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In case of interest, you are invited to download the full tendering documentation from the *Portail des marches publics* and submit your tender via the same platform.

## **Call for tenders**

### **Terms of reference**

#### **ESPON European Research Project**

#### **“Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas [CROSSGOV]”**

### **Extract from the Terms of reference**

**ESPON EGTC**

15 March 2024.

Implementation Framework: The Single Operation within the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme implemented by the ESPON EGTC. The ESPON 2030 Monitoring Committee approved the Single Operation on 26 September 2022. The Single Operation is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund via the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme.

## Key Information on the Procurement

<b>Title</b>	Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas: drivers, challenges, opportunities and integration [CROSSGOV]
<b>Procedure</b>	EU Open
<b>Contracting authority</b>	ESPON EGTC 11, Avenue John F. Kennedy L-1855 Luxembourg Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
<b>Type of contract</b>	Service contract
<b>Duration</b>	21 months (18 months for contract implementation + 3 months for administrative closure)
<b>Maximum available budget</b>	EUR 800.000,00 (excluding VAT)
<b>Place of delivery</b>	Luxembourg
<b>Lots</b>	This tender is not divided into lots
<b>Variants</b>	Not permitted
<b>Market access</b>	Participation in this tender is open to all economic operators established in the European Union, the European Economic Area and third countries signatories to international agreements in the field of public procurement by which the EU is bound
<b>Tender submission method</b>	Electronic submission via the Luxembourg Public Procurement Portal ( <a href="http://www.pmp.lu">www.pmp.lu</a> )
<b>Deadline for sending requests for information</b> And/or reporting errors, omissions, ambiguities, or discrepancies	08 April 2024 at 10h59 CET
<b>Deadline for submission of tenders</b>	<b>15 April 2024 at 11h00 CET</b>

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## 1 What is to be done? (Purpose of the contract)

The ESPON EGTC (Contracting Authority) is launching an open call for tenders to further enhance ESPON's stock of research and provide new European territorial evidence in the framework of the [ESPON 2030 Programme](#). The call for tenders will result in a European research project being implemented within the framework of the [Thematic Action Plan: Living, working and travelling across borders](#).

The aim of this European Research Project is to deliver high quality research on the topic of cross-border functional areas, contributing to the development of the concept and of the associated policy framework, as an instrument for effective and efficient territorial governance across borders regions. The project shall encompass **the entire ESPON programme area, including internal and external borders**.

### 1.1 Context

Cross-border regions reflect both national identity and regional diversity. These areas serve as vibrant cultural hubs, forged through collaborative efforts and (continuous) cultural interchange. As a result, they emerge not as mere peripheries but as thriving laboratories for European integration and territorial unity ([MOT and BBSR, 2019](#)). These regions foster innovation and collaboration, are marked by intertwined dependencies that shape both territories and communities. Yet, their development is governed by the complexities of divergent national laws and local nuances, making them arenas of diverse interactions. Recognizing the unique dynamics at play, cohesion policy endeavours to tackle the economic and social development hurdles stemming from administrative disparities in border regions. ([ESPON, 2021](#))

In pursuit of the borderless Europe envisioned in EU strategies and documents, enduring collaborations among Member States and/or border regions have materialized into actionable initiatives. Moreover, as part of the European integration and the establishment of the Single Market, interactions and exchanges within EU internal and external border regions have surged, facilitated by streamlined procedures that diminish formalities, time, and expenses. In the preparatory study for the [17<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Council of Europe of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning \(2017\)](#), cross-border cooperation areas were identified as 1 of the 20 types of functional areas. This marked a pivotal moment for cross-border regions, as highlighted by the [EC communication](#) emphasizing a fresh approach to their future and their paramount role in [territorial development](#). The cross-border integration and socio-economic convergence has been supported by different tools ranging from economic ones (e.g. the single market, Interreg programs), institutional ones (e.g. EGTCs, Eurodistricts), to functional ones, aiming to solve obstacles linked to sectoral policies (e.g. efficient provision of cross-border public services). However, a recurring theme across studies is the need for effective governance mechanisms. While progresses have been made in this direction, including the recommendations to the Commission on amending proposed mechanisms to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context<sup>1</sup> and advocating for a bottom-up multi-level governance approach, there are still research gaps and paths to be explored in this realm. Moreso in a context where *border regions usually face a combination of legal and administrative obstacles and the administrative reality differs across the EU, requiring more than a 'one size fits all' approach in order to resolve the current obstacles*<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, it should be noted that, for cross-border regions, the obstacles and challenges are not only legal and administrative nature, but also cover economic, political, cultural, cognitive, and even interpersonal aspects<sup>3</sup>.

On top of current and daily challenges, the effects of recent crises have been deeply felt within the border regions. First Brexit has impacted on cross border arrangements across the EU. The Covid-19 pandemic,

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<sup>1</sup> Work that began in 2018, with the most recent *Amended proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context* (2023) (all details can be accessed on the [legislative train schedule](#)); including the EPRS study on the [European added value assessment](#);

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740233/EPRS\\_STU\(2023\)740233\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740233/EPRS_STU(2023)740233_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/manual-on-removing-obstacles-to-cross-border-cooperation.pdf>

brought some new, unusual, situations: the rapid spread of the virus compelled decision-makers to enact drastic and stringent emergency responses, directly impacting border regions by severely limiting or halting exchanges altogether. This crisis unveiled a new reality, abruptly bringing forward some of the restrictions and limitations that border regions have long sought to overcome. For residents of certain EU cross-border regions, like those in the Nordic countries, the situation was unprecedented, as borders had remained open for the past five decades. The analysis<sup>4</sup> on the disproportionately effects of border closures highlights the urgent need for a new governance approach<sup>5</sup>, viewing borders not merely as lines but as intricate zones of interaction (MOT, 2021). Future policies must adopt a comprehensive 360-degree perspective, emphasizing shared accountability among local, national, and European institutions toward border communities. This approach necessitates horizontal, vertical, and diagonal coordination, blending voluntary cooperation with formal collaboration.

Secondly, the war in Ukraine has caused additional changes for European external cross-border regions, spanning economic, humanitarian, security, political, and social dimensions. Cooperation initiatives in Eastern European cross-border regions were halted, as the conflict disrupted trade routes and economic ties, impacting businesses and industries in cross-border regions. The influx of refugees fleeing the conflict zones has strained resources and infrastructure in neighbouring European countries. The war has raised security concerns in European cross-border regions near the conflict zone, leading to increased border security measures and heightened vigilance against potential spillover effects. And not lastly, the war has affected cultural and social ties between communities on both sides of the border, leading to shifts in perceptions, attitudes, and interactions among residents of cross-border regions. Overall, the combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war has created a complex and challenging environment, putting an enhanced pressure on the infrastructure and service provision in European cross-border regions.

Thus, in this context, we can assume that working on cross-border functional areas can serve as a potential efficient instrument, through which further reduction of cross-border obstacles can be achieved, along with easing flows of people, goods, materials and knowledge. And although different types of cooperation models have created/ mapped different types of cross-border functional areas, these remain inadequately understood in their practical daily operations by both public and private entities. Furthermore, integration for cross-border regions encompasses both dimensions of interaction and convergence, with divergent processes occurring across different types of territories. This yields two primary dimensions of integration: (I) first, the existence of interactions between territories based on flows and barriers; (II) second, the convergence of spatial characteristics driven by both homogeneity and discontinuities.

In order to take territorial governance models into account, policies need to embrace a fuller scope of functionalities permeating through the national borders. The spatial integration process is not limited to the economic sphere but capitalises also on other flows and interrelations (cultural, political, migratory, etc.). While economic development differences frequently serve as catalysts for cross-border integration, additional dynamic factors can contribute to territorial cohesion by mitigating border effects. Apart from the free movement of goods, of capital, of persons and from the freedom to establish and provide services as the four fundamental rights for borderless Europe, also several natural, institutional and market forces tend to trigger the flows. Another aspect to be taken into account is the importance of historical ties and common identity as an agent for spatial interaction or the policy framework processes that may drive the development of such functional areas. ([ESPON NO STAGEO, 2022](#))

When addressing this challenge from a political perspective, the question is how to bring the assets of each side of the border together in a complementary way: which economic sectors, which labour force

<sup>4</sup>[Analysis of the impact of border-related measures taken by Member States in the fight against Covid-19](#), follow-up study of [The effects of COVID-19, induced border closures on cross-border regions - An empirical report covering the period March to June 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> The analysis uses a framework to better highlight the degree of cross-border integration: *economic, functional, institutional, informational, cultural and interpersonal*; here, specifically the functional aspects is linked directly to public service provision.

qualifications, and which territorial assets (cultural, environmental, etc.) can be combined in a smart way in order to enhance wealth and quality of life. Cross-border integration cannot be understood without taking into account governance, and while governance focuses on the institutional aspect, it goes beyond the notion of government and explores power relations in a multi-level system and links up with territorial issues. Not differently to any governance setting in any regional development framework, the efficiency, effectiveness, and the democratic involvement of all key actors including civil society are the challenging aims also for cross-border regions. ([ESPON METROBORDER, 2010](#)).

## 1.2 Objective

The aim of the European research project is to offer **a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of cross-border functional areas**, including on the policy implications, across the ESPON space. As globalization and regional integration continue to reshape socio-economic landscapes, understanding the dynamics of functional areas becomes crucial for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners alike. Consequently, the project aims to support the proposals formulated in the [CoR Resolution on a vision for Europe: The Future of Cross-border Cooperation \(2021\)](#), calling (1) *on the European Union, in cooperation with its Member States and local and regional authorities, to promote the development of **functional living areas** in land and maritime cross border areas of the Union and neighbouring countries, including in outermost regions, and consequently focus its future funding opportunities and policies on those areas; and (2) to take the cross-border phenomenon into account based on a cross-cutting approach when drawing up its policies*. Additionally, it could effectively contribute (3) *to the systematic gathering of statistical data on life in cross-border areas, mapping out cross-border flows and interdependencies in all relevant policy areas and public life, in order to provide concrete evidence for future policy-making*, making use of existing and new evidence produced during the project lifetime. Additionally, the project could support future policy and decision making processes, and the work to be done after adopting *the (functional) cross-border regions*, provision within the [Revision of the Schengen Code](#), with the aim to *limit the impact of internal border checks on border regions - facilitating crossings for cross-border workers and establishing green lanes to guarantee the smooth transit of essential good*<sup>6</sup>.

Therefore, in this European research project, that will be investigating both the status-quo and the potential of the functional cross-border integration, the following steps are required: (I) **investigate in-depth the concept of a functional cross-border area and its relation to territorial governance mechanisms**, taking into consideration / synthesizing key theoretical frameworks, and results of empirical studies, and (II) conduct a **detailed territorial analysis** by looking at the spatial, economic, social, cultural, and multi-level governance dimensions of functional cross-border areas.

Given the diversity of borders, of geographical/territorial and of national contexts (scale, decentralisation level and competences, for instance), cross border territorial governance models could be built on the bottom-up, specific, approaches, fostering multi-level cooperation. Within this context it is, therefore, important to understand the drivers, obstacles / bottlenecks, as well as opportunities and development trends determining the origin and evolution of such new functional territories and, also, to look at the applicable territorial governance mechanisms.

Navigating the complex and rich, policy and research setting, this European Research Project should be bringing new insights and integrated overviews, bearing the ESPON mark, with new territorial evidence aimed to enhance understanding, define key features of the functional cross-border areas and provide actionable insights that can inform policy development, decision-making, and collaborative initiatives within these territories. This will require an increasing focus on a territorial and futures-orientated approach to policy design which recognises that cross-border regions are to be governed in a multi-scalar

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/carriage/revision-of-the-schengen-borders-code/report?sid=7601>

processes that require vertical and horizontal coordination. More so, for the concept to be useful in guiding policy actions for territorial development at a pan-European scale, a comprehensive, common understanding is required, which recognising the diverse potentials and challenges for different types of border regions, from urban to rural, from land to maritime, from central to remote, etc. As such, the project should support EU, national, regional policies in answering the following **key policy questions**:

- Building on a territorial sensitive approach and responding to the variety of territorial cross border typologies (mountain, river, maritime border areas) how to define cross-border functional areas in a way that common definition(s) (at the European level) correspond(s) to actual policy processes contributing to cross border integration, addressing measures to improve citizens' daily lives? How to calibrate the theoretical definitions with the actual realities of functional cross-border areas that people live/work in?
- Which methodologies should be used to define and monitor the development of the different cross-border functional areas, given both the available accumulated territorial evidence, the variety of policy practices and the lack of harmonised/appropriate, territorial, datasets?
- What are the main challenges and drivers fostering the development of cross border functional areas, at the European level? What types of persistent obstacles / bottlenecks can be mapped out and that hamper the effective governance of cross border functional areas? Are there any untapped opportunities, originating from the local levels and interactions?
- What governance structures are in place and how to capitalise on the great potentials of different cross border type of regions taking into account their institutional and territorial specificities and ensure their sustainability? How to take into account/or how to reflect the evolution of cross border interaction and dynamics in functional areas into in the governance structures/mechanism (e.g. lessons learnt after the Covid pandemic)? How to ensure vertical and horizontal policy coherence to plan and manage the different categories of cross border functional areas?

### 1.3 Description of tasks

In pursuit of the objective and policy questions described above, the following tasks shall be carried out within the framework of this European research project. The tasks listed below act as an overall framework foreseen for the delivery of the projective objective and policy questions but can be broken down into sub-tasks or reorganised as the tenderer deems appropriate, consistent with their preferred methodological approach. Nonetheless, it is suggested that **the tasks listed are not to be viewed in a linear way, but one feeding the other, being implemented in parallel and allowing for an iterative process and improving the final results.**

Tenderers are requested to describe how they intend to undertake these tasks and **the technical offer should include a detailed methodological and conceptual approach that would be applied.** This framework may be further refined and elaborated shortly after the project has been kicked off, but the main concepts and research strategy have to be clearly defined in the technical offer. Tenderers are strongly encouraged to include **innovative or exploratory proposals** which could help distinguish their technical offer and show how it provides a unique contribution to the existing knowledge base. Explanations should be given on how the project will benefit from the existing research, avoid overlaps and **provide clear-added value for policymaking as well as in the academic field.**

Tenderers are requested to describe their foreseen organisation and planning, detailing the proposed deliveries and how each task interacts and explaining how the necessary resources shall be broken down between the different tasks.



### 1.3.1 Task 1: Comprehensive approach to the concept of functional areas and multi-level governance in the cross-border context

**Develop a comprehensive approach to the concept of functional areas in a cross-border context, addressing the territorial specificities; develop a comparative analysis of territorial governance systems in cross-border regions (compendium)**

Eurostat's methodological work on [European harmonised Labour Market Areas \(2020\)](#) promotes functional area as an economically integrated spatial unit, within which residents can find jobs within a reasonable commuting distance or can change their employment without changing their place of residence. All in all, different types of functional areas may be identified across ESPON space, serving the purpose of having a better place-based policy design, delivery and evaluation, while being based on relevant statistical evidence. ([ESPON NO STAGEO, 2022](#)) Put in the context of cross-border territories, a functional area goes beyond these interactions and refers to a geographical region that extends across national borders and is characterized by a high degree of functional integration and interdependence. Unlike traditional administrative or political boundaries, which may create barriers to cooperation, functional cross-border areas are to be defined by the practical interactions, shared activities that occur within them and the pursuit of common goals.

At the moment when these terms of reference are elaborated, the discussions on cross-border territories revolve around enhancing the understanding as to what the concept of 'functional area' actually means, linking it to adequate governance mechanisms. What is missing out there is the **comprehensive European overview, that accounts for the different typologies of cross-border regions**. This is a critical issue: from clearly defining it to applying the notion on the cross-border territories and realities, and turning the discourse towards material-institutional practices, and thus successfully contributing to the implementation of EU's cohesion policy. In the absence of a clear understanding, of an integrated / common (yet layered) approach to the notion of functional cross-border area, mismatches between institutional and functional mechanisms are at risk of deepening.

The aim of this task is, therefore, to develop a **comprehensive approach to the concept of functional territories in a cross-border context**, across the ESPON space, addressing the territorial specificities and the different dimensions of the functional interactions. This should provide an integrated /common understanding for the practical incorporation of the concept into territorial governance policymaking and mechanisms at regional and local scale, with applicability at European level. This should commence with a comprehensive literature review and bibliometric analysis of the concept, including academic literature, theory and how the concept is being applied and interpreted across ESPON space, national and regional policy discourses, doubled by comparative analysis of territorial governance systems in cross-border regions. Theoretical foundations of functional areas, are drawing on concepts from geography, socio-economics, and regional studies. It examines how functional areas transcend political boundaries and operate based on functional connections, such as economic interactions, transportation networks, and cultural ties. Theoretical frameworks, including polycentrism and the functional region concept, are to be discussed to elucidate the complexities of cross-border functional areas.

While cross-border observation is addressed effectively at local level or national level, at the European level there is a growing need to develop specific, harmonised/integrated datasets for cross-border territories. Here, we identify a niche for ESPON research, bridging the extensive work done at the local level, and the need for the European perspective, building on existing research and filling in the gaps, with the relevant and up-to-date evidence, collected at the right territorial level. Hence, the methodology should indicate which datasets can be used to capture cross-border specificities at the right territorial level. Understanding the cross border functional areas will require better knowledge of cross border flows, all put in a context of green and smart transition (with a look at mobility regulation, rise of teleworking, digital public services, for instance), assessing the degree of interdependence among



different parts of the region and correlating regional and national, policy objectives vis-à-vis cross-border living and working.

Following the wide path for developing a comprehensive approach to the concepts described above, some milestones should be checked, such as adapting theory and grey literature results and conclusions to the cross-border realities; this should be done consequently by involving the widest range of representative stakeholders possible, including through Futuring Workshops (see Task 3). It is for the tenderer, based on their specific understanding of the tasks and services to be carried out, to set out in their technical proposal the theoretical matrix and precise methodology that they tend to apply for completing this task, and the most innovative proposals will be most positively evaluated as per the award criteria described in [Section 4.5](#). However, some key considerations should, in order to arrive at a normative conceptual framework with practical applicability, by:

- Starting for a territorial perspective (urban, rural, or mountain, river, land, maritime borders, etc.), addressing the different border typologies through the **conceptualisation of functional cross-border area** and building a framework that embraces a multidimensional perspective (from socio-economic to political, for example) where the objective of territorial governance is to be more flexible, responsive and to adapt to different cross border realities.
- Addressing the right scale (local, regional or supra-regional<sup>7</sup>) of the cross-border integration and convergence through relevant evidence: **define a set of multidimensional indicators** (quantitative and qualitative, for a broad range of ecological-social-economic-political indices) in order to measure and monitor the real interactions within functional areas, given the multi-scalar dimensions of what a functional cross-border area could be. This will require a detailed analysis of the available data at the relevant territorial scale (minimum NUTS 3, preferably LAU), identifying what is available, what is missing and detailing a tenderer's strategy towards overcoming any data gaps.
- **Carrying extensive work to cover missing data/evidence, both in terms of coverage and in identifying the right (new) sources from which these could be collected from.** This could be done by either up-scaling existing practices, either by piloting different solutions, tailored to specific needs or territories.

Given the complexity of the topic, the service provider is expected to work closely with the ESPON EGTC, informing on the progress or challenges encountered, as well as validate the main findings through a consultation process with key European institutions (e.g. the Eurostat, JRC, DG Regio, cross-border networks and stakeholders, etc.), and national, regional and local stakeholders.

**[For the expected outcomes of the task](#) (listed below), the tenderer shall provide details on the nature and format of this delivery already in the tender:**

- 1 **Report** on the validated, comprehensive, approach to the concepts of cross border functional areas and of multi-level governance mechanisms, accompanied with interactive visualisations like maps, dashboards, infographics (as agreed at a later stage with the ESPON EGTC);
- 2 **The framework for the specific database for the analysis**, indicating the variables/indicators and their (public or private) sources where these could be gathered from.
- 3 **A short project description** to be uploaded on the project page on the ESPON website, accompanied by (easy-to-understand) infographic depicting the conceptual approach (details to be agreed at a later stage with the ESPON EGTC).

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<sup>7</sup> As distinguished, for example, in the Critical Dictionary on Borders, [Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration, page 47](#) or in [Territorial cooperation in Europe – A historical perspective” \(DG Regio, 2015\)](#)

**It is important to note that the project could benefit from complementarities with on-going research/ initiatives:** as there have been a number of recent attempts, within different projects, studies and initiatives to define the concept of functional territories in a cross-border context, building on different perspectives. The following list presents some references that may be useful for tenderers, without being exhaustive.

- From a theoretical perspective, a first attempt to define and conceptualize the notion of the cross-border functional area (CBFA)<sup>8</sup> was made in an article published in 2022, where the authors use a *four-level model, taking into account criteria such as proximity to the border, cross-border functional linkages and/or shared potentials and challenges, intensity of cross-border cooperation, and cross-border formal governance structures*. This model served as a basis [for the experimentation conducted by Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière \(MOT\)](#), within the territorial brainstorming sessions for five pilot sites. The aim of this process is to define what a functional living area (*bassin de vie*) refers both in practice and in theory (the project is ongoing and expected to end early 2024).
- The piloting of the EUROSTAT Working Group work on cross-border cities and FUAs: within a 2-year mandate (2021 to 2023) the sub-group developed and applied a harmonized methodology regarding the cross-border cities starting from the FUA definition. They tested this on 11 border cities, taking into consideration only land borders.<sup>9</sup>
- [Building More Resilient Cross-border Regions project - Multi-level Governance and Co-developed Strategic Regional Development](#) (2023 -2024): OECD is working with five EU cross-border regions to undertake a collaborative, knowledge sharing and dialogue-based process to enhance cross-border cooperation and co-development of policies and public services to achieve common development objectives. Main activities: (1) develop a tailor-made blueprint, which will present an analysis of the situation of the cross-border region and provide an action plan and toolkit to improve its cross-border governance; (2) develop one tool that will present the main areas of attention for non-pilot cross-border regions willing to improve their cross-border governance, including multi-level governance and co-development approaches; (3) hold two knowledge-sharing events, which will gather the pilot regions to share their experiences in cross-border co-operation and co-development.<sup>10</sup>
- [DG Regio project on Cross-Border labour market analysis](#) (2023-2024): the aim of the project is to formulate future guidelines for cross-border labour market analysis and data collection based on the current experiences and to support policy making, thereby strengthening integration and territorial cohesion in cross-border regions.

**Building on past research**, looking at flagship projects such as:

- [Where the borders lie: mapping cross-border communities in ten Western European countries](#) (2023)<sup>11</sup> - research that highlighted the vital importance of understanding the spatial structure of social and economical interactions at regional scale, as one cannot expect the borders of 'real'

<sup>8</sup> Jakubowski, Andrzej & Skibińska, Karolina & Studzieniecki, Tomasz & Skibiński, Jakub. (2022). Identifying cross-border functional areas: conceptual background and empirical findings from Polish borderlands. *European Planning Studies*. 30. 2433-2455. 10.1080/09654313.2021.1958760.

<sup>9</sup> The definition of the Cross-border cities (CB cities) uses the harmonised city definition based on high density clusters specified in the NUTS-Regulation: where 50% of population lives in the cross-border high-density cells of the cross-border LAUs and commuting zones LAUs surrounding a city are characterised by at least 15 % of their employed population commuting to work in the city. As seen in the EuRegions 2023 session <https://regions-and-cities.europa.eu/programme/2023/sessions/1393>

<sup>10</sup> Where co-development is to be understood as cross-border financial solidarity, as it exists for instance between Switzerland, France and Germany within Basel and Geneva agglomerations, due to the Swiss "agglomeration policy" (<https://www.are.admin.ch/are/fr/home/mobilite/programmes-et-projets/pta/4g.html> or <https://crfginfo.org/que-faisons-nous/compensation-financiere-genevoise>)

<sup>11</sup> Sallard, Aurore & Hublet, François. (2023). Where the borders lie: mapping cross-border communities in ten Western European countries. 10.13140/RG.2.2.35117.46568.

communities to coincide with administrative boundaries. In an effort towards closing this knowledge gap, this paper presented the first large-scale quantitative analysis of cross-border communities in Western Europe.

- [Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration](#)<sup>12</sup> - *the first encyclopaedia which combines two so far not well interconnected interdisciplinary research fields, i.e. Border Studies and European Studies. Organised in an alphabetical order, it contains 207 articles written by 115 authors from different countries and scientific disciplines which are accompanied by 58 maps. The articles deal with theory, terminology, concepts, actors, themes and spaces of neighbourhood relations at European borders and in borderlands of and around the European Union (EU).*
- [A socio-economic typology on cross-border regions at European scale \(2000-2012\) - Key findings](#)<sup>13</sup> – which aimed to analysing the cross-border areas of the European Union, using the concepts of socio-economic complementarity and mobility potential, while dealing with some methodological issues: how to characterise cross-border regions? How to measure multicriteria territorial discontinuities? How to specify their evolution across time? How to assess the degree of accessibility between cross-border regions?
- [The ESPON Cross-border Public Services \(CPS 2.0, 2022\)](#): which addressed joint problems or development potentials of cross-border regions in the public service provision. Being provided on a long-term basis they aim to generate benefits for the general public or a specific target group in the cross-border territory in which the service is provided, thereby contributing to improving living conditions in border regions. The ESPON CPS 2.0 study focuses on an upgrade and update of the CPS inventory produced within the [ESPON targeted analysis](#) in 2018. Establishing a solid inventory is aimed at making this Pan-European territorial evidence easily available for public authorities and other (public or private) stakeholders.
- [The ESPON METROBORDER project: Cross-Border Polycentric Metropolitan Regions \(2010\)](#), which addressed cross-border metropolitan regions in Europe in relation to the policy aim of polycentric development. It aimed at identifying criteria, potentials and governance practices based on available ESPON evidence for polycentric cross-border metropolitan regions in Europe and proposing options for development strategies towards a multilevel approach for two case study regions (Upper Rhine Region and the Greater Region).
- [The ESPON FUORE project Functional Urban Areas and Regions in Europe \(2020\)](#), aimed to benchmark and analyse data on the current situation and recent trends in functional urban areas and other functional regions in Europe, via a web tool (that provided a range of analysis functionalities). In order to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the policy making and implementation process regarding functional urban areas and other functional regions, it is essential to have data, indicators and analysis tools that can help to better understand the drivers for growth and inclusive social development in these areas across Europe. By now significant data gaps exist to be able to understand their contribution to polycentric and balanced territorial development. This project aimed to fill the existing data gaps, complement the work of Eurostat, OECD and DG Joint Research Center in this field and facilitate policy debates at various levels, for instance within Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Sustainable Use of Land.

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<sup>12</sup> Wassenberg, B., Reitel, B. (2020). *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*. Bruxelles, Belgium: Peter Lang Verlag. Retrieved Jan 24, 2024, from 10.3726/b15774

<sup>13</sup> Ronan Ysebaert, Marianne Guérois, Matthieu Viry, Timothée Giraud, Nicolas Lambert, et al.. A socioeconomic typology on cross-border regions at European scale (2000-2012) - Key findings. [Rapport de recherche] RIATE - Réseau interdisciplinaire pour l'Aménagement et la Cohésion des Territoires de l'Europe et de ses voisinages CNRS - CGET - Université Paris Diderot. 2016.  
ffhal-03593730: <https://hal.science/hal-03593730/document>

- [The ESPON TIA CBC - Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation](#) (2019) – which provided an overview of existing ex-post and ex-ante territorial impact assessment methodologies and the way these methodologies can be applied to evaluate ex-post impact of the CBC programmes on territorial development of border regions; brought new evidence (collected data, maps and a set of indicators) on the ex-post territorial impact of 5 CBC programmes.
- [The ESPON Big Data and Housing - Data and maps update](#) (2022) – updated the methodological framework and a selection of the Big Data and Housing indicators, mainly in relation to cross-border housing markets dynamics. As a follow-up on the case study for Geneva, this was applied for five additional cases to investigate in more detail cross-border housing markets. The main outcome of the project was to assess potential benefits in cross-border cooperation on housing issues in order to reduce negative border effects so as to improve access to housing and the quality of life for border residents.
- [The ESPON BusDev project Business Development Opportunities at External EU Borders](#) (2021) - addressed opportunities and challenges of territories at the EU external land borders. Development strategies at EU external border regions need to be built on multi-level governance, place-based and coordinated sectoral policy approaches and territorial cohesion principles. Business support policies should be aimed at mitigating the outlying and restrictive conditions by building and strengthening regional assets. The external land border regions need special attention from national governments as well as EU Cohesion policy as geographically specific areas.

### 1.3.2 Task 2: Pan-European atlas of cross border functional areas

#### **Cross-border atlas: territorial analysis of socio-economic convergence, potential and integration across cross-border regions, for the ESPON space**

**Sub-task 2.1.: Collect a core set of territorial indicators related to functional territories, with a pan-European coverage, indicating both traditional and new sources relevant for cross-border territories (administrative, microdata, big data, open street map, etc.) reflecting both the status and the potential of the socio-economic integration and the degree of interactions between the territories.**

In order to develop a detailed understanding of the functional connections, interdependencies, and collaborative activities that shape these regions, evidence must be brought forward. And while this evidence is (one way or another) collected at local, regional or national level (for example: **in Germany: [Spatial monitoring Germany and neighbouring regions](#) or [BBSR dashboard](#)**; **in Hungary: the work done by [CESCI](#)**; **or for Luxembourg-Germany-Belgium-France cross-border area: [GR-Atlas - Atlas of the Greater Region SaarLorLux](#)**) efforts for harmonising or integrating these sources are still to be made (inspiration can be drawn from the [ESPON CPS 2.0](#), in this sense).

Thus, the key aim of this sub-task is to create a unique pan-European database, comprised of various, comparable, indicators at subnational scale, build on the conceptual framework developed in [Task 1](#). Subsequently, these indicators will be used to map the functional areas (with the different dimensions/layers) and will complement the territorial analysis, displayed as a practical and workable analytical tool (atlas, [see next sub-task](#)). This shall help identify the typologies of functional cross-border areas and examine the different dynamics/interdependencies, and to identify the most relevant points of policy intervention to support the design of more effective governance mechanisms.

The indicators could address the following dimensions in the territorial analysis, not limiting to these:

- examine economic dynamics: analyse the economic activities within the cross-border area, including trade patterns, industrial sectors, and employment trends; assess the distribution of economic activities and the presence of polycentrism within the region.
- explore social and cultural dimensions: investigate the social and cultural aspects that contribute to the identity of the cross-border territories; identify common cultural practices, languages, and social dynamics that foster cohesion and collaboration (from a dual perspective of cross border networks of persons and institutions, for example<sup>14</sup>).
- understand environmental considerations: examine environmental factors relevant to the cross-border area, such as shared ecosystems, natural resources, and environmental challenges; assess the need for collaborative efforts to address environmental sustainability.
- measure accessibility and mobility, including different dimensions of flows.
- identify policy and regulatory frameworks: review national and European policies, regulations, and agreements that may impact cross-border cooperation; identify legal or regulatory barriers to integration and collaboration within the functional cross-border territories.
- assess the institutional cooperation and the impact of cross-border cooperation programs and of public investments on reducing disparities, going beyond INTERREG programs.
- develop the multi-level governance dimensions and assess governance structures: evaluate the existing governance structures within the functional cross-border territories, including institutional frameworks, bilateral treaties, agreements, and mechanisms for coordination; identify strengths and weaknesses in governance that may impact cross-border collaboration.

For each of the aforementioned dimensions, the tenderers should indicate at least one indicator per theme that could be collected from new or local sources (beyond Eurostat), indicating all the technical details in order to achieve its continuous update. Where the relevant subnational scale data is absent, recommendations should be made as to their replacement. While it is acknowledged that providing a global and comparative overview across cross-border regions can sometimes be difficult to achieve, this is one of the key outputs of this tasks, as to allow for comparisons and deliver a critical (harmonised) analysis.

Simultaneously, this task, should support the efforts done so far for harmonising data collection, making data comparable and complementary for areas of cross-border cooperation. There have been a number of national initiatives that mapped numerous indicators and the differences on each side of the border, but to overcome these differences and contribute to a harmonisation of cross-border data, some (legal) changes are necessary and involve the support of the responsible statistical offices. This often implies a crucial step, getting from territorial findings to practical solutions, as it would have to require the adaptation of a (functioning) broader system or sectoral law specifically for the interest of cross-border harmonisation. Thus, engagement with Eurostat, national/regional statistical institutes/registers and/or other national institutions is highly needed and suggested, allowing for a feedback loop and constantly assessing the practical feasibility of collection and production processes.

As such, both Task 1 and 2 should be performed in an iterative manner, as the availability of data may influence the conceptual framework, and vice versa. In this regard, the service provider should maintain a strong working partnership with the ESPON EGTC.

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<sup>14</sup> Following this approach, potential inspiration can be drawn from the OECD reports on [Cross-border Co-operation and Policy Networks in West Africa \(2017\)](#) or [Cross-border policy networks in the Basel region: the effect of national borders and brokerage roles](#) -O Walther, B Reitel - Space and polity, 2013



**For the expected outcomes of the task (listed below), the tenderer shall provide details on the nature and format of this delivery already in the tender:**

- 1 **Report** on the analysis of the available datasets at the relevant territorial scale (minimum NUTS 3, preferably LAU), including practical guide to what datasets should be collected to access at least basic datasets harmonized across ESPON territory. The results should serve both the needs of different administrative levels (regions, municipalities) and of different statistical offices involved in data collection.
- 2 **Pan-European specific database**, populated with the variables and multi-dimension indicators gathered from public or private sources; dynamic and static maps to be uploaded on the ESPON portal.
- 3 **Consultation** process run with the relevant stakeholder (e.g. statistical offices).

**Sub-task 2.2.: Develop the interactive atlas: developing a set of analyses in order to depict the socio-economic status and the potentials for cross-border functional areas.**

Based on the outcomes of both Task 1 and sub-task 2.1, but also of task 3, the service provider shall use the most appropriate indicators for mapping and analysing pan-European territorial socio-economic convergence and functional integration, at the sub-national scale. The objective of this sub-task is to offer comprehensive new evidence and insights on different dynamics/interdependencies across cross-border regions from the ESPON space. The final format of the analysis is to be presented as an interactive atlas and shall be agreed between the service provider and the ESPON EGTC. The atlas should comprise around **20 analyses on different themes**, relevant for the cross-border functional areas, and agreed with ESPON EGTC.

In this respect, the service provider shall also develop and populate the atlas, that will facilitate the better exploration and visualisation of the data and typologies, and that can support policy decision-making in practice at all scales. The ESPON EGTC aspires to offer policy stakeholders an interactive, innovative and user-centred access to data to improve the user's experience, ease of navigation and, ultimately, usability of territorial data through the ESPON Portal. It is therefore critically important that the atlas has a high degree of practical functionality, adaptability and flexibility, and therefore should be designed through an iterative approach.

Tenderers should include in their technical offer, besides an indicative, preliminary list of types of analyses that they envisage to conduct, their experience (including appropriate personnel) of technically constructing similar pre-configured web-based dashboards for searching, browsing and extracting interactive data visualisation alongside their proposed methodology for delivery. This should, with the allied objective of avoiding overlap and over-proliferation of different atlases / dashboards, be technically compatible, and capable of being integrated, the software used for other platforms currently being operated by the ESPON EGTC (See Section 1.4.2.3). Here also, the service provider should develop a strong working partnership with the ESPON EGTC.

The outcome of the analysis shall be reported in a textual way as well as in easily understandable maps, graphs and interactive visualisations, like storymaps, infographics or even videos (as agreed with the ESPON EGTC). The tenderer shall provide prospective details of the nature and format of this analysis and consequent deliveries in their technical offer with the objective of easily disseminating the outputs to as wide a range of policy stakeholders as possible, including non-experts, in an easily comprehensible manner.

**For the expected outcomes of the task (listed below), the tenderer shall provide details on the nature and format of this delivery already in the tender:**

- 1 **Interactive atlas**, comprising the mapping and territorial analyses on different themes (including relevant text description), at pan-European scale, delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC.
- 2 **Report** on all back-end/front-end technical material for delivering the atlas.
- 3 **Digital presentation of cross-border regions fiches** for each cross-border typology and along the countries – delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC (different from the case studies).

### 1.3.3 Task 3: Case studies and policy recommendations

#### Conduct 10 case studies and providing a set of policy recommendation/ advice

Drawing on empirical and case analyses, the main aim of this task is to engage with the stakeholders and policymakers of different cross-border regions, testing and applying with them both the methodological and analytical results used for defining the typologies of cross-border functional areas. The goal is to test and improve the analytical results on diverse cross-border functional areas and highlight the unique characteristics that emerge within the European context. This will complement and bridge the theoretical and analytical work, with practical and applied insights, evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed methodology, identifying gaps, identifying existing policies, and suggesting potential strategies for enhancing cross-border collaboration and for territorial governance mechanisms.

Ten (10) case studies, from different types of European regions, shall be selected within this task, with the aim to gather in-depth evidence from the perspective of policy actors and other stakeholders. The distribution of the case studies should respect the fair geographical coverage, cover different relevant themes for the cross-border territories and address the right territorial scale. Criteria for selecting these case studies should at least allow for, *inter alia*: (i) the in-depth analysis of ongoing challenges/ trends affecting or potentials that could enhance the good governance; (ii) the in-depth analysis of territorial dynamics and explanatory factors driving these trends; and (iii) the in-depth analysis of various national/regional/local initiatives, besides flows and trends, the specific national and regional policy contexts in which functional areas and their governance structures can emerge. The service provider should analyse the cross-border regions covered within other initiatives and are advised, to some extent, to go beyond those, in order to avoid duplication or the overload of information on specific territories.

The approach for conducting the case studies should be tailored to respond to stakeholders' needs and accompanied by workshops, active engagement processes and deliver relevant policy advice and suggesting measures to enhance the stakeholders' ability to design and implement appropriate territorial governance mechanisms, including alignment of strategies and policies, or participatory approaches. It could be approached by using ways of exploring and envisioning more resilient futures with stakeholders in complex and non-linear social systems including forecasting and backcasting techniques. These techniques are used to shed light on a common problematic situation, to generate visions about the future and to discuss how they can be realised, including the types of data needed to monitor the achievement of such visions. Accordingly, the service provider shall undertake at least one 'Futures Workshop' in each of the case study territories with selected key stakeholders. The aim of the workshops shall be *inter alia*, as follows:

- (i) To inform and validate the conceptual understanding of functional area in a cross-border setting;
- (ii) To inform, validate and test the indicators and use them as part of horizon scanning/scenario analyses to animate the feedback of participants; and,
- (iii) To address specific contextual perspectives from different types of territories and their understanding.



The tenderer shall include in their technical offer details of their conceptual and methodological proposals for undertaking 'Futures Workshops', including:

- practical organisation and techniques;
- identification of policy stakeholders;
- stepwise sequencing and particularly how they interact with the overall approach to the case study analysis and other tasks; and,
- importantly, how they intend to ensure effective stakeholder engagement and policy uptake.

Tenderers are advised, alongside their proposed methodological approach for undertaking the case study analyses, to put forward in their technical offer a tentative list of criteria, **that would need to be further elaborated, discussed and agreed with the ESPON EGTC in the early stages of the implementation of the project.** As a second step, the ESPON EGTC may also propose alternative and/or additional case studies to be included in the analysis. **The final decision on the case study selection will be made by ESPON EGTC.**

In this context the tenderer may wish to consider how they might utilise the ESPON Contact Point network to help identify and activate relevant stakeholders in case study territories. The ESPON EGTC can also assist in this process. Again, tenderers are free propose in their technical offer their own approach to undertaking this task and the most innovative proposals will be most positively evaluated as per the award criteria described in Section 4.5.

Lastly, as part of the conclusive section of the process, it is expected that this research shall provide recommendations for European, national and regional policymakers that could take the form of proposals with a focus on enhancing the potentials or alleviating persistent obstacles or bottlenecks; targeting either geographical contexts, specific themes and situations or sectoral policies, aiming to design competitive and resilient cross-border functional areas.

**For the expected outcomes of the task (listed below), the tenderer shall provide details on the nature and format of this delivery already in the tender:**

- 1 **Report** on the elaborated description of the methodological approach applied, including the criteria selection.
- 2 **Reports** on the detailed individual case studies (including the workshop results) – delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC (but taking into account both static and interactive representations).
- 3 **Report** on the cross – cutting analysis of the case studies.
- 4 **Report** on the validated conclusions and policy advice / recommendations for European, national and regional policymakers – delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC.

## 1.4 Expected outputs and deliverables

The following outputs and deliverables shall be provided covering the tasks of the requested service as specified above in section 1.3.

### 1.4.1 Expected outputs

The main outputs of the service shall be:

- A comprehensive / integrated approach (enabling comparison) for defining cross border functional areas, including of governance mechanisms, from a multi-dimensional perspective

(e.g. socio- economic and institutional contexts, scales, etc.) and addressing specific territories (urban, rural, mountain, river, maritime borders, etc). Given the diversity of cross-border territories, this could be done by either up-scaling existing practices, encouraging and facilitating exchanges between relevant stakeholders, or by piloting different solutions, tailored to specific needs or territories.

- A core set of territorial indicators at relevant territorial scale, as per the requirements presented in tasks 1, 2, and 3, to measure development trends or capture some specific territorial patterns, dynamics or interdependencies, in different types of cross border functional areas.
- Analyses and modelling for potential cross border interactions, producing typologies of borders, allowing a deeper understanding on the drivers, challenges, or potentials behind interaction processes, by also including persistent obstacles or bottlenecks relevant for different types of cross border functional areas.
- Interactive atlas (including all back-end/front-end technical material, and mapping and analyses at pan-European scale and in the selected case study regions) that can lead to policy-relevant new knowledge using the data gathered, indicators and typologies developed.
- Case study reports for each of the selected territories, including a detailed account of the outcome of the selected Futures Workshops and how they influenced the outcomes of the research.
- Validated advice and recommendations to enhance the stakeholders' ability to design and implement appropriate territorial governance mechanisms (with a focus on enhancing the potentials or alleviating persistent obstacles or bottlenecks; and adapted to different types of borders).
- Guide for future steps: continuous update / regular monitoring and follow-up on the evolution of the cross border functional areas, registering the dynamics at work in these territories; proposal for specific example of datasets that should be collected by the various statistical offices in order to achieve the comparability and compatibility of datasets gathered at different territorial levels.
- Data and interactive maps and graphs resulting from the research and provided in the format compatible with the environment of the ESPON Portal<sup>15</sup>.

#### 1.4.2 Deliverables

The technical offer shall include a description of the format and the content of all deliveries according to the methodological and project management approach that the tenderer proposes to implement. Therefore, it is at the discretion of the tenderer to indicate in their technical offer which task(s) each delivery shall respond to, either wholly or partially, and to organise the timing, workflow and the content of the deliveries accordingly. ...

The selected service provider is requested to submit at least 4 predefined deliverables, linked to foreseen payments in the contract (3 interim and 1 final payment):

- One inception deliverable
- Two progress reports
- One final deliverable

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<sup>15</sup> <https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/sites/#/espon-hub>

The table presented in [Section 1.5.2](#) below indicates the foreseen indicative time schedule for these four predefined deliveries. Tenderers are free to propose, in their technical offer, deviations from this time schedule based on their organisation of the tasks.

The technical offer shall indicate the time schedule for all other intermediary deliverables proposed by the tenderer.

During the contract implementation, based on the project's progress, risk assessment, stakeholders' inputs and service provider's performance, the contracting authority may request an adaptation of the time schedule and the content of the proposed intermediary deliverables.

#### **1.4.2.1 Predefined deliverables**

##### **1. An inception deliverable containing at least:**

- Report (approximately 30 pages, without annexes) including:
  - Detailed description of the theoretical/methodological framework and approach to be applied to the conceptualisation of functional areas in a cross-border context, addressing the territorial specificities; comparative analysis of territorial governance systems in cross-border regions, including a comprehensive literature review, highlighting how on-going research is to be embedded, along with innovative solutions.
  - A strategy related to the consultation process with the key European, national, regional and local stakeholders and statistical offices, including the DG Regio, JRC, Eurostat and other networks.
  - Initial overview for the selection criteria to identify case studies and relevant stakeholders for participation in the Futures Workshops.
  - Overview and evaluation of validity and reliability of data and data sources to be used (minimum NUTS 3) and a strategy for overcoming potential challenges in relation to data collection, data harmonisation, missing data and data estimation<sup>16</sup>.
- Updated work plan presenting the next steps foreseen in the project's implementation, including meetings with selected target groups.
- Description of the format, content and timeline of the next intermediary deliveries (to be agreed with the ESPON EGTC).
- Additional, for the project webpage: the project description and an infographic, depicting the conceptual approach (to be agreed with the ESPON EGTC).

##### **2. A final deliverable containing at least:**

- Final main report (40 to 80 pages) including:
  - Comprehensive account of the conception of cross-border functional areas and the multi-level governance mechanisms, with the associated policy framework for implementation.
  - The pan-European analyses applying the methodology developed, territorial indicators/typologies and data gathered.

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<sup>16</sup> Note: A significant number of previous ESPON studies have encountered data challenges and identified workaround strategies to troubleshoot and overcome such data problems.

- Overview of case studies and futures workshops and how they influenced the research outcomes.
  - Recommendations for policy and future research arising from the research.
- Report on the elaborated description of the methodological approach applied, including practical proposals for gathering harmonised datasets.
- Report on the detailed account of final atlas, front-end and back-end, including relevant text description accompanying the visuals and maps.
- Reports on the detailed individual case studies – delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC.
- Digital presentation of the cross-border regions (fiches) for each cross-border typology and along the countries – delivered in the form as agreed with the ESPON EGTC (different from the case studies).
- Summary of the research results, in a communicative way, in the format and specific form agreed with the ESPON EGTC<sup>17</sup>.
- Two types of presentations: one of a technical nature (presenting methodologies and the analysis) and one general presentation of the results, including dynamic and static maps used in the analysis.
- Data, maps and figures:
  - Source files for the maps and figures (incl. map project/design and vector formats).
  - Shapefiles, geodatabase(s), for all the static and interactive web-maps, dashboards or apps.
  - Data gathered according to the ESPON metadata template, corresponding to the principles of ESPON data strategy and integration of the collected data in the ESPON database, in cooperation with the ESPON EGTC.

### 3. Two progress reports

In addition to the above, the service provider will be requested to submit two progress reports, corresponding to foreseen interim payments in the contract.

Those brief reports (max. 10 pages) shall provide:

- an overview on the progress of the implementation of the project, highlighting the status of the different tasks and the challenges and risks associated for the good achievement of the research.
- the list the meetings held
- the list of the intermediary deliverables submitted since the previous pre-defined deliverable.

The service provider will receive written feedback from the ESPON EGTC on each mandatory deliverable (inception, final and progress reports) including approval or request for revision and/or addressing identified challenges (indicatively within two weeks after receiving them and one month for the final deliverable).

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<sup>17</sup> This involves the concise and easy-to-grasp summary of overall research findings in an analogue or digital format by means of (a non-exhaustive list of forms): policy brief, infographics, dashboard, story map, simple video clip, apps, etc.)

#### **1.4.2.2 Intermediary deliverables**

In addition to the predefined deliverables, service providers are expected to provide intermediary deliverables. These can take different forms, depending on the profile and content of the requested tasks. Their exact quantity, format and content shall be proposed in the technical offer, then agreed between the ESPON EGTC and the service provider at the kick off meeting. They shall be submitted on a scheduled basis corresponding to the progress of the implementation of the different tasks described above (see sections 1.3).

While leaving freedom to the tenderers to define the intermediary deliverables in their technical offer, the following shall be considered:

- 1) intermediary deliverables shall be planned throughout the project's life cycle and are expected in between each of the pre-defined deliverables.
- 2) compulsory elements of the intermediary deliverables are: the data resource that shall be steadily acquired processed and submitted to the ESPON EGTC, a detailed overview of the data collection process and data structure, and adjustments related to the data strategy when necessary (see dedicated section about data deliverable process below).

The service provider will receive feedback from the ESPON EGTC on each deliverable.

#### **1.4.2.3 Data deliverable process and digital deliverables**

Data and data visualisations are an integral part of all the above-mentioned deliverables. When it comes to data deliverables, it is important to document and provide associating metadata and all the data possible that would allow to reproduce the results. It is important to keep the potential reuse of data in mind when collecting and structuring them, therefore, detailed spatiotemporal granularity is important. Visualisations need to be adapted both for static representation in reports as well as interactive web-based content. The project is expected to deliver both static and interactive web-based maps and figures, when relevant also dashboards, applications or similar, suitable for ESPON website and Portal<sup>18</sup>.

The delivery of data and (web)maps and/or any other relevant interactive content mentioned above shall be delivered and integrated throughout the implementation of the project as they are completed, finalised and agreed with the ESPON EGTC.

ESPON Portal is built upon a software system for web-based GIS, powering mapping and visualization, analytics, and data management. It is the backbone for creating and running the interactive web-maps, data stories, dashboards and any custom GIS applications the project may propose or what ESPON may request. Hence, all proposed/requested interactive visualisations or solutions must be compatible with the system. Access to the environment can be provided by ESPON.

#### **1.4.3 Common requirements for all deliverables**

All deliverables should be delivered in electronic (editable) format and the text – whatever the format of the deliverable, as relevant, should have gone through a thorough language check, preferably by an English native speaker. ESPON EGTC will provide the generic templates for the maps, however, the service provider shall adjust the templates if necessary, depending on the geographic extent or the relevant peculiarities.

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See: <https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/sites/#/espon-hub>

## 1.5 Project management

### 1.5.1 Mandatory meetings foreseen during the contract implementation

The service provider shall ensure participation (of at least with one team representative) in all mandatory meetings mentioned below. Costs related to these meetings must be included in the Annex B financial offer of this call for tenders. No other expenses will be paid by the contracting authority to the service provider.

Most of these meetings are held online. In case of a physical meeting (up to 4 physical meetings shall be organised during the life-time of the project), it will normally take place at the ESPON EGTC's premises in Luxembourg. However, physical meetings may also take place at other suitable locations, upon agreement between the service provider, the involved stakeholders if relevant and the ESPON EGTC.

#### **Kick-off meeting**

It will consist of a general presentation and dialogue regarding the objectives and tasks of the service contract. The kick-off meeting will also address more precisely the organisation of the project and the plans for the intermediary deliverables. The service provider will receive guidelines on how to use the ESPON portal interface for data delivery and digital deliverables, on how to design the maps in line with the main elements of the ESPON layout, as well as all relevant information concerning the proper application of the ESPON Corporate Identity.

#### **Coordination meetings**

Project coordination meetings are organised to discuss the service contract implementation, the deliverables submitted and to provide related feedback. They take place on a regular basis (e.g. monthly basis or more frequently if deemed necessary) by a common agreement between the service provider and the ESPON EGTC. Their agenda and duration are agreed in advance. Written minutes are prepared by the service provider to document key decision points and shared with the ESPON EGTC after each meeting.

#### **Steering Committee meetings**

Partnership and cooperation are central to the implementation of ESPON European research projects and are prerequisites for ensuring useful results and effective policy uptake. The successful accomplishment of the objectives of this project will be achieved by proactive participation between selected stakeholders, the ESPON EGTC and the service provider at every stage of the implementation.

To allow for a framework that facilitates successful cooperation, a Steering Committee shall be established for the lifetime of this European research project. The main purpose of the Steering Committee is to ensure the involvement and active participation of stakeholders in the implementation and steering of the project and to safeguard the policy relevance of project outputs for the stakeholders.

The goals of the Steering Committee meetings are, as follows:

- To closely follow and advise the implementation of the research, making sure that it meets both research objectives and policy demands,
- To discuss and give feedback to deliverables from the service provider and provide guidance for the subsequent steps of the research and service contract implementation;
- To discuss and agree upon how to deliver - at each stage of the implementation - the results of the research to selected target groups.

The composition of the Steering Committee is defined by the ESPON EGTC and communicated to the service provider. It comprises at least stakeholders of the territories for which case studies are expected,

the service provider and the ESPON EGTC. Other external stakeholders (e.g. representatives of the [ESPON Monitoring Committee](#)) and/or relevant organisations may also take part in the Steering Committee.

Indicatively, four steering committee meetings shall be foreseen.

The first one shall take place ca. 1 month after the kick-off meeting, preferably as a physical meeting.

The timing and location of the other Steering Committee meetings will be discussed and agreed during the kick-off meeting and may be amended during the project implementation.

### 1.5.2 Indicative time schedule

The table below presents the indicative time schedule for the predefined deliverables and kick-off and steering committee meetings.

The exact deadlines for the predefined deliverables as well as indicative time schedule for all other intermediary deliverables and for coordination and steering committee meetings will be agreed during the kick-off meeting.

The minutes of the kick-off meeting, containing a record of the agreed dates, will be signed by the representatives of both, the service provider and the ESPON EGTC, and will be subject to article 4 - "Performance of the contract and subcontracting" of the service contract.

Meetings	Predefined deliverables	Indicative deadline <sup>19</sup>
<b>Kick-off</b>		As soon as possible (and normally within 2 weeks) after the award of the contract
	<b>Inception Deliverable</b>	T +1 month
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Steering Committee</b>		T + 2 months
	<b>Progress report 1</b>	T + 4 months
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee</b>		T + 6 months
	<b>Progress report 2</b>	T + 9 months
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee</b>		T + 12 months
	<b>Final Deliverable</b>	T + 16 months
<b>Final Steering Committee</b>		T + 18 months

## 1.6 Competences and skills required

The service provider must have proven, European/transnational scale research expertise and multidisciplinary experience relevant to contract matter in order to ensure the successful

<sup>19</sup> The letter "T" in this table stands for the date of the kick-off meeting. Timeframes are indicative.



implementation of the service. The competence and experience of the service provider within the fields outlined below shall be clearly demonstrated and documented, as requested in Sections 3 and 4.

- Proven experience in studies addressing territorial development issues, including experience from policy-relevant and comparative analyses, preferably with a European or cross-border coverage and including multi-disciplinary approaches.
- At least three of the proposed team members of the Service Provider shall have at least five years of research experience and academic background in the field of expertise and knowledge related to European territorial cooperation, including peer reviewed published research in subject matters related to cross-border regions or functional areas.
- Advanced GIS and web-based GIS, and data visualisation skills (QGIS, ArcGIS or equivalent) to carry out the necessary analytical work on the data resource, configure ESPON mapping templates when necessary, and present the research results in the digital format both in static and interactive manner by means of the forms agreed with the ESPON EGTC (e.g. maps, figures, webmaps, dashboards, story maps, infographics, simple video clips, apps, etc.
- Specific experience in technically constructing pre-configured web-based atlases / dashboards for searching, browsing and extracting interactive data visualisations.
- Advanced data management, data quality checking, statistics, statistical programming skills (R, Python or equivalent). ESPON emphasises the importance of data quality, and highlights the complexity of data sourcing, harmonisation, data gap filling, especially when dealing with innovative, non-conventional or multitude of sources.
- At least two of the proposed team of experts shall have at least five years of experience and academic background in the fields of computer science, data collection and management, data quality check, web-based GIS and statistics.
- At least one member with a communication/journalistic/editorial background and experience in transforming research findings into simple to read and understand texts for general public.
- Team members shall demonstrate a very good linguistic ability to draft and communicate research findings in high-quality English.

(...)  
**End of extract**