



Inspire policy making by territorial evidence

Version 10 January 2014

ESPON 2013 Programme
COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN 2014

Discussed on 3 December 2013 at the ESPON Monitoring Committee and approved on 9 January 2014 with a written procedure¹

Implementation Framework: The ESPON Communication Plan 2007-2013
approved by the European Commission on 10 June 2008



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¹ At the ESPON MC Meeting on 3 December 2013 in Vilnius the Communication Action Plan 2014 was thoroughly discussed by the countries participating. The number of Member States present was not sufficient for the MC to take decision; therefore it was agreed to run a written procedure with the MC in order to formalise decisions of the meeting.

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1. Background and summary

In 2013 the Monitoring Committee decided to launch a new Call for Proposals for Transnational Networking Activities by the ESPON Contact Points. As a result of this decision, the implementation period of ESPON's Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures has been prolonged to the end of 2014.

The programming period 2007 – 2013 is still ongoing and it is very important to communicate about the achievement of the ESPON 2013 Programme coming to the end and projects that have been successfully completed. Therefore, the final event aimed at presenting the achievement of the Programme and its major projects will be the major activity organised within the Communication Action Plan for 2014. This event, being organised at the crossroads between two programming periods, will represent a good moment to analyse which lessons have been learnt during the previous period and what will change for 2014 – 2020.

In addition, the dialogue with beneficiaries (Lead and Project Partners), will continue to be a vital feature of ESPON's work within its Communication Plan. Events and meetings, such as Financial Managers Seminars, will help ensure that information is exchanged, in particular in terms of management and administration of projects as well as procedures related to the financial closure and winding-up of projects.

The role of beneficiaries, especially project implementers, will play a powerful role in explaining ESPON and its projects. They have a significant impact on how ESPON is perceived as they are faced with many kinds of opportunities with different audiences (speaking at conferences, meeting media, disseminating results from their researches etc.); therefore the CU will keep supporting their dissemination activities and ensuring they are well-informed to be able to act as ambassadors for ESPON, either in their daily contacts with various people or in their role as beneficiaries of ESPON.

In this context and in case of positive decision of the MC on the last TNA project proposal, the role of 19 ECPs involved in the new TNA project, is of great importance to bring ESPON and its projects to a transnational audience.

The MA and CU will continue to work closely with the Member and Partner States as well as the ECPs to increase the relevance and understanding of ESPON's communications amongst its key target audiences and to expand its outreach. This will make ESPON better known and facilitate timely, coherent dissemination of ESPON messages in Europe.

Furthermore, ESPON will promote coherence through strengthened cooperation with relevant authorities at national, European and international levels and continue to enhance dialogue with stakeholders and increase audience interactivity. In particular, the cooperation with the pan-European Programmes URBACT, INTEREG IVC, INTERACT will continue during 2014, following the successful experience gained in particular with the organisation of a number of concrete actions such as the Joint exhibition at the Committee of the Regions and the Joint Workshop during Open Days 2013.

The Communication Action Plan 2014 will continue to remain flexible to take into account changing circumstances.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Managing Authority: Official communication with Programme bodies and European Commission.

Coordination Unit:	Overall Programme level communication to general public, beneficiaries, project partners, programme bodies.
ECPs:	Informing on ESPON activities to relevant regional / national and academic stakeholders in the transnational context; promoting ESPON in their countries by increasing the national networks around ESPON.
Projects Partners:	Developing mandatory set of communication and fulfilling information requirements; participating in meetings, seminars and other events to present results of the projects.

3. Coordination between Communication and Capitalisation Activities

The communication activities are fully complementary with the capitalisation activities that are an inherent part of the overall ESPON Work Plan for 2014.

The key messages of the Communication Plan will be as well channelled through media and action belonging to the Capitalisation Activities, in particular: the ESPON website, Newsletters, Press Releases, Seminars and workshops targeting the Programme stakeholders.

The Communication Action Plan will also serve as support for communicating the main activities envisaged in the Work Plan 2014.

4. Aim and Objectives 2014

Communication and dialogue

2014 will see ESPON continuing to engage in effective communications and dialogue with its beneficiaries and partners in the EU institutions, Member and Partner States, regions.

Being understood

The programming period 2007 – 2013 is still ongoing and it is very important to communicate about the achievement of the ESPON 2013 Programme coming to the end and projects that have been successfully completed, as well as to present solid evidence of the results and impact of ESPON.

Together with Member and Partner States, ESPON will further increase the relevance and understanding of its communications among its key target audiences. It will deploy the full range of tools at its disposal to communicate its messages. These tools will help ensure meaningful, tailored and effective messages reach the relevant audiences.

A coherent approach

Coherent communications will be promoted through strengthened cooperation with relevant partners at national, European and international levels. In close working relationships with the Member and Partner States, its Network of National Contact Points (ECPs), ESPON will continue to enhance dialogue and cooperation with its target groups in order to increase audience awareness and interactivity.

The following priorities will be addressed in 2014:

- a) Work closely with beneficiaries to visualise results and evidence of projects and provide them with complete, accurate and updated information about regulations, guidelines for good project management in order to maximise the quality of project implementation.
- b) Inform project partners and raise awareness of the responsibilities they have under the regulations, provide guidance and advice to help ensure compliance, ensure that results

are communicated by the project partners and the programme jointly in order to make the programme operations tangible and visible.

- c) Inform the programme's partners, stakeholders and wider audience about the programme's achievements, progress and major projects.
- d) Inform and raise awareness amongst the general public of the role of the Community in the actions funded by the Programme.

5. Target Groups

The ESPON "Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures" for the programming period 2007-2013 defined and clarified the primary targets and recipients of its communications activities². At any given time additional groups may be added to this list, although it is our assessment that these groups are relevant for the entire programme period.

In general, the following order applies:

- Potential and final beneficiaries: public or public-equivalent bodies described in the Programme Manual and governed by public law, private bodies.
- Programme Bodies: MC, ECPs, Paying Authority, European Commission.
- The Scientific Community: those with a specific interest in the direction of ESPON and the outputs it will produce.
- Media and Opinion Leader working for regional, national and European media; the immediate services for this audience concern the provision of press releases and announcement on events and achievements.
- General public, in particular to underline the central role that the European Union plays in the ESPON 2013 Programme in cooperation with the Member and Partner States.

6. Information and Publicity Measures 2014

ESPON will work in partnership with MS and PS as well as the ECP Network in order to provide information and to promote the Programme. The ESPON CU will keep ECPs informed of all activities that will be undertaken over the year for them to play their role.

All actions will be implemented in the full respect of the information and publicity requirements of the ESPON Programme as well as of EU Requirements as stated in Articles 8 and 9 of Commission Regulation 1828/2006.

For the year 2014, the ESPON Managing Authority, with the support of the ESPON Coordination Unit, intends to implement the following actions:

6.1. Information tools

6.1.1. Programme Managing Support System (PMSS)

The Programme Management Supporting System is accessible for the main actors of the Programme, such as the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Certifying Authority, Group of Auditors and First Level Controllers for their use.

² Cf 3. Target groups, "Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures" for the programming period 2007-2013 2006.

The PMSS stores information about the projects and its beneficiaries, and subsequently also information about the various priorities and measures on the Programme level that is updated regularly by the ESPON CU. The database serves as the main source for both quantitative and qualitative data on projects implementation and achievement.

One of its functions, OLAP enables the users to extract and analyze the different data according to their needs. The PMSS can be considered as a reliable monitoring and financial reporting system that can support the everyday management and monitoring of the operations.

The PMSS has been updated with the proposal received in the last round of call under Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme. In the course of 2014, it will be completed with data from the so-called “MA Led Projects” being implemented under Priority 3 and 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme.

6.1.2. Programme Manual and Applicants’ package

The Applicants’ Package and the Programme Manual have been updated prior the opening of the last Call for Proposals under Priority 4 (August - October 2013). The Call and the Applicants Package are published at the ESPON website and were disseminated during the Info Day event which took place in September 2013.

In 2014, there is no need to foresee any additional application pack as there will be no new calls.

6.1.3. Programme Bodies as communicators

The programme bodies –MC Members and ECP network, - will be involved in reaching beneficiaries, policy makers, other stakeholders and European citizens. The CU itself will provide continuously information about the programme. External information requests will be answered as well as documents will be provided on demand.

Regular meetings and contacts between the different units and actors will be held as well as regular messages to keep the programme`s bodies informed.

As for the messages, the CU will keep producing and disseminating regularly the ESPressON towards ECP and MC Members.

6.2. Communication tools

6.2.1. ESPON Newsletter

For each of the newsletters disseminated in the framework of the Capitalisation Strategy during 2014, the ESPON CU will elaborate articles targeting any other information on the timetable of events. In 2014, it is foreseen to have at least 6 Newsletters.

6.2.2. ESPON Website

The ESPON Website will be regularly updated and constantly developed by the CU through additional pages and new products. Also, in keeping with Commission Regulation 1828/2006 Article 7(2) (d), the already included list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations will be updated.

Work iteratively modernizing and improving the website shall continue under the Priority 4 of the Programme.

For 2014 the analytical tool for web statistics is expected to be improved as well as some small improvements based on input from users.

6.2.3. ESPON Intranet

The ESPON Intranet will continuously be used to distribute documents and information among the ESPON network. During 2012 large improvements have been carried out in the ESPON Intranet which led to improved functionality for the users and administrators.

6.2.4. Media

Press releases will be elaborated and channelled to the relevant media. The press releases will be mainly targeting the press and the general public. This task will be realised in the framework of the Capitalisation Activities 2014. In 2014 is envisaged to opt at the following concrete output: 6 Press Releases.

6.2.5. Social Media

The Social Media tools will continuously be updated during 2014 to communicate events and information about the Programme.

6.3. Targeted activities and actions/Events

In 2014, the following activities and events will take place.

6.3.1. Financial Managers Seminars

In order to avoid the risk of de-commitment of ESPON funds for 2013, the ESPON 2013 Programme organized a special ‘targeted financial management seminar’ for Lead Partners in summer 2013. This event proved to be very useful with tangible results.

It is therefore decided to continue with this special effort by providing concrete guidance and support directly to Lead Partners in order to ensure that impeccable financial reports are prepared and submitted on time. In this context up to two special ‘targeted financial manager seminars’ are foreseen to be organized in the course of 2014. The first event should be held in late spring and then, after evaluating the level of the spending target, a second bilateral targeted financial manager seminar might be organized in late summer 2014.

The Lead Partners of projects with delayed or incomplete financial reporting documents will be invited to targeted financial manager seminars, where special assistance in the form of pre-check of the existing reporting documents, support with the completion of the outstanding Project Progress Reports will be given. The events will as well be open to first level financial controllers in order to facilitate a smooth and correct implementation of the outstanding financial reports.

6.3.2. ECP Meetings

Internal ECP meetings will be organized in 2014 in order to ensure coordination of activities of the programme at national level, the internal coherence and share of experience.

6.3.3. ESPON Final Event

During the programming period 2007-2013 nine major information activities (so called “Info Days on Calls for Proposals and Partner Café” including a Q&A session) have been organised to present new funding opportunities and the conditions for applying to potential beneficiaries.

In 2014 the “yearly information event” will aim at presenting the achievements of the ESPON 2013 Programme including results from major projects. Lead and Project Partners, Stakeholders of Targeted Analyses, Monitoring Committee Members, ECPs as well as all relevant target groups will be invited to the final event to learn more about the achievements

and experiences of the Programme. The event will also be the opportunity to inform about new priorities and new institutional arrangements of ESPON post 2013.

6.3.4. Working together with the EU Presidencies: ESPON Seminars

The aim of presenting the achievements of the Programme will be supported through the Open Seminar which is to be organized in June 2014 during the Greek EU Presidency.

In the second part of the year, the Coordination Unit will in cooperation with the Italian EU Presidency organise a Seminar in November / December 2014. The thematic scope and aim of the Seminar will be defined in due time during the first half of the year.

6.3.5. Participation in external events and Networking Activities

The programme will be marketed at several events like conferences, seminars, exhibitions. Information will be disseminated on e.g. project and programme results. The ESPON CU will select during 2014 some key events, organised by different institutions and/or organisation (the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, other European programmes, etcetera).

Furthermore, the established close cooperation with the pan-European Programmes URBACT, INTEREG IVC, INTERACT on complementarities will continue during 2014, following the successful experience gained in particular with the organisation of a number of concrete actions such as the Joint exhibition at the Committee of the Regions and the Joint Workshop during Open Days 2013.

6.4. Flying the EU flag

Provision will also be made to ensure that, for one week, starting on 9 May, the European flag will be flown in front of the premises of the Managing Authority.

6.5. List of beneficiaries

The list of the beneficiaries, which has been published on the web site of the Programme since 2008, together with the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to each single operation, will be regularly updated and published at the website.

6.6. Promotional material

Promotional Materials and Stands

The calls for tenders aiming at producing additional promotion materials (pens, memory keys) and exhibition stands, which were part of the Communication Plan 2011 were unfortunately not yet been launched due to a lack of resources. The calls will be launched beginning 2014.

Evaluation

To ensure a correct implementing of the above listed Information and Publicity Measures 2014, the relevant indicators that are included in the Communication Plan on Information and Publicity Measures 2007 – 2013³ will be taken into consideration.

³ Programme Manual and Applicants' package: number of downloads, number of documents requested, number of visits to the relevant website pages;
Programme Managing Support System: number and type of enhancement of the database;
Programme Bodies: number of ESPressON issued, number of reports distributed, number of meetings held;
Newsletters: number of subscriptions, number of newsletters distributed;
Website: number of website visitors;

The evaluation may also be based on a brief questionnaire disseminated at ESPON events.

Intranet: number of communication distributed;

Media: number of press releases issued;

External events: number of events MA/CU has participated in;

Targeted activities and actions/events: number of participants at the annual event/info day, number of project representatives participating at financial seminars, number of events held;

List of beneficiaries: number of downloads; Promotional material: type and number of promotional material produced, numbers of copies requested and distributed by CU.

Resources: Budget allocation 2014

ESPON has an allocated publicity budget of 466.000 EUR from 2007 onwards to fund its communication activities. The allocation by year is as follows:

Year	Budget allocated	Envisaged Activities
2007	0,00	
2008	58.250,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr); targeted activities and actions (major event launching the Programme and the first calls and expression of interests, Q&A event for potential beneficiaries, info day on second call, financial managers seminar)
2009	68.000,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr); targeted activities and actions (financial managers seminar, info day on third call, fourth call)
2010	135.000,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr); targeted activities and actions (three calls and two info days, two financial manager seminars, promotional material)
2011	100.000,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr); targeted activities and actions (two calls and two info days, two financial manager seminars)
2012	40.000,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr, social media); targeted activities and actions (ten and last call, info day, one financial manager seminar)
2013	24.750,00	Information sources (programme manual, applicants` packs, database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr, social media); targeted activities and actions (last call, info day, two financial manager seminars)
2014	40.000,00	Information sources (database); communication tools (ESPressON, newsletters, website and intranet, media/pr, social media); targeted activities and actions (Final Event aimed at presenting the achievement of the Programme and its major projects, financial managers seminar, promotional materials)
Total Budget	466.000,00	

The publicity measures noted in this Communication Action Plan 2014 will be funded by the communication plan (priority 5), the capitalisation (under priority 4) as well as technical assistance (priority 5).

BUDGET Communication Action Plan 2014		
Information tools	EUR	Source of Funding
Programme database		Ad hoc TA Budget Line
ESPressON		P5 - TA staff budget
Communications tools	EUR	Source of Funding
Newsletter		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Website and Intranet		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Media / Press Releases		P4 – Capitalisation and P5 - TA staff budget
Social Media		P4 – Capitalisation, P5 - TA staff budget
Targeted actions and activities	EUR	Source of Funding
Two Financial Managers Seminars	10.000,00	P5 - Communication Action Plan for 2014
ESPON 2013 Programme Final Event	30.000,00	P5 - Communication Action Plan for 2014
Participation in external events		P5 - TA travel budget
Flying of EU flag		No cost
List of beneficiaries		P5- TA staff budget; P4 – Capitalisation
Promotional materials and Stands		P5 – Communication Action Plan 2011(*)
TOTAL	40.000,00	
(*) The budget allocated to Promotional Materials (20.000, 00) and Stands (20.000, 00) is part of the Communication Action Plan 2011.		

Annex 1 – Indicative Calendar of Major Communication Activities 2014

Month	Document of reference	Activity
January/Yearly around	Communication Action Plan 2014	List of Beneficiaries
February	Communication Action Plan 2011	Promotional Materials and Stands
Spring	Communication Action Plan 2014	Financial Manager Seminar
May	Communication Action Plan 2014	Flying EU flag
Summer	Communication Action Plan 2014	Financial Manager Seminar
Autumn	Communication Action Plan 2014	ESPON 2013 Programme Final Event
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014	Programme Management Support System (database PMSS)
Yearly around	Communication Action Plan 2014	ESPressON
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014/Capitalisation	Newsletter
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014/Capitalisation	Website and Intranet
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014/Capitalisation	Media / Press Releases
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014/Capitalisation	Social Media
Yearly around	Work Plan 2014	External Events and Networking Activities in cooperation with ETC Programmes

Annex 2– 2013 Results (by October 2013)

ESPressON

From June 2009 until October 2013 the CU disseminated 374 ESPressON, with a monthly average of about 7 messages.

Year	Number of ESPressON
2009 (June)	36
2010	83
2011	97
2012	83
2013 (until October)	75
Total	374

Newsletter

8 Newsletters were produced and distributed to a mailing list with more than 3.000 recipients. Direct mailing campaigns towards the newsletter subscribers were implemented as well to spread the announcements of Calls for Tenders, ESPON events, LPs events and so on.

Media / Press Releases

6 press releases / articles produced and disseminated in 2013:

- 15 March 2013, press release “Commissioner Hahn and Minister Schank at the inauguration of the ESPON’s new premises”
- 23 May 2013, article “Maritime policy and transnational cooperation in the focus of workshop discussions”
- 28 May 2013, press release, “Recovering from the crisis: Evidence-based policy making for growth and jobs”
- 1 July 2013, article “Recovery and resilience in the spotlight of the ESPON Open Seminar 2013”
- September 2013, article “Economic Crisis and the Structural Funds” written by Adrian Healy and Gillian Bristow within the ESPON Applied Research Project ECR2 - Economic Crisis: Resilience of regions
- 22 October 2013, article “The ESPON Atlas - Territorial Dimensions of the EU 2020 Strategy- proved to be highly relevant for European regions wanting to benchmark themselves in relation to the growth targets set”

Social media

By October 2013 around 700 people and organisations (including regions, cities, cohesion programmes, journalists, and bloggers) were following the ESPON account on Twitter. More than 270 tweets were posted.

Website

In the period January-October 2013, the ESPON website received 331.932 visits with a monthly average of 33.193 visits. Over the course of 2013, new publications and improvements operations were made to the ESPON website including 1) publication of news items and a number of new web pages; 2) adaptation of website about the main activities of the year, including reports from projects, events, calls, newsletters, etc.

Visits	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	10 388	19 069	14 711	25 282	29 423	23 292	35 146
February	12 386	21 628	16 830	13 583	29 415	25 484	33 383
March	12 315	19 437	17 496	15 138	27 842	26 559	34 308
April	9 215	13 518	16 562	18 011	23 037	25 156	31 749
May	9 476	14 271	17 231	26 174	28 864	29 898	30 896
June	8 362	16 593	17 701	17 336	22 236	29 692	31 400
July	9 763	16 765	18 494	16 371	24 662	24 482	32 188
August	8 478	15 606	22 725	15 731	24 784	23 185	31 527
September	8 579	18 753	32 469	18 730	29 304	25 098	33 831
October	9 326	18 972	32 844	20 180	26 191	31 515	37 504
November	9 666	18 326	25 577	27 524	26 006	33 811	
December	8 993	15 545	18 815	22 767	21 405	31 339	
Total	116 947	208 483	251 455	236 827	313 169	329 511	331 932 (10 months)
Monthly Average	9 746	17 374	20 955	19 736	26 097	26 680	33 193
by October each year	98 288	174 612	207 063	186 536	265 758	264 361	331 932

Events

About 500 participants were counted in the 8 events organised by the CU. The Open Seminar in Ireland and the Scientific Conference in Luxembourg were the biggest events organised in 2013. ESPON attended also different major external events.

Event	Date	Participants
Financial Managers Seminar	Athens, 7 March 2013	47
Workshop “Stepping into the sea - New evidence on territorial development and the opportunities and risks for European seas and maritime regions”	Brussels, 15 May 2013	53
Open Seminar “Territorial Cooperation for growth and jobs”	Dublin 13 and 14 June 2013	225
Financial Managers Seminar	London, 19 July	23
Info Day on Call for Proposals for Transnational Networking Activities by ECPs	Luxembourg, 11 September 2013	23
Scientific Conference "Science in support of European Territorial Development and Cohesion"	Luxembourg, 12 -13 September 2013	94
Workshop “Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy”	Brussels, 30 September 2013	62
Workshop “Territorial Vision for Europe towards 2050”	Brussels, 11 October 2013	41
Total number of participants (by October 2013)		568

Promotional Material

Several items (pens, memory keys) that have been produced within a Call for Tender launched in 2010, have been disseminated at events in 2013.