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Please note that the information contained in this document is an extract of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and does not constitute the integral tendering documentation for this call for tenders.

The full tendering documentation (ToR and annexes) can be downloaded from the *Portail des marches publics* in the link available under the section for this call.

The only official tendering documentation (ToR and annexes) is the one published in the *Portail des marches publics*. The ESPON EGTC cannot be held responsible for any errors that may appear in the ToR published in its website or any other platform than the official *Portail des marches publics*.

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

EXTRACT OF Terms of reference

ESPON European Research Project

“Adaptive Resilience and Inclusive Strategies for Europe’s Structurally Declining Territories [ARISE]”

Technical and administrative Terms and conditions

ESPON EGTC
30 June 2026

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.

This document details both the technical and administrative terms and conditions including its annexes and constitutes the dossier of this call for tenders. 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	Adaptive Resilience and Inclusive Strategies for Europe's Structurally Declining Territories [ARISE]
Procedure	EU Open
Contracting authority	ESPON EGTC 11, Avenue John F. Kennedy L-1855 Luxembourg Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Type of contract	Service contract
Duration	27 months (24 months for contract implementation + 3 months for administrative closure)
Maximum available budget	EUR 800.000,00 (excluding VAT)
Place of delivery	Luxembourg
Lots	This tender is not divided into lots
Variants	Not permitted
Market access	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
Tender submission 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	28 September 2026 at 14h59 CET
Deadline for submission of tenders	05 October 2026 at 15:00:00 CET

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

The ESPON EGTC is launching an open call for tenders to further develop ESPON's stock of research and provide new European territorial evidence in the framework of the ESPON 2030 Programme. The call for tenders shall result in a European research project being implemented within the framework of the Thematic Action Plan: Places Resilient Crises.

The aim of this European Research Project is to deliver high-quality, policy-relevant research on how cohesion and resilience can be sustained in European territories facing persistent low growth, demographic contraction and structural change. The project will generate territorial evidence on how regions adapt under conditions of constraint and will translate these insights into policy guidance for policymakers. In doing so, it will support the evolution of cohesion policy by identifying governance approaches and alternative development pathways that enable long-term viability, social cohesion and adaptive resilience beyond traditional growth-based models.

1.1 Context

Recent evidence suggests that Europe is increasingly characterised by slower economic growth, demographic contraction and intensifying geopolitical and economic competition. Various long-term economic forecasts point towards structurally slower economic growth across industrialised economies. At the same time, ageing populations, shrinking working-age cohorts and lower rates of labour force growth are reducing the labour supply that historically underpinned expansion. These demographic headwinds are structural rather than cyclical, suggesting that slower growth may become a defining feature of Europe's medium-term trajectory. This trajectory is increasingly associated with what economists describe as "secular stagnation", namely a prolonged period of structurally weak and uneven growth.

For decades, European integration and cohesion policy were built on the promise and expectation of convergence through growth. Economic expansion was assumed to generate the fiscal resources, employment opportunities and social mobility necessary to sustain political legitimacy and territorial balance. The promise of "catching up" formed the backbone of cohesion policy and associated regional development strategies for "lagging regions". However, in a context of structurally weaker growth and demographic decline, this assumption is increasingly fragile.

These macro-structural realities are unevenly distributed across space. In many industrial towns, rural peripheries and post-extractive regions, stagnation has become a lived condition. Population loss, ageing, underused infrastructure and service withdrawal compound vulnerabilities and the effects of weak economic dynamism. In such territories, renewed growth often appears uncertain or remote. Yet policy frameworks frequently continue to operate as if recovery to a previous or new growth trajectory is possible.

At the same time, in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, European policy discourse has sharpened its emphasis on competitiveness as the central response to stagnation. High-level reflections on Europe's future economic model, including the influential Draghi Report, stress the urgency of strengthening innovation systems, strategic industries, technological sovereignty and global positioning to boost productivity growth and avoid "a slow agony" of relative decline. In this framing, restoring competitiveness as a guiding "compass" is presented as the only pathway for preserving Europe's social model and geopolitical standing.

However, competitiveness-led strategies tend to concentrate investment in regions already embedded in innovation networks, advanced manufacturing clusters and knowledge-intensive sectors. They rely on agglomeration economies and scale effects that are spatially uneven. As a result, the renewed competitiveness agenda risks reinforcing territorial concentration rather than mitigating divergence. Regions facing long-term demographic contraction and industrial restructuring are very unlikely to

become engines of frontier competitiveness, yet they remain integral to Europe's social fabric and democratic stability.

This creates a structural tension at the heart of the European territorial development model: the drive to enhance global competitiveness may not align with the objective of territorial cohesion. The Territorial Agenda 2030 calls for a 'Just' and 'Green' Europe, grounded in place-based development and balanced territorial futures. But if macroeconomic conditions constrain growth and competitiveness strategies favour already dynamic regions through processes of cumulative causation, what becomes of territories where expansion is structurally limited and unattainable?

The implications are not only economic but political. As debates around "geographies of discontent" and "regional development traps" have highlighted, territories that perceive themselves as marginalised or left behind can become sites of electoral volatility and declining institutional trust. Generational expectations of continuous material improvement and rising living standards are eroding, particularly among younger cohorts facing stagnant incomes, rising costs of living, growing inequalities, housing shortages and a potential loss of job prospects due to the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence. When growth-based promises repeatedly fail to materialise, public confidence in traditional economic narratives and their legitimacy weakens, contributing to new "geographies of despair" and a backlash against environmental policies characterised by a growing alienation and a declining faith in democracy, which threatens EU cohesion.

Recent geopolitical and environmental shocks have also exposed vulnerabilities within Europe's growth model itself. Energy supply disruptions, inflationary pressures, climate-related risks and increasing geopolitical fragmentation have highlighted the extreme dependence of European economies on resource-intensive production systems, global supply chains and continued material expansion. These developments have intensified debates around the EU's strategic autonomy while also reopening longstanding questions around the relationship between economic growth and ecological sustainability, including the urgent need for a rapid reduction in greenhouse gases to comply with climate goals.

In this context, post-growth and 'degrowth' policy ideas have gained increasing attention by interrogating how prosperity, resilience and territorial cohesion might be sustained under conditions where continuous economic expansion can no longer be assumed through an intentional, planned political shift away from GDP growth as a primary policy orientation. These perspectives also intersect with ongoing European debates on moving "Beyond Growth" as the sole measure of societal progress, including discussions within the European Parliament on alternative indicators and wellbeing-oriented policy frameworks. These challenges are not limited to structurally declining regions, but may also emerge in economically strong and rapidly growing territories facing internal inequalities and pressures on social cohesion.

These debates are also increasingly reflected within international policy discussions and institutions. Recent UN-backed initiatives examining pathways for sustaining well-being and reducing inequalities beyond growth-oriented development models illustrate the growing relevance of these questions. The recent Global Justice Report also attempted to set out a new vision for global progress in the 21st century, grounding human development and equality in planetary habitability. While often discussed at national or global scale, such challenges also have important territorial implications for regional cohesion, governance capacity, service provision and long-term territorial resilience.

Despite this, mainstream public and political discourse in Europe remains overwhelmingly growth-oriented. Electoral competition continues to revolve around promises of renewed expansion and competitiveness. Acknowledging structural limits to growth can appear politically risky. Yet territorial evidence suggests that in numerous regions, structural contraction is already a reality. From a resilience perspective, such phases of contraction can be understood not simply as decline, but as periods of systemic reorganisation within broader adaptive cycles. In such contexts, resilience cannot realistically mean restoring a previous growth trajectory but must instead mean reorganising social, institutional, ecological and spatial systems so that collective life remains viable under conditions of constraint. This

understanding draws on resilience theory which views systems as evolving through phases of growth, stability, disruption and reconfiguration.

Across Europe's structurally declining territories adaptation is already occurring in response to rising inequality and growing awareness of regional vulnerabilities to geopolitical struggles over scarcer energy resources. The prospects of prolonged energy shortages and the necessity to mitigate and adapt to climate change create pressure to reconsider development models centred primarily on continuous economic expansion. Out of necessity, local actors repurpose abandoned infrastructure, reorganise service provision, experiment with cooperative ownership models and cultivate economies of repair and care. Some cities and regions across Europe are increasingly experimenting with sufficiency-oriented and post-growth policy approaches. These practices are often modest and under-recognised within growth-based evaluation systems, yet they represent important grassroot efforts to sustain well-being, cohesion and a foundational economy in the absence of expansion. In this context, alternative policy strands such as the Wellbeing Economy, Foundational Economy, 'Doughnut Economics' and the Circular Economy have gained traction across Europe as complementary approaches that prioritise social value, essential services and resource efficiency rather than competitiveness. Nevertheless, the territorial implications and practical policy applications of these approaches remain underexplored.

This European Research Project seeks to address this research gap by examining a structural challenge at the intersection of three major European transitions: economic stagnation, demographic change and mounting environmental stress. It starts from the empirical recognition that parts of Europe may be entering a post-growth condition in which expansion is slower, more uneven and less capable of delivering universal convergence and where continued reliance on growth-oriented policy assumptions may create new territorial vulnerabilities. Rather than treating this as an ideological proposition, the research will examine the territorial implications. It asks how structurally declining regions sustain well-being, social cohesion, environmental stewardship and institutional stability when growth cannot be assumed, and how cohesion policy might evolve to support adaptive forms of prosperity under structural limits.

1.2 Objective

The hypothesis for this research is that the emerging challenge for European territorial policy is how to sustain viability and cohesion where long-term growth is uncertain and may no longer offer a credible path forward. This requires greater recognition that structural low-growth conditions may become an enduring feature of parts of Europe's territorial landscape, moving beyond a binary distinction between dynamic growth regions and failing peripheries. It calls for a differentiated territorial perspective that recognises structural contraction as a condition requiring its own policy logic focused on aligning economic governance more closely with social cohesion, ecological sustainability and long-term public value rather than output growth alone.

The objective is therefore to generate territorial evidence on how cohesion and resilience can be sustained in European regions facing persistent low growth, demographic contraction and limited prospects for renewed expansion. To achieve this objective, the project has the following specific objectives:

1. Examine how structurally declining territories adapt under conditions of economic, demographic and ecological constraint while also drawing comparative insights for regions experiencing strong growth but facing social cohesion and ecological transition challenges.
2. Analyse how cohesion policy frameworks may need to evolve in a context where competitiveness strategies and growth-based convergence may no longer function effectively as universal solutions.
3. Identify governance, institutional and territorial mechanisms that enable adaptive forms of prosperity in structurally low-growth contexts.

In pursuit of these objectives, the following policy questions shall be addressed:

- How should territorial cohesion be reinterpreted and operationalised in regions where long-term economic and demographic expansion is structurally constrained?
- How can the EU reconcile an intensified competitiveness agenda with the objective of territorial cohesion, particularly in regions unlikely to become engines of future economic growth?
- What forms of resilience and governance adaptation enable structurally declining territories to remain viable, and how should cohesion policy instruments and performance frameworks evolve to recognise and support these forms of adaptive prosperity?

In seeking to answer these policy questions, the research positions itself as the next analytical step in ESPON's work—moving from diagnosing economic and demographic shrinkage towards understanding its systemic implications for territorial cohesion in an era of persistent low growth and demographic decline. In doing so, the project should engage with wider European debates and research on well-being, planetary boundaries, alternative development metrics, post-growth planning and the policies that could enable societies to prosper without growth. By grounding these debates in empirical territorial evidence and situating structural decline within a broader context, including the increasing spatial selectivity of competitiveness strategies, the project aims to provide ESPON with a practical and policy-relevant contribution to discussions on how prosperity and resilience might be measured and supported under conditions of structural constraint and to strengthen the evidence base for understanding how adaptive forms of prosperity can emerge under structurally low-growth conditions.

This project aligns with the ESPON TAP - Places Resilient to Crises as it provides new insights and explores policy pathways for all places confronted with uncertainties while using their assets in facing multiple types of crises. By shifting attention from resilience as recovery to resilience as reconfiguration, the project seeks to broaden the analytical foundations of territorial development in Europe. It situates Europe's geographies of decline not as anomalies to be corrected, but as critical vantage points and opportunities for understanding how EU cohesion and strategic autonomy can be maintained. The project also aligns with the ESPON TAP - Nature Based Solutions for Adaptation to Climate Change and complements the TERRBOUND Project - Rethinking Territories within Planetary Boundaries - by extending discussions on ecological limits and planetary boundaries into the domains of territorial cohesion, demographic change and adaptive resilience.

1.3 Description of tasks

In pursuit of the objective and answering the policy questions described above, the tasks outlined below shall be carried out within the framework of this European Research Project. Tenderers are requested to include within their technical offer how they intend to implement these tasks via a methodological framework and approach, including: (i) a description of their foreseen organisation and planning; (ii) proposed deliverables; and (iii) how the necessary research resources and effort shall be distributed between the different tasks.

It should be noted that while the tasks are intended to provide an overall framework for the achievement of the objective and answering the policy questions, they can also be divided into sub-tasks or reorganised as the tenderer deems appropriate, consistent with their preferred methodological approach. Similarly, tenderers are free to add to, or elaborate upon, the policy questions outlined above. Therefore, while the description of tasks offers a suggested basis for the organisation of this European Research Project, and should generally be followed, it is not intended to be inflexible. Tenderers are strongly encouraged to include innovative or exploratory proposals which could help distinguish their technical offer and how it provides a unique contribution to knowledge. Interdisciplinary and experimental approaches capable of advancing understanding of territorial resilience, adaptive

prosperity and cohesion beyond conventional growth-oriented policy frameworks are particularly encouraged.

For successfully achieving the objectives of this study, the tasks below will be carried out in close collaboration with the ESPON EGTC and the steering committee.

1.3.1 Task 1: Developing the conceptual and analytical framework

The first task shall establish the conceptual, analytical and methodological foundations for the project. The purpose of this task is to develop a coherent framework for understanding how territorial cohesion and resilience operate under conditions of persistent low growth, demographic contraction and structural decline. The task shall review relevant academic, policy and ESPON literature relating to territorial shrinkage, resilience, demographic change, competitiveness, post-growth debates, well-being approaches and adaptive governance. Particular attention should be paid to how concepts such as resilience, cohesion and prosperity are currently operationalised within European territorial policy and how these may need to evolve under structurally low-growth conditions.

Building on this review, the selected service provider shall develop the project's research hypothesis, analytical framework and methodological approach. This should include defining key concepts, identifying relevant territorial indicators, establishing criteria for territorial typologies and developing an approach for comparative case study selection. The task should also position the project in relation to existing ESPON work, including ESCAPE, TERRES, FUTERR and TERRBOUND, ensuring conceptual complementarity while clarifying the project's distinct focus on territorial governance, adaptive resilience and cohesion under structural constraint.

The methodological framework should combine quantitative territorial analysis with qualitative and participatory approaches, ensuring that the research remains territorially grounded and policy-oriented. The task should also establish the foundations for stakeholder engagement and institutional learning throughout the project, including mechanisms for dialogue with national, regional and local actors. Tenderers are encouraged to engage, where relevant, with emerging debates and experimental approaches relating to adaptive prosperity, well-being, sufficiency-oriented development and post-growth territorial futures, insofar as these contribute to understanding resilience and cohesion under structurally low-growth conditions.

Expected outcome: A robust conceptual and methodological framework for the project, including a research hypothesis, analytical model, territorial indicators, typology criteria and case study methodology, together with a clear positioning of the project within the wider research landscape.

1.3.2 Task 2: Territorial Typologies and Spatial Patterns of Structural Contraction

The second task shall develop a European territorial evidence base on structurally declining and low-growth regions. The purpose of this task is to identify and analyse the different territorial patterns, trajectories and vulnerabilities associated with structural contraction across Europe. The task should seek to move beyond narrow demographic or GDP-based understandings of decline by examining how contraction interacts with governance capacity, accessibility, infrastructural conditions, institutional resilience and wider socio-spatial inequalities.

The selected service provider shall develop a territorial typology of structurally declining regions across Europe, identifying distinct pathways of contraction, adaptation and resilience. The analysis should include different territorial contexts, including shrinking rural regions, post-industrial territories, post-extractive landscapes, peripheral and border regions, as well as economically dynamic territories facing internal inequalities and social cohesion pressures. Particular attention should be given to compounded territorial vulnerabilities emerging from the interaction between demographic decline, low growth, geopolitical pressures and ecological transition challenges.

Expected outcome: A European territorial typology of structurally declining regions, accompanied by spatial evidence, vulnerability mapping and analytical indicators capable of supporting differentiated territorial and resilience-oriented policy approaches.

1.3.3 Task 3: Comparative Case Studies of Adaptive Resilience and Territorial Reconfiguration

The third task shall investigate how territories adapt under conditions of structural contraction and long-term low growth. The purpose of this task is to document concrete governance practices, institutional arrangements and territorial strategies that enable regions to sustain cohesion, accessibility and territorial viability despite demographic and economic pressures.

The selected service provider shall undertake comparative regional and local case studies representing diverse territorial contexts across Europe. These may include shrinking rural regions, post-industrial towns, peripheral and border territories, post-extractive regions and metropolitan regions facing growing internal inequalities. The research should examine how local and regional actors respond to structural decline through forms of adaptive resilience and territorial reconfiguration, including infrastructure repurposing, innovative service provision, cooperative governance arrangements, mobility solutions, foundational economy approaches and new forms of community-led territorial development.

The task should adopt participatory and place-based research approaches, combining qualitative analysis with stakeholder engagement, interviews, futures workshops and governance mapping. Particular attention should be given to identifying transferable lessons, governance innovations and institutional capacities that support long-term territorial adaptation under structurally constrained conditions.

Building on ESPON TERRES, the task should contribute to operationalising the concept of “resilience as reconfiguration”, understood not as recovery to previous growth trajectories, but as the capacity of territorial systems to reorganise and remain viable under conditions of structural change.

Expected outcome: A comparative body of evidence documenting adaptive territorial practices and governance innovations across structurally declining regions, together with a transferable framework for understanding resilience as territorial reconfiguration.

1.3.4 Task 4: Governance implications, policy pathways and operational guidance

The fourth task shall assess how cohesion policy, territorial governance and resilience planning frameworks may need to evolve in response to persistent low growth and structural territorial contraction. The purpose of this task is to identify how European territorial policy can better support long-term territorial viability, adaptive governance and social cohesion where competitiveness-driven growth strategies may no longer provide universal solutions.

The selected service provider shall analyse the implications of the project findings for cohesion policy instruments, governance arrangements, funding logics and evaluation frameworks. Particular attention should be paid to the tensions between competitiveness agendas and territorial cohesion objectives, as well as to the limitations of growth-based evaluation systems in structurally low-growth territories. The task should explore complementary policy approaches and indicators related to well-being, accessibility, foundational services, social resilience and ecological sustainability.

Building on the findings from previous tasks, the service provider shall formulate operational policy guidance and differentiated territorial policy pathways capable of supporting adaptive prosperity under structural constraint. This should include practical recommendations for cohesion programming, resilience-oriented governance, vulnerability mapping, strategic foresight and institutional learning across governance levels. Practical outputs may include governance frameworks, policy checklists, self-assessment tools and recommendations for future programming periods. This may include

consideration of how alternative or complementary territorial development approaches — including approaches focused on sufficiency, adaptive prosperity, foundational economies and long-term territorial viability — could inform future cohesion and territorial governance frameworks under conditions of structural constraint.

The task should clearly position the project as complementary to TERRBOUND. While TERRBOUND focuses primarily on governance within planetary boundaries and ecological limits, this project extends this perspective into the domains of territorial cohesion, demographic contraction and adaptive governance under structurally low-growth conditions.

Expected outcome: Operational policy guidance and practical governance tools supporting differentiated territorial approaches, adaptive resilience and cohesion policy development under conditions of persistent low growth and structural change.

1.4 Expected outputs and deliverables

The outcome of the various analysis resulting from section 1.3 (the various methodologies, analyses, etc.) shall be reported via 1) **static formats** - in a textual way as well as maps, graphs, infographics, figures (e.g. for different reports, briefs, presentations, infographics, articles, leaflets, etc.) and 2) **interactive formats in the ESPON Data and Knowledge Portal**¹ - visualisations like web maps, data stories, dashboards, apps, videos (as agreed with the ESPON EGTC). The tenderer shall provide provisional details on the nature and format of these deliveries already in its technical offer.

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 conceptual and methodological framework establishing the analytical foundations of the project, including a literature review, research hypothesis, territorial concepts, analytical dimensions and proposed methodological approach.
- A European territorial typology and spatial analysis of structurally declining and low-growth regions, including mapping of territorial patterns, vulnerabilities, adaptive capacities and differentiated trajectories of structural change.
- A comparative set of regional and local case studies examining governance adaptation, territorial resilience and mechanisms of adaptive reconfiguration under conditions of structural contraction.
- Policy recommendations and operational guidance for European, national and regional policymakers on how cohesion policy and territorial governance frameworks may better support resilience, viability and social cohesion under structurally low-growth conditions.
- Practical outputs supporting policy implementation and institutional learning, such as governance frameworks, vulnerability assessment approaches, strategic foresight inputs, self-assessment tools and resilience-oriented policy guidance.
- Analytical reflections and policy guidance on complementary territorial development approaches and evaluation frameworks beyond conventional growth-oriented models, including approaches related to well-being, foundational services, accessibility, adaptive resilience and long-term territorial viability.

Data and interactive maps and graphs resulting from the research and provided in the format compatible with the environment of the ESPON Data and Knowledge Portal.

¹ <https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/sites/#/espon-hub>

1.4.2 Deliverables

The technical offer shall include a description of the format and the content of all deliverables according to the methodological concept the tenderer proposes to implement. The technical offer shall also indicate to which task(s) each deliverable is referring to.

1.4.2.1 Predefined deliverables

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

The table presented in section 1.5.3 below indicates the time schedule for the predefined deliverables.

N.B. All reports and related deliverables (e.g. PPT, maps, posters, data delivery etc.) must use ESPON corporate identity and templates provided; specific instructions will be provided to the service provider during the kick-off meeting.

1. An inception deliverable containing at least:

- Report (approximately 30 pages, excluding annexes) including:
 - Refined conceptual and analytical framework for the research
 - Definition of the main concepts and analytical dimensions guiding the study
 - Updated methodological approach, including proposed territorial analysis and case study approach
 - Preliminary reflections on territorial typologies, indicators and data sources
 - Overview of data availability, potential limitations and proposed mitigation approaches
 - Preliminary approach for stakeholder consultation and engagement
 - Initial considerations regarding policy relevance and operationalisation of findings.
- Work plan presenting the next steps foreseen in the project's implementation, including meetings with selected target groups.
- Description of the format and content of the next intermediary deliverables.

2. A final deliverable containing at least:

Static formats:

- Final main report (40 to 80 pages) including:
 - Executive summary.
 - Final version of the conceptual and analytical framework.
 - Final territorial analysis and evidence on structural low growth, demographic contraction and adaptive resilience across European territories.
 - Final version of the territorial typologies, spatial analysis and vulnerability assessment.
 - Analysis of governance approaches, territorial adaptation mechanisms and comparative case study findings.
 - Assessment of implications for territorial governance, resilience planning and cohesion policy.
 - Conclusions, policy recommendations and operational guidance.
 - Reflections on future policy development and possible directions for further research.
- Comparative case study reports and related territorial evidence as agreed with the ESPON EGTC.

- Scientific annexes, detailing the methodology and the research results including:
 - Methodological approaches, data sources and analytical limitations.
 - Territorial indicators, analytical dimensions and mapping approaches used throughout the project.
 - Supporting evidence related to territorial typologies, vulnerability mapping and comparative analysis.
 - Additional technical material, datasets and analytical outputs as agreed with the ESPON EGTC
- Policy-oriented communication material including maps, graphics, visualisations and other dissemination outputs suitable for policymakers and stakeholders.
- Presentations (PPT, or similar - editable) of the research results: one technical presentation of the methodology, and one broader/policy-oriented presentation of the results, conclusions and recommendations adapted for the general audience.
- Data and interactive maps and graphs resulting from the research and provided in a format compatible with the ESPON Data and Knowledge Portal.
- **All figures** (graphs, schematics, illustrations, and images) included in the final deliverables shall be submitted together with their source files, particularly when underlying data are involved (e.g. editable spreadsheet files such as XLSX, and editable vector formats such as PDF, EPS or AI). All images must also be delivered separately in high-resolution PNG format. Any externally sourced images must be properly credited and licensed.
- **All maps** included in the final deliverables shall be submitted together with their source files, including the map project files (e.g. from QGIS or ArcGIS). These project files must contain correctly linked spatial and attribute data (e.g. SHP, GPKG, CSV, XLSX, or geodatabases). All map layout exports must be provided both in editable vector formats (such as PDF, EPS, or AI) and in PNG format.

All maps must follow the layout design of the ESPON map templates (MapKits), and all associated data files must be saved within the designated folder structure of the template. Additional editing and finalisation in vector editing software is permitted and encouraged. The service provider must also be able to adapt the templates when necessary, for example to adjust the spatial extent of the map (e.g. zooming in on case study areas).

- **Structured data and metadata from** all maps and figures must be provided using the ESPON data and metadata templates. The service provider shall organise descriptive and statistical data in Excel spreadsheets, structured as one or multiple datasets depending on the project outputs. Relevant spatial data must be delivered as .shp, .gpkg, or geodatabases. The data delivery should constitute a standalone product and include the following:
 - **Well-defined metadata:** All data must be accompanied by metadata explaining and describing the dataset. Metadata should provide context and include details such as title, code, abstract, source, type, years covered, and geographic coverage. Detailed requirements for metadata are provided in the [ESPON Database documentation](https://database.espon.eu/doc/)².
 - **Replicability, modularity and reuse:** Data must be delivered in a way that allows analyses to be reproduced and facilitates reuse beyond the project. This includes providing sufficiently granular temporal data, ensuring a multilevel perspective (local/regional, national, EU27), and delivering background data together with any derived or aggregated datasets.

² <https://database.espon.eu/doc/>

- **Good spatio-temporal coverage, high granularity and special attention to data gaps:** Data must cover all countries participating in the ESPON Programme (EU27 + EFTA) for the longest time-series and spatial granularity feasible if not stated or agreed otherwise. Particular attention should be given to identifying and addressing data gaps. Where gaps exist, complementary data sources, interpolation, or other appropriate methods should be used where feasible. In addition to the ESPON Programme area, data for candidate and potential candidate countries, microstates, and the United Kingdom should also be included, whenever feasible (and if at marginal costs) and subject to prior agreement of the contracting Authority.

Interactive formats:

In addition to the static content, service providers must also develop interactive content for the ESPON Data and Knowledge Portal; this a platform that allows to develop and publish interactive webpages, atlases, handbooks interactive reports, web-based maps, data stories, dashboards and various content driven applications. The platform is based on ArcGIS Enterprise technology and all the proposed/requested interactive visualisations or solutions must be compatible with the system. The platform provides configurable widgets and templates to allow easy development of the abovementioned content even with no or basic programming skills. Access to the platform with a dedicated workspace will be provided to the service provider by the ESPON EGTC. The exact format and structure of the interactive content shall be agreed 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 payment in the contract.

These 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 delivery (inception, final and progress report) including approval or request for revision and/or addressing identified challenges (indicatively within two weeks after receiving them and one month for the final delivery).

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 element 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.

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

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 reports and maps, however, the service provider shall adjust the templates if necessary, depending on the geographic extent or the relevant peculiarities.

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 lifetime 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 and all relevant information concerning the proper application of the ESPON Corporate Identity; this includes guidance on the ESPON Data and Knowledge 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 on communicating results during the project implementation.

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

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. 2 months 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 Ad-hoc coordination meetings

Project coordination meetings are organised to discuss the service contract implementation: these **meetings** may be organised to discuss deliverables submitted and to provide related feedback, or other related issues to the organisation of the work and content, including also:

- **meetings** involving the data specialist of the ESPON EGTC, which may be organised to discuss the data strategy and collection, visualisations and a map-validation workshop.
- **meetings** involving the brand manager of the ESPON EGTC, which may be organised to discuss the communication strategy during implementation: presentation of intermediary results, informing the audience on the progress made during the project lifetime, etc..

Defined case by case, these take place on a regular basis when deemed necessary. The meetings are organised by ESPON EGTC, and the conclusions may be documented.

1.5.3 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 the 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 of the service contract - "Performance of the contract and subcontracting".

Meetings	Predefined deliverables	Indicative deadline ³
Kick-off		As soon as possible (and normally within 2 weeks) after the award of the contract
	Inception Deliverable	T +2 months
1st Steering Committee		T + 3 months
	Progress report 1	T + 8 months
2nd Steering Committee		T + 9 months
	Progress report 2	T + 15 months

³ The letter "T" in this table stands for the date of the kick-off meeting. Timeframes are indicative.

Meetings	Predefined deliverables	Indicative deadline ³
3rd Steering Committee		T + 16 months
	Final Deliverable	T + 22 months
Final Steering Committee		T + 24 months

1.6 Technical and professional capacity requirements

The service provider must have proven, European/transnational scale research expertise and multidisciplinary experience relevant to the contract subject matter in order to ensure the successful implementation of the service. The competences and experience of the service provider within the fields outlined below shall be clearly demonstrated and documented, as requested in Sections 4.3 and 5.2, as part of the verification of selection criteria.

- Proven experience in studies addressing territorial development, territorial resilience, demographic change, governance and cohesion policy issues, including experience from policy-relevant and comparative analyses, preferably with a European or transnational 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 experience and academic background in analysing territorial development, regional resilience, governance systems, sustainability transitions, socio-spatial inequalities, demographic change or territorial policy in a pan-European or comparative context.
- 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 digital formats both static and interactive by means agreed with the ESPON EGTC (e.g. maps, figures, webmaps, dashboards, story maps, infographics, simple video clips, apps, etc).
- 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 and recognises the complexity of data sourcing, harmonisation and addressing data gaps, non-conventional or multiple of sources.
- At least two of the proposed team members shall have at least five years of experience and academic background in spatial analysis, territorial data management, applied statistics, GIS, territorial governance analysis or related fields relevant to the project objectives.
- The proposed team should collectively demonstrate the capacity to combine quantitative territorial analysis with qualitative, participatory, interdisciplinary or place-based research approaches relevant to territorial resilience, governance and structural territorial change.
- Interdisciplinary expertise relating to territorial resilience, adaptive governance, sustainability transitions, well-being approaches, socio-ecological transformation, post-growth debates or alternative territorial development frameworks would be considered an asset.
- At least one member with a communication/journalistic background and experience in visualising and presenting research findings in an easy-to-grasp and policy-relevant way.
- Team members shall demonstrate a very good linguistic ability to draft and communicate research findings in high-quality English.



(...)

End of extract

Consult www.pmp.lu for downloading the full tendering documentation from the Portail des marches publics and submit your tender via the same platform.