

ESPON



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

ESPON Thematic Action Plan and “On demand” activities

Venezia 5 June 2025



Thematic Action Plans

Thematic Action Plans

The TAP is a strategic document describing:



Specific territorial trends and drivers

that policy making will have to address in the specific thematic field

The available territorial evidence

including data or research methodologies, existing and that could constitute a starting point

The additional evidence gaps

that ESPON should be suited to fill

The knowledge gaps among policy makers at all levels

that prevent them from delivering effective policy response

Some major thematic activities

to bring the evidence to the policy makers and transfer it into actionable knowledge

Thematic Action Plans



Approved – first activities launched in 2022

Approved – first activities launched in 2023



**Climate
neutral
territories**



**Governance
of new
geographies**



**Places
resilient
to crises**



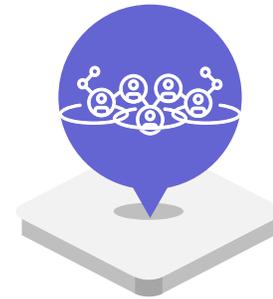
**Perspective
for all people
and places**



**Living, working
and travelling
across borders**



**Smart
connectivity**



**European
territories in
global
interactions**



**Adapting to
the impacts
of climate
change**



Climate neutral territories



Objective: to produce territorial evidence on (renewable) energy consumption and production, ecosystem services, biodiversity, and natural resources within European territories and its seas. The new evidence to be created will provide information on the territorial opportunities and challenges that could affect the transition of cities and regions towards climate neutrality by 2050. It will allow to understand possible territorial consequences for cities and regions, following different development pathways towards complete carbon neutrality by 2050.



Places resilient to crises



Objective: to produce territorial evidence on the vulnerability of European territories to different types of crises, such as environmental, economic, social, health and digital disruptions. The new evidence to be created will provide information on the specific strengths of European territories that enable them to withstand crises as well as on their specific development opportunities that can be tapped to better manage the effects of crises. It will support identification of vulnerability and risks of different types of territories to crises as well as transformative development opportunities (based on, e.g., geographical specificities and similarities).



Governance of new geographies



Objective: to develop methodological studies aimed at identifying emerging geographies, their socio-economic characteristics and integrated development potential. It will also give an opportunity to assess existing governance mechanisms and recommend new ones, while promoting functional approach in planning and governance; networking and involvement of civil societies, youth initiatives and actions by other stakeholders. It will deliver new and innovative territorial data on delineations and development trends of functional territories, in order to boost tailored multi-level governance mechanisms addressing different type of functional areas and to improve capacities of spatial planning authorities and involved stakeholders.



Perspective for all people and places



Objective: to develop the knowledge and evidence base on the territorial patterns of upward economic and social convergence. This TAP will focus on better understanding of socio-economic trends and developing new approaches for better capturing the territorial dimensions of social and economic realities and disparities to support better capacities and skills of policymakers on all levels of governance and across policy sectors



Living, working and travelling across borders



Objective: to develop knowledge and evidence on cross-border regions. This includes pinpointing challenges, exploring cooperation in areas like services and jobs, acknowledging regional differences, and bridging the data gap. It focuses on understanding the socio-economic progress of European cross-border regions. This translates to examining how well these regions are catching up economically compared to more developed areas. By providing evidence and analysis, the TAP empowers governance at all levels, while recognizing the value of citizen participation



Smart connectivity



Objective: to leverage digital transformation to tackle territorial challenges, particularly in less connected areas. This involves exploring ways to improve connectivity (both digital and greener), enhance digital skills, and develop new methods for coordinating public services across all levels of governance, ultimately promoting digital cohesion. examines both digital and physical connections. It focuses on monitoring digital progress, closing the digital divide, and improving accessibility (especially for less connected areas) through smart mobility solutions. Based on its research, it provides policy recommendations on enhancing transport, accessibility, and digital services, with a focus on lagging regions



European territories in global interactions



Objective: to prepare policymakers for a "vigilant, dynamic and adaptive" approach to regional competitiveness in the context of the Open Strategic Autonomy (OSA). This means understanding how the OSA, which prioritizes green and digital transitions, will affect trade, access to technology, and foreign investment in different regions. This knowledge will be used to develop recommendations for adapting territorial strategies to maintain competitiveness. It will examine how the emphasis on strategic autonomy will impact European regions' competitiveness in green and digital transitions. The research activities under this TAP will examine how the OSA's instruments will affect dependencies on global trade, technological networks, and foreign capital ownership and how regions can adapt to these changes.

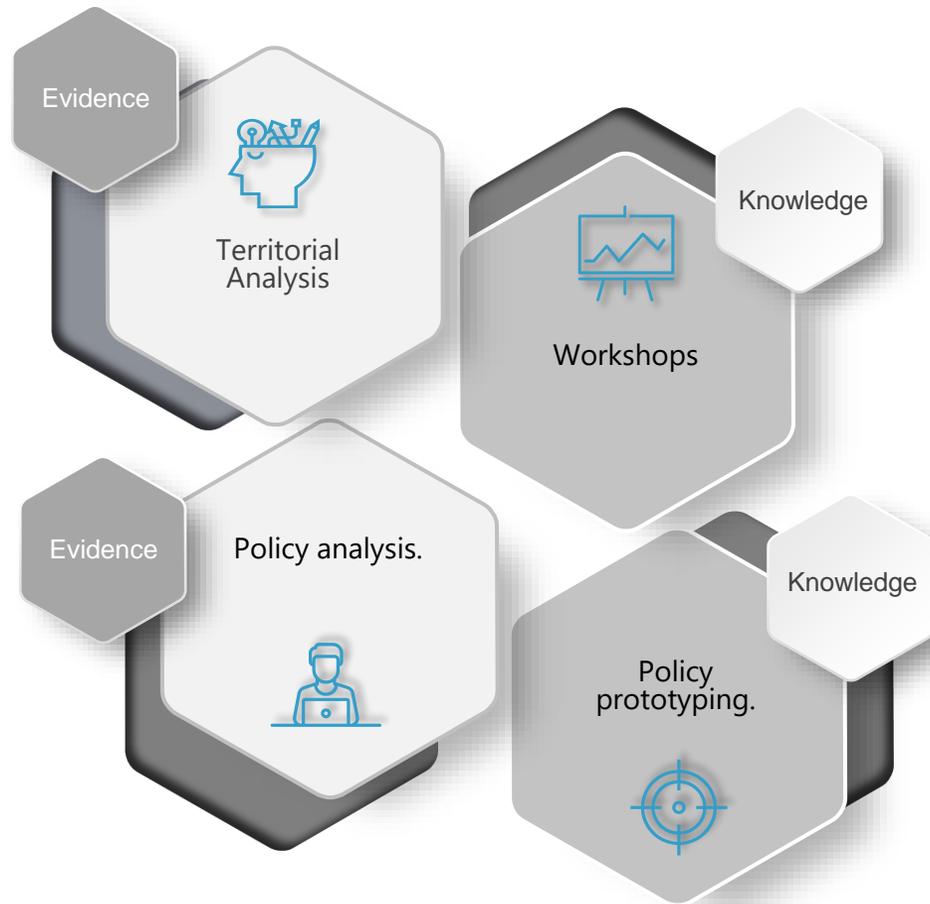


Adapting to the impacts of climate change



Objective: to support efforts to adapt to climate change by promoting nature-based solutions (NbS) by providing evidence on the territorial impact of climate change and the effectiveness of NbS in different areas. It also seeks to improve policymakers' capacity to integrate NbS into territorial development strategies and focuses on the territorial dimension of climate adaptation using NbS. It will develop indicators to measure climate vulnerability and the effectiveness of NbS interventions. The research will also examine how NbS can contribute to other EU policy goals, such as nature conservation, while strengthening territorial cohesion.

Thematic Action Plans



TAPs are composed of several activities

On one side, the activities related to the production of **evidence** (such as European research projects, targeted analyses, case studies, data, maps etc.)

On the other side, the activities related to the **knowledge development**, intended to deliver the evidence to the policy makers

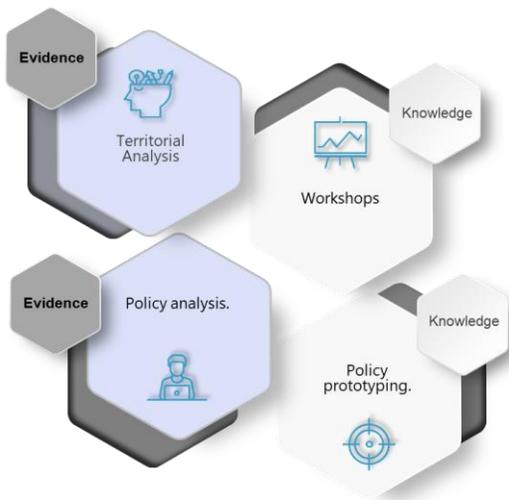
Thematic Action Plans

Europe-wide thematic activities:

- studies similar to current applied research projects, including pan-European collaborative actions with multilateral organisations and/or including involvement of national/regional stakeholders (for case studies);
- position papers, policy briefs, thematic papers;
- territorial and public policies scenarios on specific themes; pan-European comparative analyses and surveys (at various territorial levels);

Demand-driven thematic activities for TAP themes:

- targeted analyses (traditional and foresight-driven); fast-track targeted analyses (short-length and/or with reduced territorial focus);
- enhanced targeted analyses including further developed European territorial evidence and transferability assessment;
- case studies, both spin-off and on-demand; territorial reports (TAP-related at various territorial levels: country, local, FUAs...)



On-demand knowledge development

// transnational knowledge development activities by the EGTC

Policy events

// initiated by the EGTC or on request of MC, ECPs or groups of stakeholders

// aimed to boost the uptake of the produced territorial evidence.

// include such formats as: conferences, thematic seminars, peer learning workshops, policy labs or ad-hoc policy impact evaluation events

Learning events

// initiated by the EGTC or on request or groups of ECPs or stakeholders

// offer different formats of training sessions

// meant to increase the stakeholders' fluency in using the ESPON EGTC web applications, mapping solutions, policy analysis tools or specific methodologies

Networking events

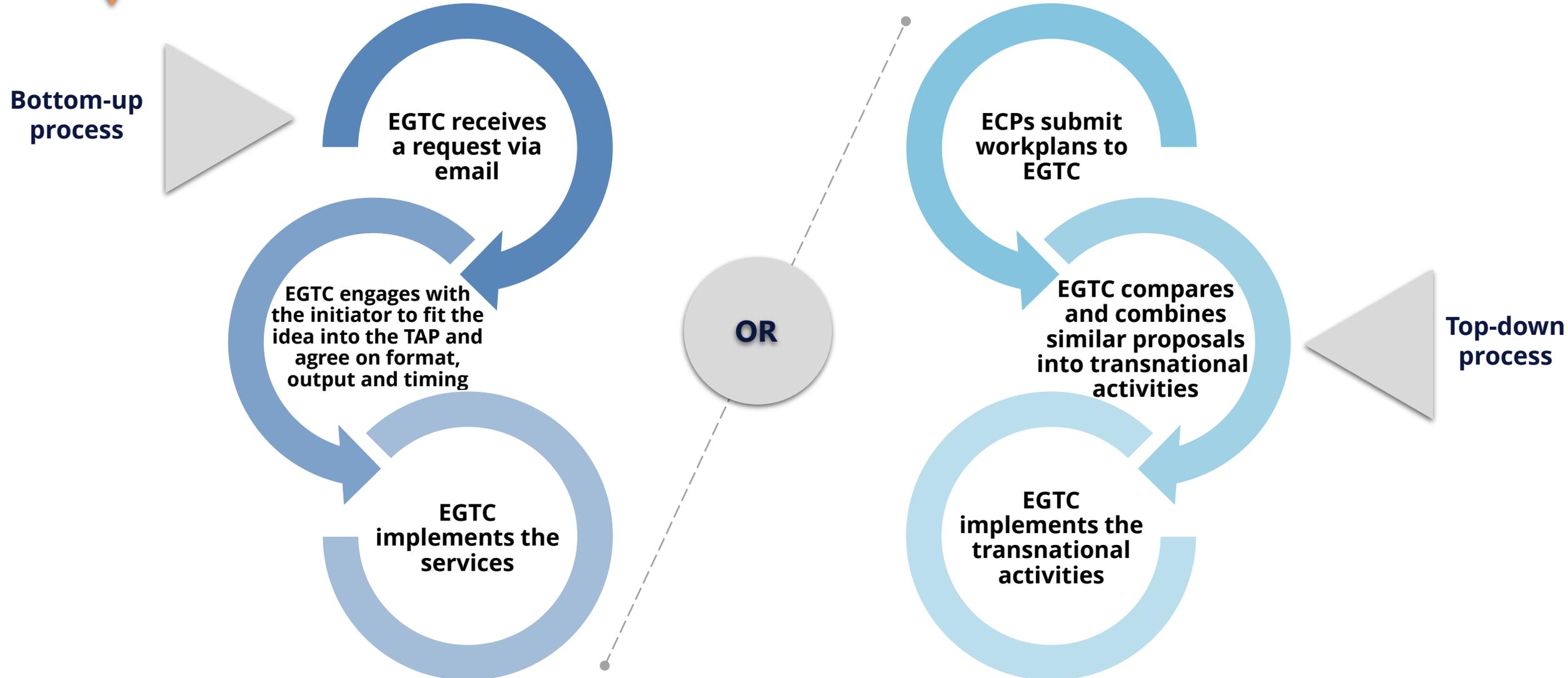
// initiated by the EGTC or on request of ECP or groups of researchers or stakeholders

// meant to facilitate information exchange between stakeholders, researchers and practitioners

// include such formats as: territorial observatory events, scientific conferences or topical exchange sessions

On-demand knowledge development

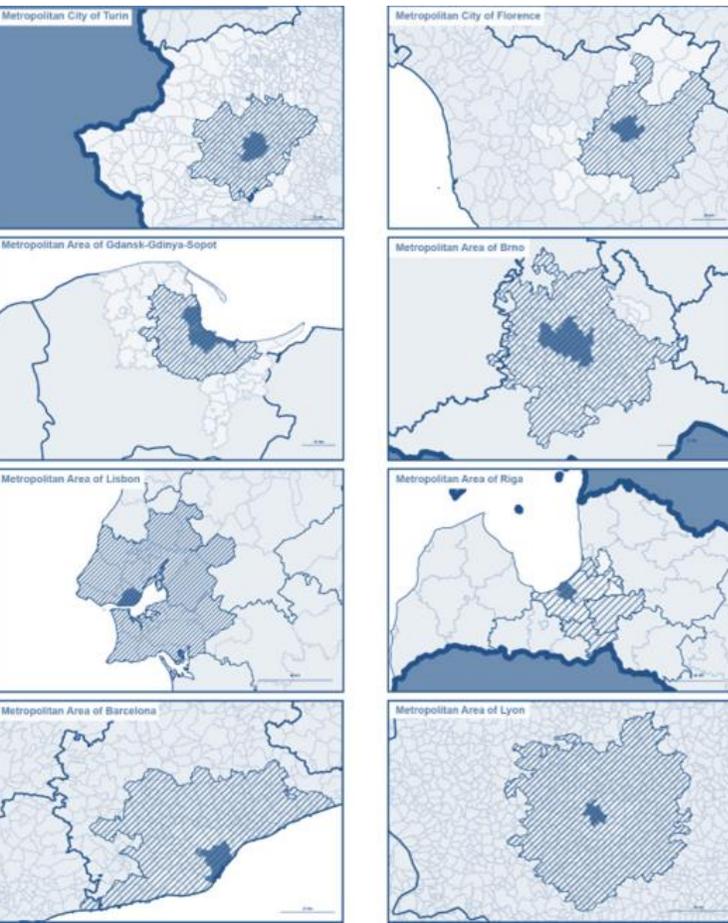
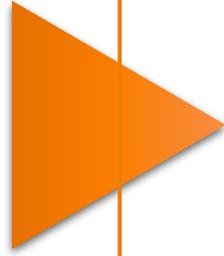
// transnational knowledge development activities by the EGTC





Targeted analysis

Targeted analysis



Focus: specific policy processes led by macroregional /national/ regional/ local stakeholders of the ESPON Programme area and **fitting the specific TAP**

Types:

- fast-track targeted analyses (short-length and/or with reduced territorial focus);
- targeted analyses (traditional and foresight-driven);
- enhanced targeted analyses including further developed European territorial evidence and transferability assessment;
- case studies, both spin-off and on-demand; territorial reports (TAP-related at various territorial levels: country, local, FUAs...)

Methodology: traditional or foresight driven, may contain new European territorial evidence

Expected results: It translates European territorial evidence to the particular policy context in the development of all kinds of territories (macroregions, regions, cities, FUAs...)

Stakeholders' involvement: collaboration with national/regional/local stakeholders to define policy questions and/or development scenarios, select case studies and embed the outcomes in policy processes

How does it work

- Stakeholders develop their project proposal by filling in a digital application form .
- In their proposal, stakeholders outline the policy issues that they would like to have addressed by an ESPON Targeted Analysis. When doing that, stakeholders need to make sure that their proposal:
 - ✓ Takes into account their specific territorial context and the policy needs
 - ✓ Relates to one of the eight Thematic Action Plans (TAPs) of the ESPON Programme
 - ✓ Reflects a wider European perspective;
 - ✓ Includes how they will make use of the analytical results in their policy-making processes;
 - ✓ Explains the added value of their project idea for themselves as well as for stakeholders in other countries, regions or cities.
- For a smooth implementation process, stakeholders need to consider the following:
 - ✓ The analysis needs to be feasible in terms of methodology, indicators and data provision;
 - ✓ Active stakeholder involvement throughout the entire implementation process is key to receiving meaningful and useful results.

What happens if you are selected

- You will be invited to co-create a Terms of Reference document together with ESPON EGTC.
- A dedicated budget, typically around EUR 250,000, will be earmarked to finance the targeted analysis, and allow you to interact with research experts in the topical field
- ESPON EGTC will launch public procurement and invite you to participate in the evaluation of tenders.
- Then, ESPON EGTC will sign a service contract with the best tenderer and act as a contracting authority to ensure that the service quality matches your expectations.
- You will be offered an opportunity to learn with your peers and share evidence and experiences with other stakeholders.
- You will also be invited to attend ESPON events, both transnational and organised in cooperation with EU Presidencies, to network with an international community of policy makers and experts (cost not covered by the Programme)

Targeted analysis

// indicative time length (stages 1-5): 18 - 24 months (depending on the thematic scope or geographical coverage)

PROJECT
TIMELINE

6 months

Cutoff date (TBD)

3 months

15 months

uptake / afterlife

Call for proposals

Stakeholders develop and submit their proposals

1
Evaluation and selection of proposals

EGTC evaluates and selects a predefined number of proposals fitting the specific TAPs

2

Develop the selected proposals into ToRs

EGTC together with the stakeholders develop the ToRs

3
Public procurement and contract award

EGTC launches public procurement procedure

4

Project implementation

Contract signing
Kick-off and project implementation / Delivery dates
Steering with project stakeholders and volunteer MC

5

Delivery of the project results

EGTC works closely with the project stakeholders and volunteer MC in validating the results

Results uptake

Results uptake and usage by the stakeholders in the policy development processes

Targeted analysis

// ESPON EGTC-MC-ECP interactions and selection criteria for stakeholder proposals

Call for proposals

1

Evaluation and selection of proposals

2

Develop the selected proposals into ToRs

3

Public procurement and contract award

4

Project implementation

5

Delivery of the project results

Results uptake

Selection criteria

- The project shall aim to collect and deliver new territorial evidence aligned to a specific TAP theme and context, and also perform a territorial analysis (use of analytical results in policy making).
- It shall bring a wider European perspective to the territories of the stakeholders (presence of European perspective).
- It shall demonstrate a distinct territorial context and address the specific policy opportunities and challenges in the territories of the stakeholders therein (place-based approach).
- It shall engage the respective stakeholders in design, implementation and delivery stages as well as in the policy uptake of the outputs (stakeholder involvement).

WWW.ESPON.EU

The screenshot shows the ESPON website interface. At the top, the browser address bar displays the URL: [https://www.espon.eu/projects?f\[0\]=topic%3AEconomy%2C%20Finances%20and%20Trade&f\[1\]=topic%3AEmployment%2C%20Education](https://www.espon.eu/projects?f[0]=topic%3AEconomy%2C%20Finances%20and%20Trade&f[1]=topic%3AEmployment%2C%20Education). The page title is "Discover ESPON Projects".

A search filter overlay is open on the left side of the page. It features a search bar and a "Filter options" button. Below the search bar, it says "Select filters below to refine your search results." The filter options are organized into three sections:

- Thematic Action Plans:** Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change, Climate-Neutral Territories, European Territories in Global Interactions, Governance of New Geographies, Living, Working and Travelling Across Borders, Perspective for all people and places, Places resilient to crises, Smart Connectivity.
- Topics:** Economy, Finances and Trade (checked), Employment, Education and Skills (checked), Environment, Climate and Energy, Governance, Population and Living Conditions, Regional Economy (checked), Science, Technology and Innovation, Territorial Structures and Land Use, Transport and Accessibility.
- Project type:** Applied Research, European Research, On demand Territorial study, Targeted Analysis, Territorial Impact Assessment.

At the bottom of the filter overlay, there is a "Results (45)" button and a "Clear Filters" button.

The main content area displays a grid of project cards. The first row includes:

- [MedcoopNet] - Understanding Cooperation Dynamics in the... Projects**: Cooperation in the Mediterranean area.
- [RE-INDUSTRY] - Capacity building for re-industrialising regions in a globally... Projects**: A new approach for reindustrialising regions.
- [DHAK] - The role of digital helpers in reducing digital inequalities Projects**.

The second row includes:

- [COREIB] - Collecting and analysing data for the post-27 INTERREG Projects**.
- [STARTER] - Strategic Autonomy Rules for Trade in European Regions Projects**.
- [URDICO] - Urban Dimension of Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes Projects**.

Navigation elements include "My account", "ESPON in your country", "TERRITORIAL", "PORTAL", "About", "Priorities", "Projects", "Support", "News", "Events", "Library", "Engage", and "Explore". The "Projects" menu item is highlighted with an orange circle. The "Filters" button in the main content area is also highlighted with an orange circle.

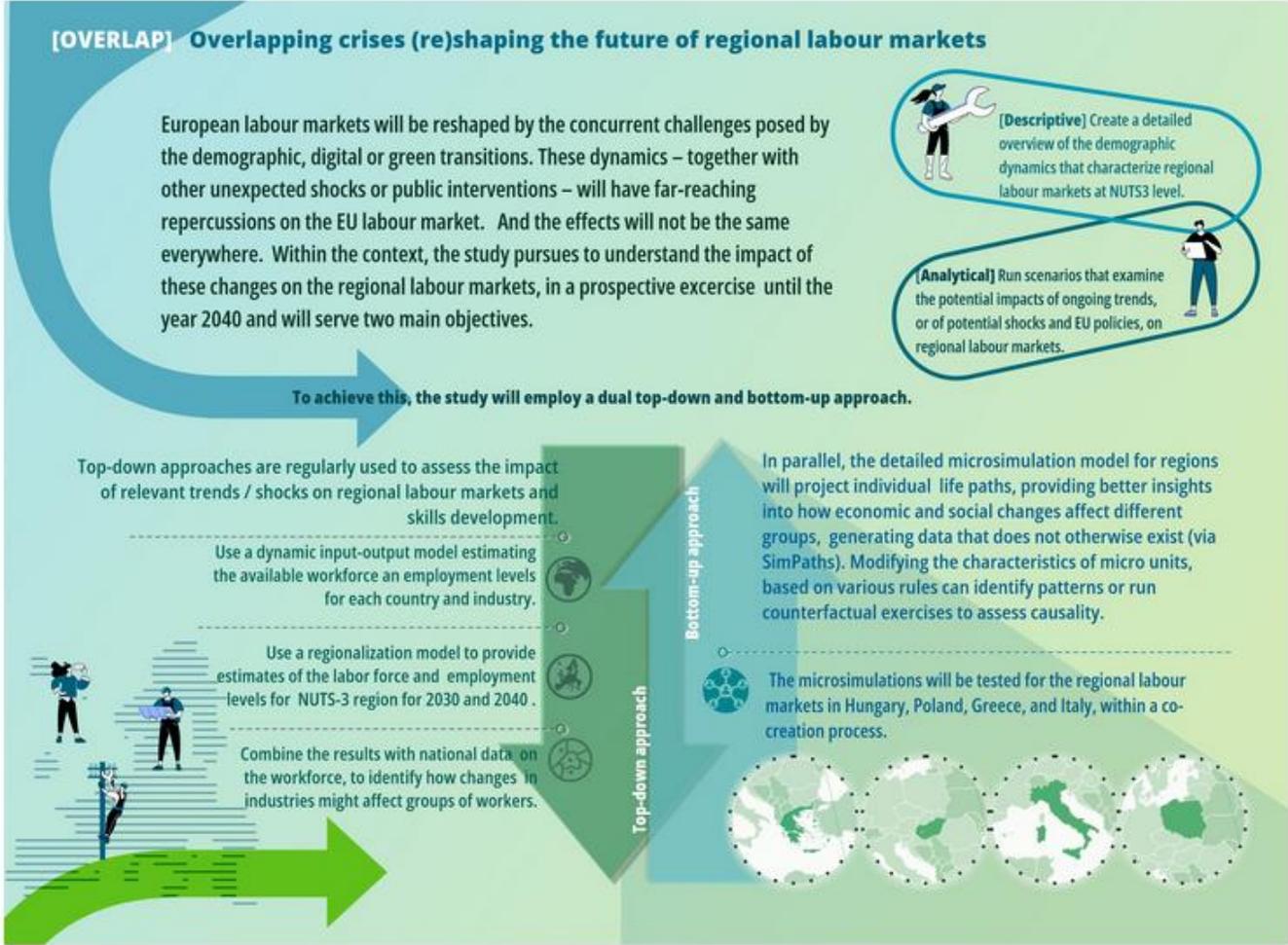
Examples of projects: OVERLAP



[OVERLAP] - Overlapping crises (re)shaping the future of regional labour markets

Perspective for all people and places · Projects

Lifetime August 2023 – June 2025 Budget EUR 565,000.00



Examples of projects: HOUSE4ALL

Home / Projects / [HOUSE4ALL] Access To Affordable and Quality Housing For All People



[HOUSE4ALL] Access to affordable and quality housing for all people

Perspective for all people and places · Projects

Lifetime	Budget
September 2023 – September 2025	EUR 676,915.00

Expected results

The main outputs of the service will be:

- A (policy) conceptual framework defining affordable and quality housing.
- A compendium on housing policies in ESPON countries.
- A methodological framework describing how to measure housing affordability and quality considering an integrated place-based approach with a special focus on groups in vulnerable situations.
- Pan-European analysis on housing affordability and quality and case studies on different types of territories.
- A guide or handbook aimed at national, regional and local policy makers on how to promote and implement affordability and quality housing
- Data and interactive maps and graphs which will be showcased in the [ESPON Portal](#)

Examples of projects: InTerAlp

Home / Projects / [InTerAlp] - Interface Territories Across The Alpine Region



[InTerAlp] - Interface Territories across the Alpine region

Governance of New Geographies · Projects

InTerAlp sets out to contribute to the ongoing discourse around an Alpine Spatial Planning Perspective (ASPP)

Lifetime	Budget
January 2024 - November 2024	EUR 243,250.00

Related publications



Governance of New Geographies

[InTerAlp] - Interface Territories across the Alpine region - A new geography

Policy brief · December 22, 2024

A policy brief from the InTerAlp Project

Download



Governance of New Geographies

[InTerAlp] - Interface Territories across the Alpine region - scientific results

Scientific Reports · December 22, 2024

Scientific reports from the InTerAlp project

Download



Governance of New Geographies

[InTerAlp] - Interface Territories across the Alpine region

Final report · December 22, 2024

The final report of the InTerAlp project

Download



Governance of New Geographies

[InTerAlp] - Interface Territories across the Alpine region - Case studies

Case Studies · December 22, 2024

Case studies from the InTerAlp Project

Download

The main outputs of the service are:

- Territorial evidence on the existing interlinkages and flows in Alpine interface territories;
- Identification of common development challenges that could be addressed by tailored governance mechanisms;
- Delineation of functional areas that are defining the Alpine macro-region;
- Assessment of the effectiveness of existing governance structures for Alpine interface territories for an integrated sustainable development of the Alpine region;
- Proposals of ways/measures/tools to better and more effectively plan for and develop Alpine interface territories in a sustainable manner, addressing possibilities for improving cooperation and cross-border relations and indicating ways of using existing bodies and initiatives better.
- Proposals for the promotion of effective soft planning instruments and tools.

Examples of projects: Re-INDUSTRY

Home / Projects / [RE-INDUSTRY] – Capacity Building For Re-industrialising Regions In a Globally Decarbonizing Economy



[RE-INDUSTRY] – Capacity building for re-industrialising regions in a globally decarbonizing economy

European Territories in Global Interactions - Projects

A new approach for reindustrialising regions

Lifetime	Budget
January 2025 – December 2025	EUR 249,520.00

Expected results

- Identification of different types of renewable energy dependent industries and investments with high potential for regional economic value creation and sustainability.
- New territorial evidence on the current changes in competitiveness and in prospects for growth and resilient regional development related to global value chains and FDI.
- Identification of specific local/regional factors that could influence the probability of achieving value creation in the stakeholder regions.
- Proposals of measures and/or tools to better and more effectively plan for and develop the green reindustrialisation process, both in the stakeholder regions and in similar regions in Europe, including recommendations for better stakeholder cooperation related to new investments and industrial establishments, and recommendations for better support to reindustrialising regions in a multi-level governance context.

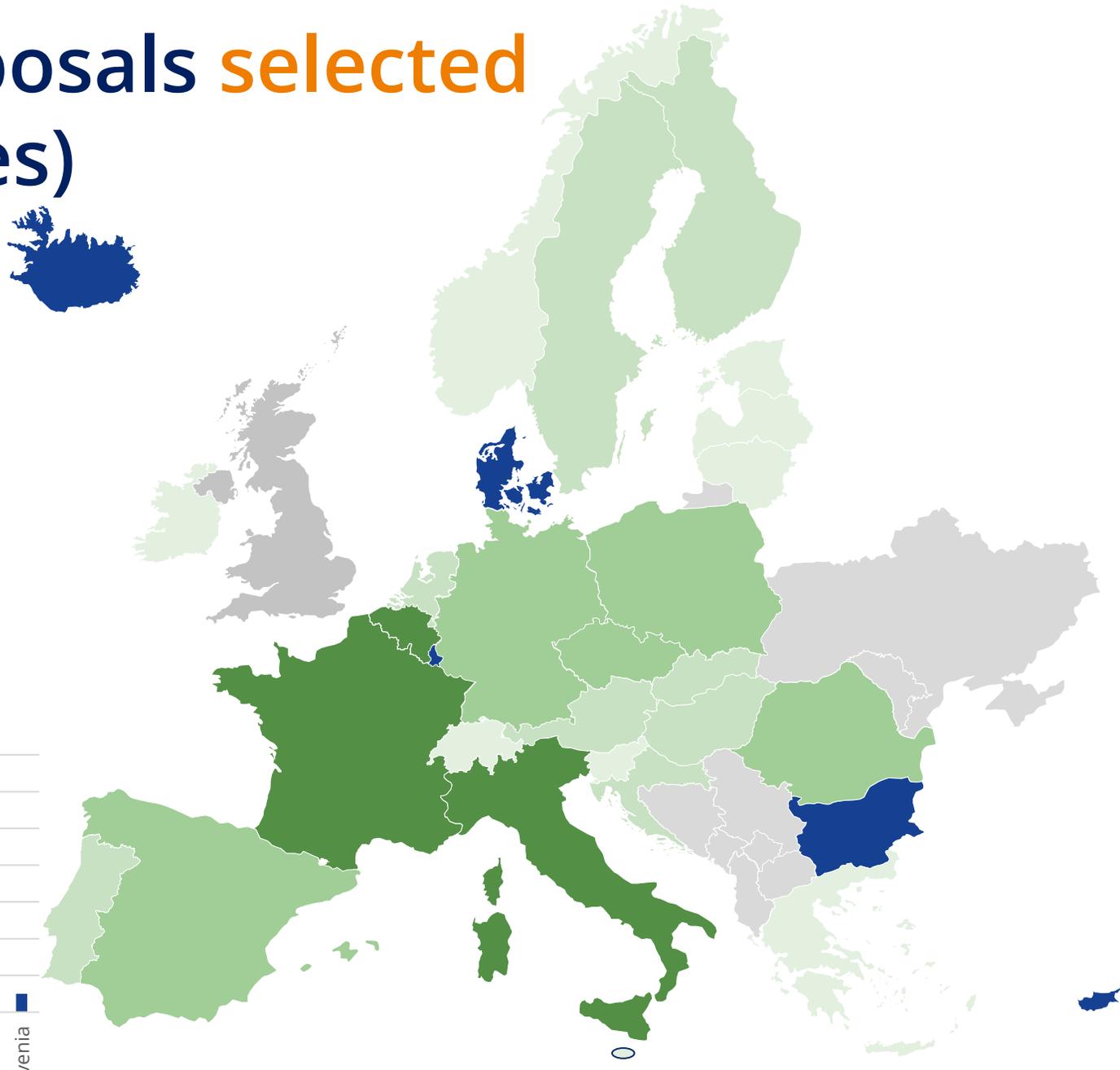
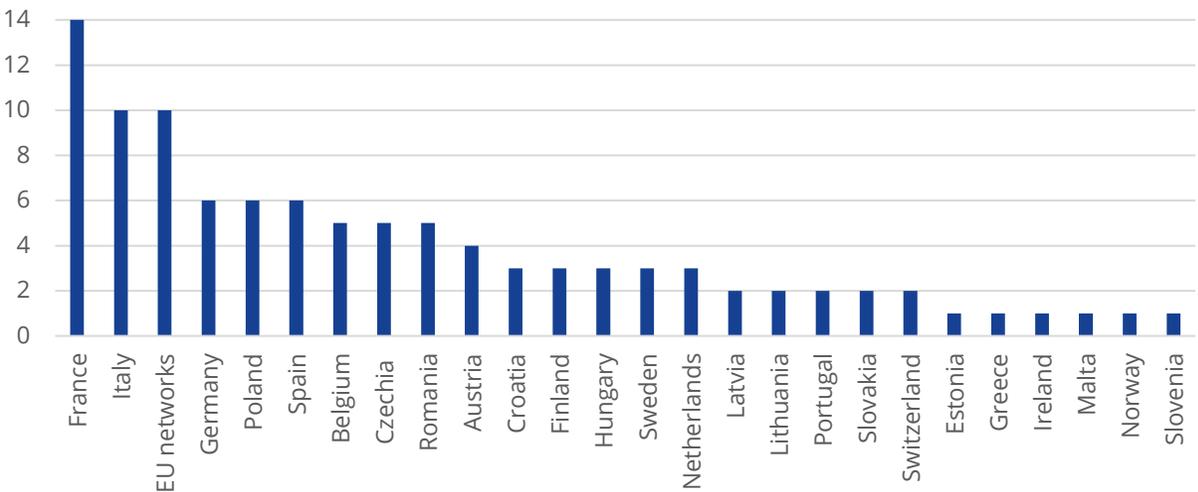
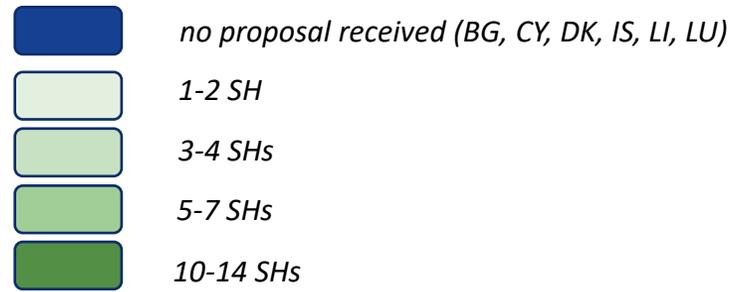
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State of play with targeted analyses

Targeted Analyses - proposals **selected** (total after 4 cut-off dates)

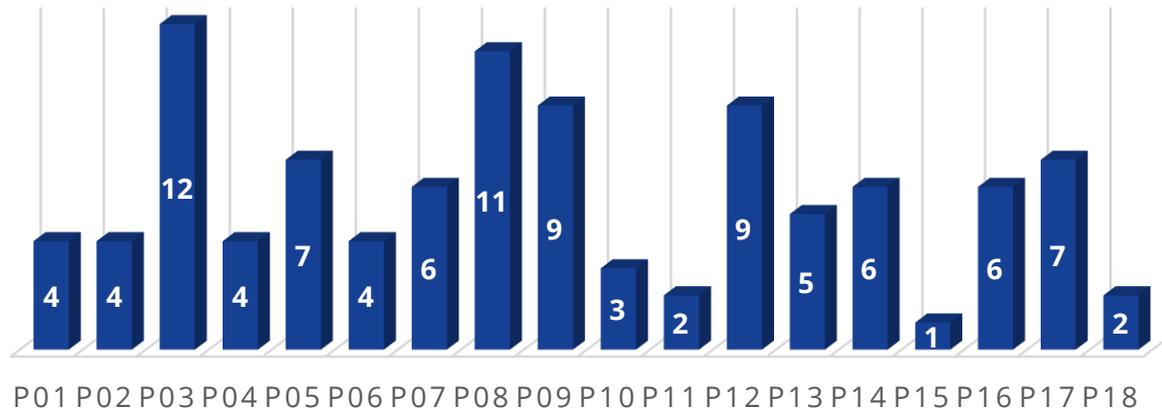
Number of stakeholders by country

102 stakeholders

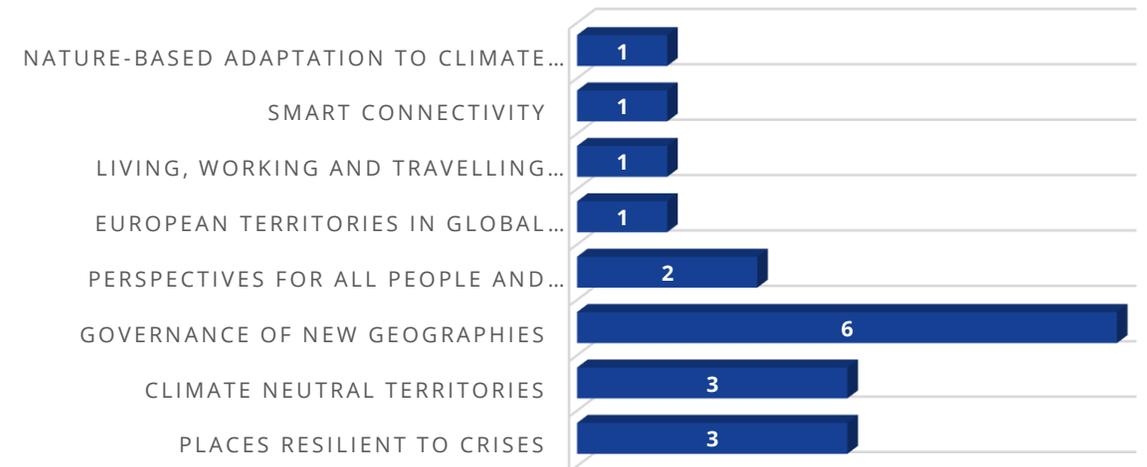


Analysis of the TA proposals selected

NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDERS BY PROPOSALS
(102 IN TOTAL)



NUMBER OF PROPOSALS BY TAP



Distribution of targeted analyses per TAP



Places resilient to crises

- **CHANEBO** - Challenges at EU's North-East External Borders
- **VREPO** - Vulnerability, REsilience and REcovery POlicies of the physical living environment
- **ResiliAnce** - Improving Local Intermediate Authorities' crises preparedness and territorial Resilience



Governance of new geographies

- **InTerAlp** - Interface Territories across the Alpine region
- **KARPAT** - Determinants and opportunities for the socio-economic and spatial development of the Carpathian region
- **AtlanticMRS** - Orientations for the development of an Atlantic Macro-Region
- **PREPARED** : Policy Rethink: Enhanced Planning and Governance for North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Corridor
- **MedCoopNet**: Mapping Mediterranean Cooperation Networks and Governance
- **SECC**: Spill-over effects of cultural capital on territorial development policies

Distribution of targeted analyses per TAP



Smart connectivity

- **DHAK** - Digital Helpers : Awareness and Knowledge



Nature-Based Adaptation to Climate Change

- **GILL** - Methodology for quantifying the demand for green infrastructure at local level



European territories in global interactions

- **RE-INDUSTRY** : Capacity Building for Re-industrializing Regions in a Globally Decarbonizing Economy



Climate neutral territories

- **CleanEnergy4CE** - Putting clean energy transition policies into practice in central Europe
- **ISCoPLA** - Supporting Climate Projects in Local Areas
- **METROLAND**: Metropolitan Territories: Land Take Reduction and Net Zero Development

Distribution of targeted analyses per TAP



**Living, working
and travelling
across borders**

- **CROSSSHOP** - Cross-border shopping in the French-German border region



**Perspective
for all people
and places**

- **RURALPLAN** - Innovative planning in shrinking societies
- **URDICO** : Urban dimension of Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes



Future steps

Future steps

- Next cut-off-date : **24 November 2025**
 - ✓ Maximum number of proposals to be selected in each cut off date up to 5.
 - ✓ A new webinar for stakeholders will be organised in 2025
 - ✓ FAQ for stakeholders has been updated
 - ✓ Probably no more than 2 other selection rounds, after the next one in 2025.