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Invitation to participate in a Competitive Dialogue

Upgrade of the ESPON's Territorial Impact Assessment methodology - towards new innovative approaches

EXTRACT OF Descriptive Document

ESPON EGTC

12 April 2024

Implementation Framework: The Single Operation within the ESPON 2030 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 Programme.

This document details both the technical and administrative terms and conditions including its annexes and constitutes the dossier of this tendering procedure. Its original is kept in the contracting authority's records and is the only version that is deemed authentic.

Key Information on the Procurement

Title	Upgrade of the ESPON's Territorial Impact Assessment methodology - towards new innovative approaches
Procedure	Competitive Dialogue
Contracting authority	ESPON EGTC 11, Avenue John F. Kennedy L-1855 Luxembourg Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Type of contract	Service contract
Duration	Competitive dialogue phase – approximately 9 months Contract duration - 21 months (18 months for contract implementation + 3 months for administrative closure)
Maximum available budget	EUR 700.000,00 (excluding VAT) Inclusive of EUR 15.000,00 per unsuccessful Tenderer who has submitted a Tender
Place of delivery	Luxembourg
Lots	This tender is not divided into lots
Variants	Not permitted
Market access	Participation in this competitive dialogue is open to all Economic Operators established in the European Union, the European Economic Area and third countries being signatories to international agreements in the field of public procurement by which the EU is bound
Submissions method	Electronic submission via the Luxembourg Public Procurement Portal (www.pmp.lu)
Deadline for sending requests for information And/or reporting errors, omissions, ambiguities, or discrepancies	21 May 2024 at 15h59 CET
Deadline for submission of requests to participate	28 May 2024 at 16h00 CET

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1 Introduction

The ESPON EGTC¹ is the Contracting Authority conducting the Competitive Dialogue and thus shall award the contract related to this tendering procedure.

The present document describes the context and objectives of the ESPON's project on **upgrading the territorial impact assessment (TIA) methodology**, it outlines the procurement process and identifies the needs of the ESPON EGTC as the Contracting Authority, concerning the subject matter of this tendering procedure.

This descriptive document is part of the tender documentation and is intended to allow Candidates to obtain an overview of the procurement process.

Please note that initiation of a tendering procedure imposes no obligation on the Contracting Authority to award the contract. Also, fulfilment of the conditions imposes no obligation on the Contracting Authority to award the contract.

1.1 Purpose, context, objectives and main expected results

The ESPON EGTC is launching the competitive dialogue to further build up ESPON's stock of research and provide new European territorial evidence in the framework of the [ESPON 2030 Programme](#).

This competitive dialogue shall define the most appropriate solution for **upgrading and further expanding the [ESPON TIA methodology](#), fitting national and subnational contexts**. In a context where a multitude of TIA methods co-exist, the EGTC seeks to design a renewed and innovative ESPON approach. Thus, this competitive dialogue aims at ensuring that out of a process of structured exchanges with selected economic operators, precise specifications are developed into Terms of Reference which will serve as the basis for requesting final tenders.

1.1.1 Context and Objectives of the activity

Context

The ESPON Programme has been a pioneer in advancing the understanding and analysis of "territorial impacts", by developing TIA methodologies and inspiring European institutions to proactively seek for better ways on how to address territorial impacts of public (sectoral) policies. For instance, ESPON has responded to the early calls outlined in the [European Spatial Development Perspective \(1999\)](#), for examining territorial impact of investment policies, in particular of the large infrastructure projects.

Thus, by and large, there is a long history of establishing the groundwork for straightforward and practical insights and tools regarding Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA). This journey began with the ESPON 2006 Programme, which contained TIA studies related to diverse EU sector policies (Policy Impact Projects). Subsequently, ESPON initiated the [ESPON Spatial Scenarios project](#) with the aim of "standardising" different approaches, and it gave birth to the first comprehensive TIA methodology – ESPON TEQUILA 1. During the ESPON 2006 Programme the work on understanding

¹ The ESPON EGTC was established on the 9th of January 2015 based on Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006, as amended, to undertake the role of the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, the ESPON 2030 Programme and the potential subsequent approved ESPON cooperation programmes.

policy impact and its relation to territorial cohesion was unprecedented, thus in academic circles some even referred to ESPON as the "[European Territorial Cohesion Assessment Network](#)".

Building upon these experiences, the ESPON 2013 Programme furthered its commitment to TIA, by introducing the ESPON Territorial Impact Package for Transport and Agricultural Policies ([ESPON TIPTAP](#)) which essentially was a substantial upgrade of the ESPON TEQUILA model (ESPON TEQUILA 2). However, there were also calls for more simple and accessible approaches which could target "non-technical" audience. Thus, another strategic turn took place during the ESPON 2013 Programme. For instance, during the applied research project [ESPON ARTS](#), a simple and user-friendly method was elaborated which by now is commonly known as "ESPON's TIA Quick Check". In parallel, another ESPON project ([ESPON EATIA](#)) developed an approach to support the EU member state level in the identification and evaluation of potential policy impacts of EU initiatives at national, regional and local levels. The approach is based on qualitative assessment and a set of tools (a guidance document was prepared).

The ESPON TIA Quick Check allowed to make a 'quick' ex-ante analysis of the potential impact of EU legislation, policies and directives on the development of regions. The 'TIA quick check' is based on the vulnerability concept in which the effects deriving from a particular policy measure (exposure) are combined with the characteristics of a region (territorial sensitivity), to produce potential territorial impacts. The ESPON ARTS methodology was also recommended in an early guidance of the European Commission on TIA. On top of that, ESPON prepared its own [Handbook](#) for policy makers for promotion purposes.

During the ESPON 2020 Programme the ESPON Quick Check method was uplifted to the status of being the principal method, and much effort was made to cement it as an effective instrument which can be used to perform TIA in a short period of time. It appealed to policy makers as a simple and straightforward method suitable even to non-specialists and producing immediate results. Consequently, the ESPON's TIA web tool (<https://tiatool.espon.eu>), which supported the implementation of the ESPON Quick Check method, underwent major upgrades during the ESPON 2020 Programme in terms of an improved interface and functionalities for analysing indicators and producing TIA maps.

At the outset of the ESPON 2030 Programme, the "ESPON TIA methodology" stands out as well-known brand; it is being referenced in the [European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines](#) ("TOOL #34. Territorial impacts".) and is considered as a reasonable alternative to more complex tools provided, for instance, by the Joint Research Centre. Although mostly applied as an ex-ante tool for analysing territorial effects of draft legislation, the ESPON TIA methodology may also be used in an ex-post setting on various types of interventions, for instance, policies and funding programmes.

Thus, since 2015, more than 30 Territorial Impact Assessments have been carried out using as a basis the ESPON TIA methodology. The TIAs have looked into territorial impacts of thematically various EU directives/legislative proposals, for instance, on ship generated waste, minimum quality requirements for reused water, clean and energy efficient road vehicles, work-life balance, UK's withdrawal from the EU, EU Territorial Cooperation post-2020, EU Labour authority, etc. These TIAs have attracted various regional and local experts, as well as staff of DG REGIO, DG ENV and DG MOVE.

The ESPON TIA methodology is well suited for TIAs which address European level legislation, or proposals at a larger regional scale (like macroregions, cross-border regions, etc.) since the analysis is essentially based on using NUTS 3 level data.

If one considers the real impact (uptake of results) of these TIAs, several notable examples can be mentioned which demonstrate the use of evidence produced in the TIAs:

- TIA results are referenced in an actual end text of an adopted EU Directive.²
- TIA results are referenced in the Proposals for EU Directives or Regulations.³
- TIA results are referenced in Commission Staff Working Documents⁴.
- TIA results are referenced in adopted Opinions of the European Committee of the Regions.⁵

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) so far has been the main user of the ESPON TIA methodology. Numerous TIAs have been carried out over the period of the last 10 years, and the results of analyses were presented in TIA reports featuring the mapped impacts and their territorial distribution at NUTS 3 level (based on the selected set of indicators), as well as conclusions and policy recommendations. These pieces of evidence were then used to draw up CoR's Opinions. The EGTC will continue to provide this kind of support during the ESPON 2030 Programme, a [3-year support scheme](#) has been recently announced. The main recipients of the ESPON service will predominantly be the CoR and the European Commission, however, the service will be open to other European-level institutions or networks where conducting a TIA at NUTS 3 scale is feasible, for instance, INTERREG cross-border programmes and transnational programmes, macro-regions, etc.

At the same time, during the ESPON 2020 Programme, several distinct innovations took place to expand the TIA field and address some of the potential shortcomings, but these did not amount to a full-fledged upgrade or revision:

- ESPON Territorial Impact Assessment for Cross-Border Cooperation ([TIA-CBC](#)) project developed a methodology to assess ex-post territorial impacts in cross border regions. The methodology and its case study application is currently featured in the [Handbook on Strategic Environmental Assessment](#).
- The ESPON EGTC took stock of the various projects which were produced on territorial indicators during the ESPON 2013 Programme and developed a [Policy Brief and a Working Paper](#) which provided some practical solutions on how to measure territorial impact of integrated territorial investments by selecting meaningful impact indicators. The Policy Brief was widely referenced by the European Commission in the [Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development](#) Strategies.
- The ESPON Programme with the support of the European Investment Bank pioneered first ever territorial [impact assessment of ESIF \(2007-2013\) financial instruments](#), by developing a "model region" approach and looking at "added value" of financial instruments at

² For instance, in Directive (EU) 2019/883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships, amending Directive 2010/65/EU and repealing Directive 2000/59/EC , <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L0883>

³ For instance, Commission Proposal for a "Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2009/33/EU on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles" (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1543329236795&uri=CELEX:52017PC0653>) concludes that "The Territorial Impact Assessment of this amended Directive illustrated that the impact will be evenly distributed among regions in the Union."

⁴ For instance, Commission Staff Working Document "Impact Assessment. Accompanying the document "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse"" (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f411658c-6f1f-11e8-9483-01aa75ed71a1>) references TIA results, analysis and TIA maps are found throughout the text and in the Annex 9.

⁵ For instance, Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions on Work-life balance for parents and carers (2018/C 164/11) (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017AR3138#ntc1-C_2018164EN.01006201-F0014), Policy recommendation No 9. is based on the TIA results.

territorial level, examining, for instance, indicators on leverage (attraction of private capital) and legacy resources (repayment of funds).

- The ESPON EGTC developed a [Transnational Brief](#) to illustrate the ways how net territorial impact can be detected for INTERREG programmes, by applying well known counterfactual methods. In addition, an [ESPON working paper](#) examined how to set output and result indicators for the Territorial Cooperation Pro-programmes (ETC).
- The ESPON 2020 Programme was also involved in examining territorial impacts of physical environments ([ESPON HERITAGE](#) and [ESPON HERIWELL](#)) and natural hazards ([ESPON TITAN](#)), hence going in the analysis beyond the impact of “policies”.

Notwithstanding these developments, the (academic) research in the field of TIA has also continuously advanced, showcasing the application of new methodologies and unique data sets for TIA purposes. In this context, there is a risk that in the long term, ESPON may be perceived as providing primarily 'quick and basic' solutions lacking substantial methodological and academic foundation, if the ESPON TIA Quick Check continues to be suggested as the “main’ method. The following are some of the current challenges the ESPON TIA Quick Check faces:

- Can such a simple method be still relevant in today's complex world of territorial policies? The method relies heavily on expert judgment conveyed during one-day-session, which limits its capacity to offer more nuanced TIA assessments or effectively address the need for TIAs at a non-European level.
- What kind of relevant insights can be actually gathered by examining TIA maps and analysis produced from the ESPON TIA webtool? On many occasions the TIA analysis provided by the ESPON TIA may not capture the full scale of territorial complexities concerning the impact.
- The ESPON's TIA methodology is based on employing statistical data at the NUTS 3 level. Is it a feasible territorial level to provide meaningful insights about territorial impacts?

Objectives

This activity aims at upgrading the ESPON TIA methodology in a way that it can be effectively used by national and regional policy makers at multiple territorial levels to assess territorial impacts of draft legislation, spatial and sectoral policies, EU funded programmes, etc. The project shall address the following main challenges which have been identified by the EGTC:

- The application of the ESPON TIA methodology has a constant challenge – it cannot sustain a scenario of being the sole tool which can provide an overview of territorial impacts. It has already been argued that a lot of side information on territorial implications needs to be collected independently as a supplement in order to make sense of the ESPON's TIA maps etc.⁶
- The ESPON TIA methodology would benefit from improving scientific rigorousness. For instance, the ESPON TIA methodology does not appear in a recent [TIA Handbook](#), since the editor argues that it does not seem appropriate to present it in the handbook as a comprehensive TIA tool.
- The application of the methodology may limit the interpretation of the ESPON TIA results, for instance, treating the immediate effects of a policy and its long-term impact equally introduces confusion and may lead to ambiguous conclusions. Likewise, it is not possible

⁶ Essig, S. and Kaucic, J., 2017, ESPON TIA - Balancing between Policy Orientation, Practicability and Scientific Ambition, in: Medeiros, E. (2017), *Uncovering the Territorial Dimension of European Union Cohesion Policy*: Routledge, London.

to include an expert assessment of “regional sensitivity” (which means that the tool may lead to conclusions contrary to the researchers’ intentions and the experts’ preferences).

- The ESPON TIA methodology is based on NUTS 3 regions which obviously makes any assessments less feasible and realistic in national and subnational contexts. By applying TIA to subnational level may pose a risk of: firstly, conducting a TIA based on few NUTS 3 regions which is not feasible; secondly, developing additional tools, like GIS solutions, which actually defies the purpose of applying ESPON’s TIA methodology.

It is also evident that ESPON's TIA methodology is already being adapted to meet specific territorial requirements. Sweden piloted [adjusted version of the ESPON's methodology](#) to propose territorial impact assessments for major infrastructure investments in the TEN-T core network corridors. In addition, with a technical support of the World Bank, Romania has developed a [territorial impact assessment tool](#), to substantiate and support the decision-making process regarding the design and implementation of national policies and investment programmes; this was done by adjusting the ESPON's TIA methodology to be applicable at the national level and the Romanian context.

In the meantime, several European wide initiatives have put in the spotlight the need for finding appropriate ways of how to think about and perform a TIA at national and subnational levels.

In March 2022, the [Territorial Agenda 2030 Pilot Action on TIA](#) launched a European-wide survey to understand how TIA is applied at national and regional contexts. Based on the survey results and extensive analysis of the Pilot Action members, a **manual (handbook)**⁷ was produced, aimed at practitioners and regional policy makers at different levels. The manual describes different ex-ante and ex-post territorial impact assessment methodologies and, most importantly, provides a reflection and guidance on what may work at which territorial context and what needs to be considered. It features multiple real-life examples of TIA application in practice, and guides users on practicalities (advantages and disadvantages) of applying a range of well-known TIA methods. The manual is being prepared for publication in the TA2030 website and other relevant channels.

The most innovative part of this stocktaking exercise is a proposal of using a new ex-ante TIA method called [SPA\(TIA\)](#). Firstly, SPA(TIA) may be deemed as a highly efficient tool, it does not require extensive financial and human resources to be applied in practice. Secondly, it offers innovative elements. For instance, the methodology takes into account goals and different time horizons of policy interventions; the tool is easy adaptable to any spatial territories which are under examination (NUTS 2, 3, LAU, ad hoc); and it takes into account diffusion of territorial impact beyond the targeted territories, based on different criteria (distance, commuting time, territorial adjacency, etc.). In the manual, SPA(TIA) is introduced by showcasing a mock-up intervention scenario, thus the method has not yet been widely tested in real life scenarios.

As the Pilot Action on TIA has almost reached its completion, an immediate follow up activity has been launched in a form of a new TA 2030 Pilot action led by the Netherlands. The new Pilot Action will focus on a regulatory Territorial Impact Assessment. The aim of the Pilot is to supplement the manual on the TIA methods with a guidance and best practices on how to showcase (and take into account) potential territorial sensitivities when designing national legislation or applying EU-level legislation nationally. The Pilot action may also potentially provide some guidance from a territorial perspective on how to improve regulatory impact assessment at the EU level.

Against this backdrop, there is clearly an avenue for the ESPON Programme to **pursue innovation in the field of territorial impact assessment**. Thus, **the primary objective of this activity shall be the development and upgrade of the TIA approach to be piloted and applied at different territorial levels across Europe**.

⁷ The Handbook will be published in the Territorial Agenda 2030 website: <https://territorialagenda.eu>

In addition, the objective is to also support the “Do no harm to Cohesion” principle where a TIA is one of the cornerstones. For instance, the [CoR](#) in this context calls upon the Commission to further develop TIA models and methods with support of the ESPON Programme.

Some of the key issues this activity shall address are the following:

- How has the research field on territorial impact assessments been progressing over the last decades in terms of producing new and innovative methods? Where does the ESPON TIA methodology currently stand vis a vis other impact assessment methods? How the recent developments concerning methodologies may be used to improve the ESPON TIA?
- How have policy makers and regional development practitioners at different territorial scales been applying TIA, and what challenges and success stories can be derived? What could be the learning points for the ESPON Programme?
- What kind of TIA methods are relevant at national, cross border and subnational level and for what kind of purposes? Where does the ESPON TIA methodology stands in this regard?
- How exactly the territorial impacts could be evaluated, what shall be a relation/balance between quantitative and qualitative assessments? What shall be used as a baseline for assessing any territorial impact in terms of being positive or negative – could it be (spatial) policy targets?
- How territorial diversity could be included in TIA assessment (impacts on different types of territories within an administrative or territorial unit on which the assessment is being performed)?
- How to eventually upgrade the ESPON TIA methodology so it becomes more relevant to national and subnational policy makers? What kind of indicators and innovative methodologies or tools are needed to do that?
- How to apply it in practice process-wise? Who should implement/run a TIA and how the stakeholder involvement should be organized?
- What kind of data is needed about different types of territories to be able to carry out territorial impact assessment of various draft proposals (legislation, policy, funding allocation, etc)? What specific data would be needed to employ the upgraded ESPON TIA methodology?
- How to communicate and use the results of TIA so that any results of the TIA could actually be taken into account by policy makers?

1.1.2 Main expected results

The geographical coverage of the project shall take into account all EU member countries and Partner States participating in the ESPON 2030 Programme⁸. In practical terms it means that the upgraded ESPON TIA methodology shall be applicable in the above-mentioned countries.

The upgrade of the ESPON TIA methodology entails:

- Stocktaking of the application of the ESPON TIA methodology, identifying main weaknesses and proposing ways how to upgrade the methodology with innovative elements in a way that the new methodology goes substantially beyond the approach of “quick checking”.
- Development of appropriate scientific guidance and methodological explanation material adapted in its complexity to different potential users, for instance, researchers, spatial

⁸ The 27 members of the European Union, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

planners, and practitioners in public administrations. The methodology may include a draft technological solution which would allow for an initial testing of the methodology.

- Analysis on who should implement/run a TIA and how the stakeholder involvement should be managed.

1.2 Objectives of the dialogue

During the dialogue phase, invited candidates will be requested to share technical or methodological insights they find necessary to implement the expected activities.

Indicatively, the dialogue phase with the candidates shall in general address the key issues mentioned in section 1.1.1, and more specifically:

- What are the current existing needs in terms of implementing national and subnational TIAs? Which policy-related and practical process-wise aspects need to be considered, for instance, in terms of stakeholder involvement and organisation of a TIA?
- How to upgrade the ESPON TIA methodology so it becomes more relevant to national and subnational policy makers? How exactly to go beyond the “quick check” approach in methodological terms? What kind of implications would that entail in terms of data collection and presentation, and in terms of interpretation of TIA results?
- How to conduct territorial impact assessments which cover different territorial contexts (national TIA, cross-border TIA, interregional-setting TIA, etc.)? Shall a testing of the methodology be foreseen?
- How to utilise in a practical manner the results of the SPA(TIA) approach?
- What technological requirements are needed for upgrading the ESPON TIA methodology and implementing it in practice?
- How to ensure that the upgraded ESPON TIA methodology will actually be used by policy makers?

1.3 The Competitive Dialogue Procedure

The ESPON EGTC is launching a Competitive Dialogue to identify and define the best means suited to meet its objectives as described in 1.1.1.

Accordingly, the Contracting Authority will (1) select candidates based on the Request to Participate, (2) implement dialogues with the selected candidates, (3) invite the selected candidates to submit a tender.

Up to three (3) candidates will be invited to participate in the dialogue, that will take place **in two successive rounds of dialogue (see section 3)**. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to conduct one additional dialogue (3 dialogues in total), if necessary, to identify the adequate solution to meet its needs.

Once the dialogue stage is complete, the ESPON EGTC will release the Terms of Reference which shall be the basis for developing the tenders. The Terms of Reference (ToR) shall stipulate provisions for implementing tasks and services related to the upgrade of the ESPON TIA methodology.

The procedure will conclude with the award of a service contract to the tenderer submitting the most economically advantageous tender.

Candidates will bear the costs of drawing up their Request to Participate, and the ESPON EGTC shall not be liable to pay any compensation if the Request to Participate is rejected or if the EGTC decides not to select any Request to Participate.

Only the tenderers which have submitted a non-selected tender, shall receive a lump-sum of **EUR 15.000,00 (fifteen thousand euros)** for their participation in the Competitive Dialogue procedure.

1.4 Overview of the Competitive Dialogue Procedure

The following table summarises the stages of the Competitive Dialogue and offers a timeframe for implementation. **Please note that the timeline is indicative only** and subject to change. Any change shall be communicated to the candidates / tenderers, in a due time.

Competitive Dialogue procedure indicative timeline		
#	Stage	Week
	Publication of the Contract notice	Week 0
Request to Participate		
	Preparation of the Request for Participate	//
	Deadline to submit request to participate	Week 05
	Evaluation of the Request to Participate: pre-qualification and shortlisting	//
	Communication of selection results	Week 07
	Standstill period during which the candidates may lodge a complaint	//
Dialogues		
	Invitation to participate in the dialogue	Week 10
	Preparation of first input paper	//
	Submission of first input paper	Week 14
	1st Dialogue	Week 16
	Preparation of second input paper	//
	Submission of second input paper	Week 20
	2nd Dialogue	Week 22
	Elaboration of Terms of Reference	//
Tendering stage		
	Release of the Terms of Reference and sending of the invitation to submit the tender	Week 26
	Deadline to submit Tenders	Week 29
	Evaluation of tenders and confirmation of the successful tender	Week 32
	Standstill period	//
	Award of the Contract	Week 36
	Project kick-off meeting	Week 37

(...)

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