

ESPON



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

Single Operation – further implementation steps

Agenda Item 5

Mons, 3-4 June 2024

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

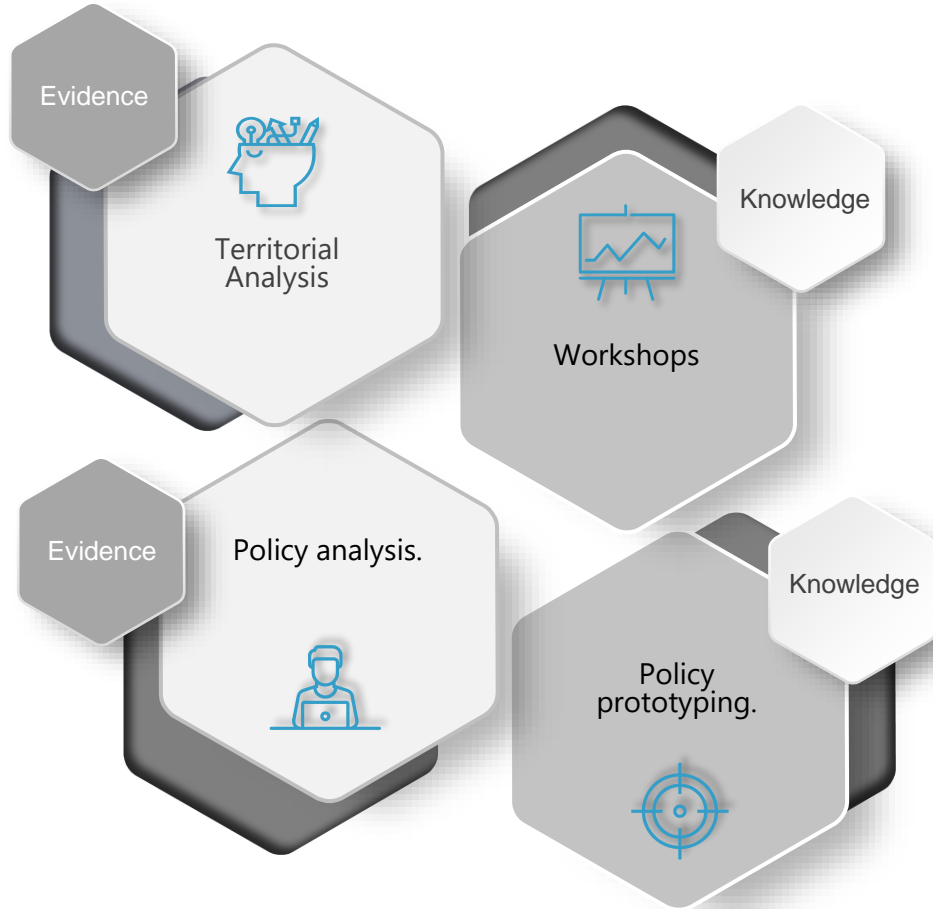
The knowledge gaps among policy makers at all levels

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

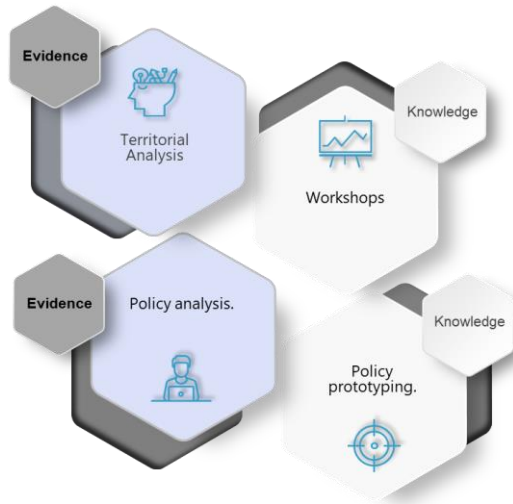


TAPs are composed of several activities

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

TAPs evidence production



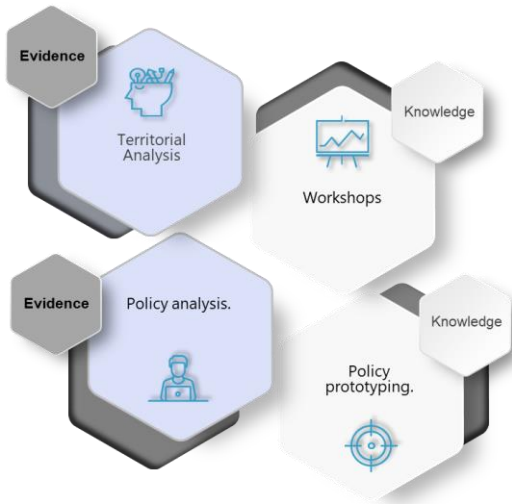
Europe-wide thematic activities:

- European 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:

- 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...)

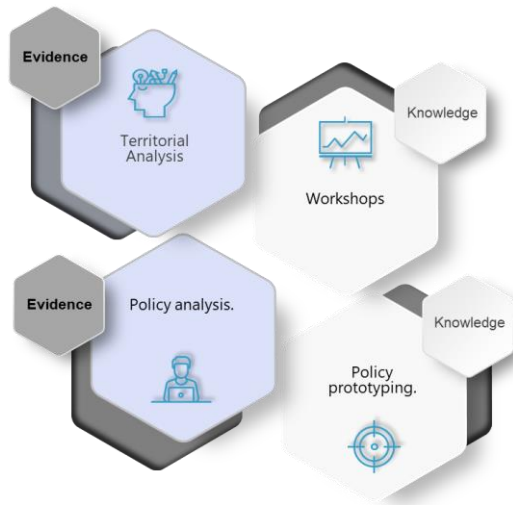
TAPs evidence production



Cross-thematic activities:

- Cross-cutting studies and scenarios;
- Territorial foresight reports (public policies oriented); territorial observation reports and atlases;
- Territorial impact assessments or other new methodologies (e.g. modelling, evaluation, policy analysis); territorial reports (comprehensive at EU/national levels);
- Supportive actions to TA2030 implementation (e.g. performance monitoring framework)

TAPs knowledge development



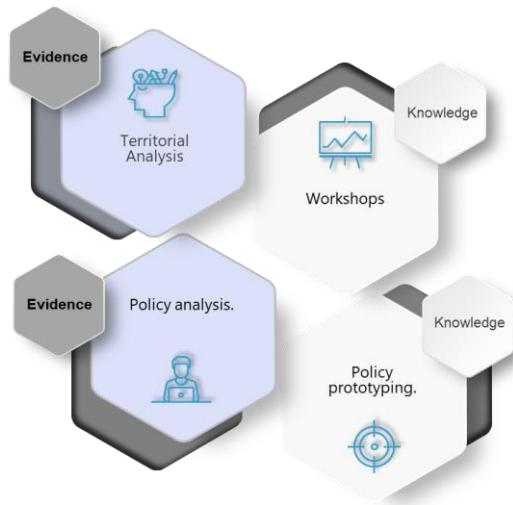
“Pushing evidence” activities (delivering the messages of the evidence production to the different stakeholders):

- standard outreach activities;
- publications,
- dissemination events;
- position papers
-

“Pulling evidence” activities (attracting the interest of the stakeholders and scientists) and “pulling” them in ESPON by directly involving in activities and debates:

- policy prototyping;
- territorial science boot camps;
- peer-to-peer workshops;
- digital community of practitioners
-

TAPs knowledge development



“Accompanying measures” (accompanying stakeholders in their process of understanding and use ESPON evidence, according to their requests):

- impact assessments;
- task force supports to policy processes;
-

ESPON is applied via Thematic Action Plans (up to 10)



8 TAPs have been approved and are under implementation



**Climate
neutral
territories**



**Governance
of new
geographies**



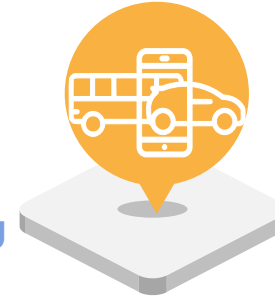
**Places
resilient
to crises**



**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.



Focus: it will develop knowledge base on the territorial aspects of green transition towards a climate neutral economy in a broader sense, i.e. considering mobility, spatial planning, consumption, energy and society. This TAP will investigate possibilities to transform existing challenges into opportunities by, inter alia, decreasing carbon emissions; increasing carbon sinks and energy efficiency; becoming more energy self-sufficient and eradicating energy poverty.



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.

The comparative studies under this TAP can pinpoint vulnerability and risks of different types of territories to crises as well as transformative development opportunities (based on, e.g., geographical specificities and similarities).



Focus: it will facilitate better understanding of possible territorial consequences related to different crises, by providing new insights and possible pathways for all places confronted with uncertainties, pressures and 'black swan' events.



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.

This TAP will avail 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.



Focus: it will develop a knowledge base to better understand new emerging geographies in terms of their delineations, functional and cooperation arrangements and involved actors and stakeholders. In addition, through the observations for the entire ESPON Programme area, this TAP shall provide new knowledge and possible pathways on how to find appropriate and new governance mechanisms.



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.

Building on the diversity and the potential of European territories as a key determinant to secure sustainable and prosperous territorial development (beyond sole economic growth), the territorial evidence and knowledge development activities in this TAP will support better capacities and skills of policymakers on all levels of governance and across policy sectors



Focus: it will stimulate networking and peer learning to promote adaptive strategies that reflect broader collective objectives (prosperous development, inclusion, spatial justice, wellbeing, just and fair transition, etc.) and involve all relevant stakeholders in the policy-making processes.



Living, working and travelling across borders



Objective: develop the evidence and knowledge basis about the territorial patterns of upward socio-economic convergence in cross-border regions. The TAP will support the efforts of all stakeholders in enhancing cross-border integration and cooperation by identifying the opportunities, bottlenecks and instruments for alleviating the specific obstacles that cross-border regions face. This TAP will build and enhance the evidence collected on cross-border interaction and cooperation, bringing a more comprehensive and integrated overview, to inform decision-making .



Focus: identify best practice examples, instil innovation, and inspire new pathways for cross-border territories to cope with or capitalise on challenges (such as mobility, health, migration or environmental crises). It will seek integrated territorial approaches promoting cohesive cross-border regions, and the development of functional living areas on land and maritime country borders. It shall consider all (internal and external) borders of the European Union including the outermost regions , EFTA countries, IPA countries, the ENP countries and relevant third countries (like the United Kingdom). It will also address the integrated territorial development of the four EU macro-regions: the Baltic Sea Region, the Danube region, the Adriatic/Ionian Region and the Alpine Region .



Smart connectivity



Objective: link digitalisation and mobility, develop an evidence and knowledge base in understanding how digital transition can help dealing with territorial challenges and digital cohesion, especially related to low accessibility (e.g. the prospect of a better and smarter (greener) connectivity, improved digital skills and new ways how to organise public services across different levels of governance).

It will provide analysis and policy guidance on how to improve transport and passenger mobility and accessibility in places which are outside of high-speed networks and fall into enclaves of lower accessibility and consequently potential reduced economic potential.



Focus: future-looking on the foresight element (not to overlap with research dedicated to digital transition and mobility issues). The innovation elements to be explored will be more in the context of private sector offering appropriate digital (smart) solutions to public administrations rather than innovation to support business development.



European territories in global interactions



Objective: prepare Cohesion Policy architects and beneficiaries alike for a vigilant, dynamic and adaptive approach towards territorial competitiveness and the green and digital transition. The adaptation of territorial strategies for competitiveness, decarbonisation and digitalisation to the Open Strategic Autonomy requires empirically backed or simulation-aided advice. Concretely, it will provide regional policymakers with evidence on changes in competitiveness as well as prospects for decarbonisation and digitalisation as a result of changes in global trade, access to global technological networks and foreign investment.



Focus: joint effects of regional strategic dependencies and their exposure to the instruments of the Open Strategic Autonomy, unlike the preceding ESPON research that addresses the regional effects of global trade, technological networks and foreign capital in general. Moreover, research will consider the risks from these joint effects (e.g., changes in labour markets and industries) and responses to de-risk (e.g., mineral exploration, technological developments, circular economy).



Nature-based adaption to climate change



Objective: mobilise ESPON evidence to help sustain Nature-based Solutions policy actions in support of Cohesion Policy's objectives of a greener, low-carbon future alongside the priorities of the Territorial Agenda 2030 for a just and green Europe.

This TAP will also support the objective of 'a Europe closer to citizens' by helping to strengthen integrated territorial development, policy co-creation and local initiatives.



Focus: as opposed to technological and physical infrastructure solutions (so called, 'grey' options), the TAP will instead concentrate on the potential for managing climate risks through 'green' and 'blue' options, which focus on Nature-based Solutions in land, water and marine areas. Green and blue adaptation measures tend to have a very strong territorial dimension, including in their overlap with other EU policy domains and the prospect for significant territorial conflicts with other sectors, necessitating an enhanced cross-sectoral, multi-level and integrated territorial governance perspective.