect demands of particular importance for the achievement of useful actions within Priority 1 and 2.

Tools' development will be targeted to the use of policy makers and practitioners at all administrative levels and will be made widely available via the ESPON website and publications in order for potential users to capitalise on the territorial indicators, indices and tools developed.

#### **4.2.2 Deliveries and outputs expected**

This type of action will include several projects. One project on indicators/indices shall deliver **territorial indicators that are scientifically and politically calibrated**. The territorial indicators need to reflect the policy orientations laid down in relevant documents related to EU Cohesion Policy, such as the coming EC Green Book on Territorial Cohesion and the Territorial Agenda for the European Union.

Related to the concept of territorial cohesion the project is envisaged to result in **one or several indices** that can be used to inform policy makers on the development of the European territory in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion. An **index related to territorial cohesion** shall be developed based on territorial indicators using synthetic/combined indicators and typologies for types of regions and cities.

Other projects will provide new tools for territorial analysis, including models and methodologies that can further support an integrated analytical approach. New methodologies and models supporting Territorial Impact Assessment represent one potential innovation within the ESPON Scientific Platform.

In total, 5-10 projects leading to new tools are envisaged. In addition, some existing tools, such as mapping facilities and models, will be maintained and updated.

Project teams working on this type of actions will be expected to give a presentation of the status-quo of their project at ESPON seminars which will be organised twice a year. In addition, they will be required to **disseminate project results** in the framework of international conferences and seminars, e.g. transnational activities of the ECP Network, events organised by the CU. Dissemination activities must be foreseen in the project proposal and be included in work package number 3 "Dissemination" which implementation should run at least six months after the delivery of the project's final report. However, project teams should consider that their core activity is the development of territorial indicators/indices and tools. The allocation of resources across all work packages shall consequently reflect this aspect. In addition, to ensure the consistency of a project's dissemination activities with respective activities organised at Programme level, the project team should take into consideration the objectives and actions of Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme "Capitalisation, ownership and participation: Capacity building, dialogue and networking", make use of these facilities and opt for complementarity.

In addition to the above, a series of outputs is compulsory for these projects. However, depending on the actual duration of the project, the exact number of outputs will vary. Generally, the following outputs can be considered to be required:

- An **Inception report**, based on the approach outlined in the project proposal, to be submitted twelve weeks after the Kick-off Meeting. The Inception report consists of two parts. In its content part it should provide a more detailed overview of the approach to be applied, the methodology, as well as the main data sources, etc. In addition, it should reveal the distribution of work packages among partners. Furthermore, in its financial part - with the completion of the template provided by the Programme - the Inception

report should as well detail the break down of the project's budget on the individual partners per budget line. It should be demonstrated by the TPG how the individual work packages are going to be synthesised to produce a coherent project report. The inception report should throughout the lifetime of the project serve as a basis for assessment of project development. Whenever progress reports or interim report(s) are submitted they should be checked in relation to the inception report to see whether progress is being made on the content within the timeframe foreseen.

- One or two **Interim report(s)**<sup>1</sup> depending on the project volume and duration, consisting of an executive summary, outline of methodology, presentation of main results achieved so far, and description of further proceeding.
- **Draft final report**, consisting of max. 50 pages (plus an executive summary of max. 10 pages) of the main results, and a presentation of proposals for further actions in this particular field.
- **Final report**, as a revised and improved version of the draft final report on the basis of comments received from the MC and the CU. Please note that the final report of max. 50 pages is considered as the main output of the project.

All above mentioned reports will have to be delivered both, in a printed version via mail directed to the postal address of the ESPON CU as well as digitally by e-mail (or the most adequate media) directed to the ESPON CU (in case the size of the files does not allow for sending by e-mail the reports can be delivered by upload on the dedicated programme intranet). Deadlines for the submission of the above mentioned reports will be specified in the individual project specifications as well as in the subsidy contract and will coincide with the deadlines for the submission of progress reports which approval will allow for the release of the reimbursement of the incurred costs.

## 4.3 Territorial Monitoring System and Reports

### 4.3.1 Objectives

Monitoring territorial dynamics related to European policy and particularly to territorial cohesion is demanded by policy makers. A Territorial Monitoring System for the continuing assessment of territorial structures, development trends, perspectives and policy impacts shall be set up. It shall be able to provide facts related to main territorial challenges such as climate change, ageing, polycentric development etc. as part of current spatial scenarios. Furthermore, it shall inform policy makers how the actual territorial development corresponds/correlates to agreed European policy objectives for territorial cohesion as laid down, inter alia, in the Territorial Agenda for the European Union.

The monitoring system shall rely on the ESPON 2013 Database, use, integrate and eventually further elaborate the territorial indicators and indices developed and present results in an easily accessible way. A targeted use of key territorial indicators shall become reality for a periodical monitoring and reporting of the European territorial development.

The monitoring activity shall further progress on the experience gained and the result of the test phase implemented at the end of the previous programming period. The monitoring shall also target different types of territories including metropolitan urban regions, rural areas and others as stated in the Structural Funds Regulation.

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<sup>1</sup> In case the project should run for a period of less than 12 months, no interim report will be required.

The reporting shall address practitioners and policy makers requiring information on European territorial dynamics which could add this dimension to development considerations in their regions and larger territories. The territorial monitoring shall be presented in reports which will allow the evaluation of territorial effects of trends and policy impacts and support the monitoring of territorial development with respect to policy objectives at European level.

#### **4.3.2 Deliveries and outputs expected**

The project will develop a **concept for a continuous monitoring of the European territory**, focusing on selected structures, trends, perspectives and policy impacts. In this process the necessary supporting indicators will be selected and some new ones will be developed.

The concept for a European Territorial Monitoring will be implemented and result in **periodic reports 2-3 times during the programme implementation period**, conveying the key findings of the monitoring effort and relating these results to key policy orientations adopted for territorial development and cohesion.

The TPG responsible for this action will be expected to give presentations of the status-quo of their project at ESPON seminars which will be organised twice a year. In addition, they will be required to **disseminate project results** in the framework of international conferences and seminars, e.g. transnational activities of the ECP Network, events organised by the CU. Dissemination activities should be foreseen in the project proposal and be included in a specific work package which implementation should run at least six months after the delivery of the project's final report. However, project teams should consider that their core activity is the development of a territorial monitoring system. The allocation of resources across all work packages shall consequently reflect this aspect. In addition, to ensure the consistency of a project's dissemination activities with respective activities organised at Programme level, it would be useful for the project team to refer to the objectives of Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme "Capitalisation, ownership and participation: Capacity building, dialogue and networking".

In addition to the above, the following series of outputs is compulsory:

- An **Inception report**, based on the approach outlined in the project proposal, to be submitted twelve weeks after the Kick-off Meeting. The Inception report consists of two parts. In its content part it should provide a more detailed overview of the research approach to be applied, the methodology and hypothesis for further investigation, as well as the main literature, data sources, etc. In addition, it should reveal the distribution of work packages among partners. Furthermore, in its financial part - with the completion of the template provided by the Programme - the Inception report should as well detail the breakdown of the project's budget on the individual partners per budget line. It should be demonstrated by the TPG how the individual work packages are going to be synthesised to produce a coherent project report. The inception report should throughout the lifetime of the project serve as a basis for assessment of project development. Whenever progress reports or interim report(s) are submitted they should be checked in relation to the inception report to see whether progress is being made on the content within the timeframe foreseen.
- **Interim report(s)**, consisting of an executive summary, outline of methodology, presentation of main results achieved so far, and description of further proceedings.
- **Mid-term report**, including a proposal for the further development of the ESPON Territorial Monitoring System, as well as a proposal for a work plan for the period 2011-2013.

- **Two-three periodic reports**, conveying the key findings of the monitoring effort and relating these results to key policy orientations adopted for territorial development and cohesion.

All above mentioned reports will have to be delivered both, in a printed version via mail directed to the postal address of the ESPON CU as well as digitally by e-mail (or the most adequate media) directed to the ESPON CU (in case the size of the files does not allow for sending by e-mail the reports can be delivered by upload on the dedicated programme intranet). Deadlines for the submission of the above mentioned reports will be specified in the project specifications as well as in the subsidy contract and will coincide with the deadlines for the submission of progress reports which approval will allow for the release of the reimbursement of the incurred costs.

## **4.4 Update of indicators and maps**

### **4.4.1 Objectives**

In order to keep the ESPON knowledge up to date a number of targeted actions updating indicators, maps and corresponding tools, if necessary, will be carried through. In many cases, these actions might be based on urgent demand. Such targeted actions will mainly relate to the maintenance of tools and the urgent update of existing datasets and maps based on new European datasets and information that become available.

European standards (ETRS1989 for data and LAEA for map projections) shall be respected, and made available in electronic format for publication purposes.

The demand for updates will be generated by policy development and the occurrence of new data that makes updates feasible.

### **4.4.2 Deliveries and outputs expected**

Every update of indicators and maps shall be documented in a report presenting the new indicator values as well as an updated European map. In addition, maps showing the changes in the indicator shall be presented accompanied by an analysis/interpretation of the changes occurred.

Annexed to the report the absolute indicator values shall be included broken down to the regional level used.

## **4.5 Operational provisions**

The procedures described in the following chapters (4.5.1-4.5.4) are relevant for the three major projects, “the ESPON 2013 Database”, “Territorial Indicators and Indices” and “Territorial Monitoring and Reports”, that will all be launched with open calls for proposal<sup>2</sup>.

Concerning the other types of actions, every year and for each of the type of action, the MA will propose to the MC an MA-led project which will include the different activities that should be implemented in the course of the reference year. The activities included and described in the different MA-led project will be implemented by the MA as provision of services according to EU and Luxembourg public procurement legislation (see 4.5.4).

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<sup>2</sup> For “Territorial Indicators and Indices” and “Territorial Monitoring and Reports” where the theme and/or nature of the activity make it appropriate and most efficient in obtaining the results envisaged, and whenever the foreseen budget is below €75.000, actions may be contracted as provisions of services and tendered according to Luxembourg public procurement rules

#### **4.5.1 Application procedure for Call for Proposals**

For each thematic issue, project specifications will be compiled responding to the research framework described above.

As soon as the launch of a particular call for proposal will have been decided upon by the Monitoring Committee (MC), a pre-announcement of the call will be issued, providing information on the themes that will be included in the call. The pre-announcement will be widely published by adding it to the ESPON website, in the ESPON newsletter as well as in the Official Journal of the European Commission, C series/S series. At the same time, the Member and Partner States participating in the ESPON 2013 Programme will be informed about the planned call so that the information can be nationally disseminated to potential Lead and Project Partners. The pre-announcement will normally be issued eight weeks prior to the publication of the call for proposal.

The pre-announcement procedure is supposed to facilitate the submission of a proposal at a later stage, by giving interested beneficiaries the chance to prepare on beforehand. The pre-announcement gives an opportunity to incorporate ideas of all partners equally, thus ensuring a high level of commitment to the project. As an additional advantage partners can test how the cooperation works during this preparatory phase before starting implementing actual project activities.

Upon the publication of the call for proposal – via the same channels as the pre-announcement - the respective project specifications will be made available on the website of the ESPON CU ([www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)), outlining the thematic scope of the project, its general objectives, and primary research issues envisaged as well as expected results and a timetable for deliveries.

Calls for proposal will usually be open for two months (40-45 working days). Proposals should be submitted according to the application requirements provided and specified in the accompanying application pack. Standardised application forms will be provided by the ESPON 2013 Programme. Automatic registration of proposals will be ensured.

#### **4.5.2 Selection procedure**

The selection procedure starts immediately after the deadline set for submitting project proposals. It consists of two distinct assessment parts, an eligibility check and an evaluation. The two parts will time-wise run in parallel. The MC will first decide on the eligibility of proposals received before addressing the results of the content related evaluation resulting in a ranking of the best proposals. The MC will select the best eligible proposal according to the ranking resulting from the content related evaluation. The MC takes the final decision on project approval

##### **Eligibility criteria**

Project proposals will be checked against the eligibility criteria in order to ensure that they fulfil the technical requirements of the Programme. The eligibility assessment will be performed by the CU.

The check of the eligibility criteria will be documented by ticking boxes of “yes” or “no”, depending on whether the respective evidence has been provided or not. Each project proposal to be evaluated has to fulfil the following criteria:

<b>ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA</b>
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1. Application has been submitted in due time in original <b>and</b> electronic version <sup>3</sup> .
2. Application is complete and includes the requested administrative forms, supporting documents as well as the anonymous project proposal (the list of supporting documents required will be provided in the specific call), all properly filled in according to the detailed instructions provided in Part A and Part B of the Application Form.
3. The content of the proposal relates to the topic(s) set out in the call.
4. The partnership involves at least the minimum number of participants given in the specific call.
5. All partners are eligible (including that solvency of private partners involved is confirmed by the respective Member States and Partner States)
6. The budget limits have been respected.

In case the CU should detect, during the eligibility check phase, one or more of the following omissions in applications received within the deadline given, which would lead to the application being deemed ineligible, the respective Lead Partner will be informed in written by fax and offered a maximum of **seven working days** (counting from the day following the day of receipt of the fax as documented by the transmission report) to correct the omission(s).

The correctable omissions are the following:

- Missing supporting documents in paper version as requested in the call (two annexes of Application Form Part A – 3.5b (management chart) and 3.6b (financial flow chart) as well as solvency documents – if relevant).
- Missing signature and/or missing stamp on a document.
- Missing supporting documents in electronic version as requested in the call (two annexes of Application Form Part A – 3.5b (management chart) and 3.6b (financial flow chart)).
- Correction of discrepancies in the electronic version of the proposal submitted compared to the paper version sent to the MA (CU) by post, which is considered the valid application in legal terms.

In the first two cases, the listed missing and/or corrected documents, duly signed and stamped, shall be dispatched in original to the CU by registered express delivery within **seven working days** (counting from the day following the day of receipt of the fax as documented by the transmission report). In case of missing electronic versions of supporting documents as well as discrepancies between the electronic and the paper version of the submitted application, the electronic version corresponding to the paper version submitted shall be sent by email to the CU (to the email address indicated in the communication) within **seven**

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<sup>3</sup> You are advised to keep a proof of the submission of the postal version within the set deadline in case no date stamp is placed on the envelope by the postal services. Following the electronic submission you will receive an automatic confirmation that your email has successfully reached the programme mailbox. Should you not get the automatic confirmation mail, please check that the application was sent to the correct address and/or that no other error has occurred in order to avoid any problem with the eligibility of your proposal.

**working days** (counting from the day following the day of receipt of the fax as documented by the transmission report).

Any document delivered after the deadline given will not be considered and the proposal will be deemed not eligible. It is advised to all applicants to keep a proof of the sending of the requested documents within the deadline (e.g. receipt of the post office clearly indicating the sending date).

After completion of the eligibility check, and following the decision of the MC on the final eligibility outcome the evaluation takes place. The Evaluation Committee will be made up of three MC members or experts nominated by the MC and a representative of the European Commission. MC members should be prepared to participate in an Evaluation Committee on a rotating basis.

The Lead Applicants of ineligible applications will receive a notification letter specifying the non-fulfilled eligibility criteria. Only those proposals that will have fulfilled the eligibility criteria will be subject to the subsequent qualitative evaluation.

### **Evaluation criteria**

In parallel with the eligibility check, the evaluation of all project proposals will take place. The Evaluation Committee will be made up of MC members or experts nominated by the MC and representative(s) of the European Commission. MC members should be prepared to participate in an Evaluation Committee on a rotating basis.

The check of compliance with the evaluation criteria is based on a scoring system and results in a ranking list of all project proposals received.

This step in the selection procedure serves to assess the relevance of the proposals regarding the priorities and objectives of the ESPON 2013 Programme and of the specific call to which they respond. It also looks into the impact of each proposed project, i.e. its importance for stakeholders involved in territorial development on EU, national and regional level.

The evaluation will be based on three types of selection criteria:

- Content related criteria, referring to the anonymous scientific part of the proposal;
- Management related criteria, and
- Partnership related criteria.

<b><u>Content Related Criteria</u></b>
1. Sound concept and quality of the objectives and deliveries (e.g. can the objectives be realistically achieved through the proposed approach and methodology?).
2. Quality and effectiveness of scientific methodology and statistical quality (e.g. Does the project consider European standards and initiatives on data related issues?).
3. Contribution to the maintenance, development and expansion of the existing scientific platform and the existing analytical tools resulting from the ESPON 2006 Programme (e.g. does the approach and the results aimed at bring a clear added value compared to other past initiatives?).
4. Contribution to the expected results and impacts of the programme (e.g. to which degree will the results of the action be useful in the context of ESPON applied research actions and in policy development processes?).

5. Intensity of internal and external co-operation (Does the project provide clear linkages to other projects or ESPON activities? Does the project comprehend an exchange and dissemination of experiences and knowledge with other European and national/transnational organisations such as spatial observatories dealing with national and cross-border territories?)
6. Appropriateness of measures for the dissemination of project results (e.g. are they conceived in such a way that the adequate target group can be reached?).

#### **Management Related Criteria**

1. Appropriateness and clarity of the management structure and the plan for project implementation (e.g. is the Lead Partner experienced in project management? Are procedures for decision-making and monitoring transparent? Is the timing for individual work packages and the overall work plan convincing?).
2. Transparency of procedures related to ERDF requirements (e.g. are the required audit procedures, that need to be established, in place and are all project partners aware of them?).
3. Appropriateness of the allocation and justification of the resources (budget and staff) among the different work packages and project partners (e.g. is the break down of budget to partners adequate?).

#### **Partnership Related Criteria**

1. Quality and relevance of the presented competences/expertise and of the transnational project group as a whole (e.g. are the relevant partners involved, contributing the required knowledge and experience and are their specific fields of expertise taken account of?).
2. Quality and relevance of experience of the individual partners (e.g. does the accumulated academic and professional background of the team enable them to deal with the thematic and methodological challenges of the project?).

Each criterion will be awarded a score between 0 – 10. Half marks can be given, too. The scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

0. No evaluation possible: The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1. Unacceptable: The proposal almost fails to address the criterion making it very difficult to judge due to missing or incomplete information.
2. Extremely poor. The criterion is addressed very superficial and highly unsatisfactory manner.
3. Very poor. The criterion is addressed in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner.
4. Poor. Serious inherent weaknesses exist in relation to the criterion.
5. Un-sufficient. Inherent weaknesses exist in relation to the criterion in question, which are too serious for correction.

6. Sufficient. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion; however there are significant points that would need correction.
7. Fair. The criterion is addressed sufficiently; however some points would need correction.
8. Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, although some improvements are still needed.
9. Very good. The criterion is addressed in a convincing way and only minor improvements are needed.
10. Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question without any shortcomings.

Each group of selection criteria has a total number of points. No weighting will be applied. However each criterion should be scored with a value of at least 6. Proposals that fail to achieve this minimum score for a criterion will not be further considered in the selection procedure.

The Evaluation Committee will convene after the closure of the call at the latest. The committee will include an uneven number of evaluators, normally 5 and at least 3. In case of force majeure, like illness and/or transport delays/cancellation, a different number of evaluators can be accepted.

Evaluators will assess and mark the proposals exactly as they are described and presented. The evaluation will follow a two step approach: assessment and scoring of (1) the anonymous content related part and (2) the management and partnership related part. Evaluators will not make assumptions or interpretations about the project in addition to what is in the proposal. Concise and explicit concluding justification will be given for each proposal as well as comments for each score, where relevant for the evaluator. Evaluation forms without concluding comments will be deemed inadmissible. Equally, evaluation forms carrying handwritten corrections of scoring are declared inadmissible if they are not accompanied by handwritten initials. Recommendations for improvements to be discussed as part of a possible contracting will be given, if needed.

Once all the members of the Evaluation Committee have completed their individual assessments, the evaluation proceeds to a consensus discussion, supposed to represent the common views of the evaluators. The consensus discussion, which also includes a ranking of proposals, is moderated by the CU who also writes a consensus report containing recommendations for improvements of proposals suggested by the Evaluation Committee. Consensus reports with hand-written corrections of scoring will be declared inadmissible.

Provided that several proposals receive an equal aggregate score, other factors might as well be taken into account by the Evaluation Committee:

- A reasonable geographical distribution of project partners.
- A reasonable involvement of partners from Member States having entered the EU after 1 January 2004.

The CU is responsible for a final editing of the evaluation report for each project specification included in the call. The main objectives of this process are:

- To ensure a sufficient compilation of arguments voiced pro and con the individual proposals evaluated.
- To review cases where a majority/minority view was recorded in the consensus report.

- To clearly reflect the ranking of the majority of evaluators in the consensus report and in the case of equal scoring of several proposals explain the considerations made regarding the additional factors mentioned above, that led to the final ranking.

Taking into account the importance of the TPG's managerial capabilities for the correct project implementation, the Managing Authority (MA) will, through the CU, separately assess the "Management Related Criteria" of the submitted proposals. Should the result of this separate and independent assessment be different from or add to the one obtained by the Evaluation Committee, the recommendations of the CU to the MC will take this opinion of the MA into account.

By signing confidentiality agreements (using no-conflict-of-interest forms) members of the Evaluation Committee guarantee their independence and impartiality during the assessment as well as that the privacy and confidentiality of all proposals will be kept. Declarations of no-conflict-of-interest with negligence mistakes are declared inadmissible. The content of the proposals should not be published or forwarded to persons or institutions which are not directly engaged in the evaluation or decision making. The project idea itself, as well as the description and concept of the project and the structure of the application, remain the property of the project applicant.

### **Decision making**

As indicated in the previous section, the decisions on approved projects will be made by the MC of the ESPON 2013 Programme, based on the results of the eligibility and evaluation processes. For each theme, the MC will approve the best eligible proposal confirming the ranking of the content related evaluation (only one proposal will be approved for each of the theme).

This decision will be notified to all Lead Applicants soon after the MC decision. All the Lead Partners of the approved projects will receive a letter from the MA (CU) stating the decision of the MC as well as the total ERDF, EU Member States' and eventually Partner States' national funds approved. The MC decision may include certain conditions, recommendations and/or suggestions for improvements. In this case, the process of contracting, managed by the CU, will include a necessary revision/amendment of the project proposal. The result of this procedure will be the basis for concluding a Subsidy Contract.

All the Lead Applicants of the ineligible or non-approved proposals will receive a notification letter with a brief summary of the assessment results. In case Lead Partners of ineligible or non-approved proposals are not satisfied with the decision of the MC, they may put forward an appeal (for more details on the appeal procedure, please refer to chapter 8.12 of the Programme Manual).

### **4.5.3 Contract and duration**

The proposals that are selected for funding and that fulfil the conditions set by the MC will receive a Subsidy Contract, closed between the MA and the respective Lead Partner of the project. The Subsidy Contract shall determine the rights and responsibilities of the Lead Partner and the MA, the scope of activities to be carried out, terms of funding, requirements for reporting and financial controls, etc.

A model of the Subsidy Contract is available on the Programme website ([www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)).

#### **4.5.4 Budget**

TPGs conducting a project under Priority 3 will be granted a subsidy covering 100% of the real eligible costs incurred for carrying out the project approved. Funding will be made available by the ERDF, the national co-financing will be ensured by EU Member States at programme level and, eventually, by Partner States. Each call will indicate the maximum budget available related to individual project specifications included in the call.

Main individual actions, for Territorial Indicators/Indices and Tools and Territorial Monitoring Systems and Reports which budgets do not exceed €75.000, will normally be contracted as provision of services and tendered according to EU and Luxembourg Public Procurement Rules. For each individual project terms of references will be issued and a tendering procedure carried through.

For minor actions under Territorial Indicators/Indices and Tools and Targeted Actions for Update of Indicators and Maps, every year and for each of the type of actions, the MA will propose to the MC an MA-led project which will include the different activities that should be implemented in the course of the reference year. The activities included and described in the different MA-led project will be implemented by the MA as provision of services according to EU and Luxembourg public procurement legislation