



ESPON Seminar 12-13 June 2007

Workshop report

Background

The ESPON 2013 Programme will through its **Priority 2: Targeted analysis based on user demand** facilitate projects where users of ESPON results work together with Transnational Project Groups (TGP). The aim is to carry through analysis with stakeholders “sharing an interest in support of ESPON analysis in gaining European experience and/or knowledge on common challenges related to their territorial and/or urban development”.

The analysis shall bring together the European dimension with national, transnational, cross-border, regional or local perspectives. By doing so they should contribute to informed policy decisions through new understanding of future development potentials and challenges for their territorial and/or urban development.

The users can be European authorities, national authorities, Structural Funds programmes (objectives 1, 2 and 3) as well as groups of regional/local administrative entities (regions, cities).

ESPON will invite potential users to propose project ideas. After a screening of ideas and demands, a selected number of project ideas (selected by the MC) will be developed into a project specification and announced in a call for proposal from transnational teams of researchers/experts. Transnational Projects Groups (TPGs) with members from at least three ESPON countries will compete to win the contracts.

At the Bonn seminar on 12-13 June 2007, two set of parallel workshops discussed the implementation of Priority 2:

- The first focussed on the content, i.e. possible *project themes* for targeted analysis.
- The second discussed the *organisation of the cooperation* between the actual stakeholders and the Transnational Project Groups.

The workshops were brainstorming sessions, with about 110 participants altogether, coming from European organisations, EU programme secretariats, European-wide interest groups, countries, regions and research organisations.

The workshops discussed on the basis of the guiding questions presented in the Annex.

1. First round of parallel workshops: Which topics could be in demand for targeted analysis projects and what outcomes do the users expect?

According to the ESPON 2013 programme, the targeted analysis may focus on trend studies; visions, perspectives and scenarios; impact assessments; innovative and experimental studies; and technical/methodological support. The analytical approach can be integrated, cross-thematic analysis; individual themes with analysis of sector or phenomena or type of territories; or include/be based on case studies. The European relevance must be given at any time.

The first three parallel workshops discussed the thematic issues where the participants could envisage that ESPON results would be useful for their work. The topics discussed were to a large extent a reflection of the participant's interests:

- Actors at the European level will at all times closely follow the EU policy agenda. At the moment, the main headlines are connected to the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas, to the Cohesion policy, the Territorial Agenda and the territorial challenges mentioned there such as climate change, energy and demographic development. Also the ESDP is still relevant in this context.
- Organisations that work with regional development issues at the European level, such as CPMR, Euromontana, METREX, EUKN, R.E.D and MOT did all point at issues and topics of specific relevance for themselves, for their type of territory, region or city – i.e. for the territorial balance in Europe and for the development of maritime and peripheral areas, mountain areas, metropolitan regions, urban areas, rural areas, border areas, etc.
- Cross-border and trans-national Interreg programme and other areas may have practical needs for analysis of the development in their regions, as statistics often are less comparable and available for border areas. Here, transposing ESPON results may be of particular relevance as support for knowledge production at the level of programme areas and for the analysis of the development potentials.
- Project initiatives can be expected from groups of regions and urban areas across Europe, where they have common interests in adding a European dimension e.g. in how cities with similar challenges best develop their policies in the accelerating globalisation, best practice exercises etc., and where ESPON studies provide an excellent platform for comparative approaches to place regions and cities in the European context and to identify their potentials and perspectives.

The main messages are that the thematic orientation of the new Priority 2 of the ESPON 2013 programme on the one side logically will take up themes from the results of the ESPON 2006 Programme (as these will be the main base for the targeted analysis), eventually combining some themes in new ways or making a cross-thematic analysis of all available ESPON findings related to their area. On the other side, the content will be influenced by a European, national and/or regional/local policy agenda.

In addition, new thematic combinations and experiments can add to these main messages from the seminar on the future project content. Priority 2 actions might go beyond the format of studies and could include innovative actions. This might be training efforts related to the use of ESPON results, i.e. how to read regional relevance out of ESPON maps, how to use methodologies and techniques applied in ESPON, or how to relate to the European perspective. The innovative actions might also include concrete assistance with European knowledge for the elaboration of visions and strategies for larger territories. However, for all these activities further consideration is needed as regards the added value and benefit of these activities for the ESPON programme.

The new Priority 2 on use of results is complementary and mutually supportive to the other activities of the ESPON 2013 programme, where Priority 1 carries through applied research and Priority 3 implement activities that will improve the scientific platform.

The main difference between Priority 2 and the rest of the programme is that activities shall provide evidence and knowledge as well as analytical support and improve the usefulness of ESPON results. The authority expressing analytical demand and ideas for targeted analysis (explaining as well how results are to be used) has the role to propose and the MC later on to decide the thematic orientation of the targeted analysis.

The key for usefulness – from a user’s point of view – is that projects takes up issues that are on the users own agenda, at the right time. The most interesting overall territorial challenges at the moment are known, however new themes will obviously appear on the policy agenda. It will therefore not be appropriate to concentrate a call for interest on certain thematic issues, as there must be enough flexibility, also to cater for new needs occurring over the next seven years.

In the Annex you will find an overview of the themes mentioned by different stakeholders during the workshops.

2. Second round of parallel workshops: Cooperation and partnership for the best use of ESPON results

The stakeholders behind a selected project idea will be taking part in defining the detailed content based on their expression of interest and in the development of the project. They will as well be delivering information to the analysis, such as detailed data and qualitative inputs. The stakeholder involvement shall provide for supplementary knowledge support and involve policy makers and practitioners in organisational settings such as a steering group and/or sounding board. The TPGs will be fully financed by the ESPON 2013 Programme, while stakeholders involved will have to cover cost of meetings, travel and their inputs to the analysis.

The geographical coverage of projects will normally be less than the entire European territory and the geographical detail larger. The size and duration of projects can vary.

The second round of workshops addressed questions related to how this best can be done within the framework of ESPON and to the benefit of European and national authorities, Structural Funds programmes and groups of regional/local administrative

entities. There was a clear consensus regarding the cooperation between users and researchers:

- The ideal partnership for a targeted analysis should include persons with solid competencies both from the user and the researcher side, and the cooperation must be based on mutual trust and respect and oriented towards the requested outputs. Communication is a key word. Individual solutions for each project are therefore necessary, depending on the partners and the character of work.
- The users will be responsible for providing input on their needs, to provide practical knowledge and to make efforts to facilitate data not readily available. Users should also respect the need for the results to be of European relevance, and should participate in dissemination of results. They must commit themselves to the necessary involvement throughout the work.
- The TPGs must accept that targeted analyses are more applied than applied research, and therefore rather far from traditional research. A combination of a good understanding of the subject matter, willingness to listen to users and ability to address users need in a practical language is necessary. The particular language concerns both the ability to communicate in an easily understandable manner as well as the use of the languages most appropriate for the users.
- The cooperation between TPGs and users is a key factor for the use of the results of Priority 2 projects. The results must be scientifically solid and the users must feel confidence in accuracy of project results, conclusions must be expressed in a non-technical language, and they must be delivered in time to be fed into policy development processes.
- The ESPON projects shall have a European-wide relevance, i.e. be of interest beyond the actual group of users. This must be taken care of both in the selection of topics for targeted analyses and when the mechanisms for dissemination of results are established. A number of European networks do exist where results can be presented to a wider audience outside the ESPON family. There is also a possibility to expand a Priority 2 project into a more pan-European study under Priority 1.
- A challenging task will be ESPON projects which are supposed to support decisions on concrete actions such as documents on strategic development or Structural Funds actions involving many stakeholders. These ESPON projects will require a particular collaborative approach between actors, normally from different countries. The ESPON programme will be able to financially support the analytical part of the collaboration, but not the coordination of the actors themselves. The latter for example would be possible by an Interreg A, B, or C project. This option for complementarity between Structural Funds Programmes of course would require actors who are experienced in international cooperation and managing of Structural Funds projects.

A checklist on the main organisational points to remember can be found in the Annex.

Conclusions

Some important conclusions, which should be taken into consideration when Priority 2 of the new ESPON 2013 programme is further developed, may be drawn from the workshops:

- The thematic focus of the new Priority 2 of the ESPON 2013 will be defined by stakeholders and decided by the MC. They will probably have similarities to the themes of the existing ESPON results and reflect the major challenges politically defined. The main difference between targeted analysis under Priority and the rest of the ESPON Programme is the purpose of user involvement and use of ESPON results.
- The key for usefulness – from a user’s point of view – is that a project addresses issues that are on the users own agenda, at the right time. For the targeted analysis, themes will change over time as the policy agenda changes.
- To develop the partnership between users, policy makers and practitioners, and TPGs in a way that promote cooperation and provide relevant results is also a key for the relevance of the action and the use of project results. It is a new way of working both for users and for researchers.
- Users are asking for relevance related to their own agenda and request a tight partnership with the TPGs already from the start of a project, i.e. when project ideas are developed. On the other hand, ESPON will have to secure the European-wide relevance and the transparency of the competition between TPGs. The proposed two-step procedure, first identifying the ideas based on user initiatives and thereafter tendering and selecting transnational TPGs, may therefore potentially represent a challenge for implementation of Priority 2.
- Skills and experiences are required on the user side to enter in a targeted analysis and contribute with more detailed knowledge from the user side. In addition, the identification of policy makers from the user side related to the projects has to be carefully considered in advance in order to ensure a concrete impact of the analysis made in partnership.

The benefit for the ESPON 2013 Programme and the European perspective of targeted analysis needs careful consideration. User interest should be assured by the foreseen “bottom-up” procedure and the partnership in the implementation.

Benefits according to the provisions of the ESPON 2013 Programme must however also be secured and lessons learned related to this new type of projects. A possible way forward can be to start with a limited number of pilot projects testing and developing practical experience from combining the user perspectives with programme perspectives.

Annex.

A. First round of parallel workshops (A-B-C)

A.1. Guiding questions for the first round of parallel workshops

Workshop A-B-C discussed possible project themes.

The main questions were:

- *Which topics could be in demand for projects delivering targeted analysis?*
- *What outcomes do the users expect?*

Detailed questions to workshop A-B-C:

- *Possible cross-thematic studies?*
- *Possible thematic studies?*
- *Possible geographical foci?*
- *Studies following processes?*
- *Operational results?*
- *What time span should a targeted analysis have?*

A. 2. Topics mentioned in demand for targeted analysis projects

a) Spatial issues

- Interrelations between metropolitan areas as basis for polycentric development.
- Definition of metropolitan areas and data on these areas.
- Urban sprawl dynamics versus “compact city” approaches.
- Relationships between/ integration of urban and rural areas.
- Cross border “nature” of metropolitan and rural areas.
- Rural areas as development poles.
- Prospective analysis of the “urban and rural poles” approach and the effects on regional policy and a balanced and polycentric territory.
- Comparative analysis of the territorial organisation of rural areas.
- Comparative analysis between mountain regions and lowland neighbours.

b) Local economic development issues

- The effects of cluster policies, especially in relation with training policies, for different types of regions and cities.
- Relocation of industrial facilities/shift to service-oriented economy.
- Territorial impact of tax policies.
- Quality of growth and job creation (considering a deep sectoral breakdown).

c) Transport and mobility issues

- Transport and mobility patterns and policies at regional level.
- Internal/external accessibility and linkage of metropolitan regions.

d) Demographic issues

- Migration flows, within the EU and at the EU borders.
- Population concentration and depopulation, particularly of certain urban areas.
- The impact of ageing on public services for different types of regions and cities.

e) Environmental issues

- Cities as major players in energy saving integrated policies.
- The diversity of pollution of coastal regions.
- Territorial implications of climate change and adaptation strategies.
- Implications for regions and cities of the aim to reduce the CO2 emission.

f) Governance issues

- City-region governance.
- Impact of regional policies on urban sustainable development.
- Impacts of the process of innovation and innovation policy.
- Visions and strategies for metropolitan areas.
- Differentiation of cross-border dimensions (governance, public policies).
- Planning outcomes, and connection to policy instruments.

g) Possible geographical foci associated to these topics included outermost regions, mountain areas, coastal areas, islands, metropolitan areas, rural regions and border regions.

A. 3. Outcomes expected by users

- **Different types of expected results:** case studies / localised studies; guidelines; experimental actions (assistance for strategies /visions); scenarios and visions; dissemination of European spatial data to the lower level; and training on methodologies.
- **Results easy to digest:** readable for different target groups, short (max 50 pages), and attentive to the language issue.
- **Results approaching different territorial levels and scales:** should allow for transformation (e.g. typologies into territorial context and acceptance of regional stakeholders).

- **The results that can support multiple SF programming stages**, including: project preparation, drafting of local action plans and policy recommendations, project selection, and production and transfer of knowledge on programme level. They can provide inputs such as short, targeted analyses (scenarios) feeding into policy processes, indicators to support spatial strategies and information on neighbouring areas outside EU.
- **The implementation of Priority 2 projects** needs to consider:
 - further reflection on complementarities and synergies for the specification of “demand” towards ESPON (for “networks”).
 - foresee a rather flexible mechanism to respond to non-anticipated needs or urgent requests (call for proposals is a “heavy” procedure).
 - a pedagogic approach (at EU-level) to make aware SF-Programmes of territorial dimension (their daily work is focused on administrative issues).

B. Second round of parallel workshops (D-E-F)

B. 1. Guiding questions for the second round of parallel workshops

Workshop D-E-F discussed the best organisation of projects in partnership. The main question was:

- ***How should the cooperation be organised between the stakeholders and the Transnational Project Groups?***

Detailed questions to workshops D-E-F:

- ***What could be the ideal partnership for a targeted analysis?***
- ***What can be expected from the users?***
- ***What can be expected from the Transnational Project Groups?***
- ***How can it be ensured that results of targeted analysis are used in practice?***
- ***How can the European-wide relevance be achieved?***

B.2. What could be the ideal partnership for a targeted analysis?

- **The ideal partnership composition:** broad, competent, enthusiastic, with vision, output oriented, redirecting what exists on what is precisely needed, valuing short and focused brainstorming for creation of ideas on highly relevant research topics.
- **Partnership should ideally be close and on shared goals:** the collaboration should be as close as possible all along the process. Intermediaries (familiar with local conditions) can be important to ensure the optimal operational outcome.
- **The importance of communication:**

- **Some challenges:** relevant stakeholders need to be able to identify themselves through common understanding; different institutions use different languages (e.g. UN – EU & different professions); so far, we are not able to find a language general enough to tackle the general population; technical languages are not useful for practitioners.
- **Some proposals:** look for a common understanding of principles etc. even if in different countries it is named differently (e.g. develop a glossary which can be translated to own languages); enhance communication, by developing a core group of partners who do the actual work, no bigger than 7 persons, being advised by an extended group of experts; consider 2 executive summaries using different languages.

B.3. What can be expected from the users?

- A demand for a stronger European dimension on ‘self-centred’ local / regional perspectives.
- A strong commitment to the project.
- Active project formulating and involvement in the project process.
- A flexible framework of partnership/cooperation with several models leaving the possibility for tailoring to the topic/setting.
- Provision of the needed information (e.g. on what is high on political agenda, communicate local/regional concerns and desires, indicate “insider” sources of local/regional knowledge).
- Clear and easy understandable deliverables.
- Transfer of findings into practice and policy-making.
- An acknowledgement of ESPON from institutions using results.

B.4. What can be expected from the Transnational Project Groups?

- Should have good understanding of topic in general.
- Start research with open minds and then do in-depth research.
- Willingness to listen to users and to embark on dialogue with users.
- Clear division of labour from outset needed, dialogue between users and researchers, particularly in planning stage.
- Develop tools for policy analysis.
- No more concepts but practical outcomes: e.g. methods which allow practitioners to employ the results.
- Utilisation of synergies with other projects, programmes, etc. helps success in the long run.
- Provide summaries in common understandable language also for outsiders.

- **Some restrictions:** the limitation of involvement of researchers' view in formulating priority 2 projects (TPGs do not exist before the project); very quick reports are not reasonable (smaller reports and lower number of reports proposed).

B.5. How can it be ensured that results of targeted analysis are used in practice?

- **Needs for *process*:** assure a useful target is formulated – academic not bad, but focus is important; assure the project is consistent – otherwise interests of users are 'killed'; clarification also helps to reduce bureaucracy and the success of the project; use common guidelines and transfer them to the precise problem; targeted analysis should be linked and synchronised with decision-making processes.
- **Needs for result *design*:** short results; not technical results; simple messages of maps – clear & convincing; solve the 'ownership' problem – possible to apply results for different levels etc.; provide means for end users to employ results; validation system of results is essential; involvement of local administration to ease use of results.
- **Needs in relation to *users*:** turn results also to the outside: address other users than those inside ESPON as well; priorities are needed for targeted analysis, since not every potential user can be satisfied; important to feed into action not only into concepts; commitment of policy makers through participation from beginning.
- **Keep in mind:** it is the task of ESPON to provide information, better understanding, knowledge, analytical support based on applied research results at European level. A wide range of deliverables could be thought of – to disseminate results better to users.

B.6. How can the European-wide relevance be achieved?

- A clear differentiation between different spatial levels should be ensured (3 level approach).
- Single references to one city, region etc. makes transfer difficult – links to territorial types or more general application or hint on relevance for other cases is recommended.
- Very general targeting of a problem can be misunderstood – then the relation to lower levels becomes difficult.
- Identification of wide user-groups and dissemination of results beyond participants. Use of existing networks and established institutions at European level for more efficient dissemination of results.
- A few targeted analyses could be extended onto a European level (targeted analysis project as a pilot phase for a full-scale ESPON project).
- Collaboration with contact points/focal points and with networks to reach different stakeholder groups.
- Collaborative research in conjunction with research of other initiatives (DG Research) and other networks (e.g. EUKN) can support the use of ESPON results.

B.7. Good advice to remember

- Decide on what for we are doing what we are doing – whom do we want to address? Which problems do we want to solve? Focus on science or policy priorities?
- Difficulties for small groups to sustain the financial modalities of ESPON (pre-financing) – affects broad involvement.
- Not only ESPON's character is changing, but that of other programmes/networks as well – do we need a new division of labour and focus of projects?
- For solving communication problems: who needs to move to whom? Researcher to politician or vice versa in terms of e.g. extent of results ...
- Strong need for more data and knowledge, particular at city level.
- Assessment of policy measures important as well as a monitoring of the implementation of knowledge in practice.