



Application Form PART B – call for proposal (PRIORITY 1) ANONYMOUS

ESPON Applied Research Project 2013/1/23

Small and medium sized towns in their functional territorial context (2012-2014)

- I. Please outline your concept for addressing the research need expressed within the project specification by also describing the objectives of the proposed work (maximum 15 pages).
- II. Please present a break down of the overall concept into individual work packages, indicating also the respective responsibilities of each Project Partner (maximum 15 pages).
- III. Please describe the scientific approach you intend to apply, including the methodology you plan to make use of as well as the typologies, data, indicators, etc. and how you intend to solve problems in this field, e.g. data availability (maximum 15 pages).
- IV. Please indicate which activities you foresee at which point in time to allow for the dissemination of your project's results (maximum 5 pages).

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Abbreviations

CU	ESPON Coordination Unit
ERDF	European Regional Development Funds
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
FUA	Functional Urban Area
GIS	Geo Information System
LAU	Local Administrative Units
LP	Lead Partner
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ÖIR	Österreichisches Institut für Raumplanung
PC	Project Coordinator
PM	Project Manager
PSC	Project Steering Committee
TPG	Transnational Project Group
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader

1. Outline of the concept

1.1 Introduction

The project ‘Small and medium-sized towns in their functional territorial context (2012-2014)’ belongs to the first priority of the ESPON 2013 programme ‘Applied research on territorial development, competitiveness and cohesion: Evidence on European territorial trends, perspectives and policy impacts’. As such it is central in developing evidence and awareness on small and medium-sized towns in their urban functional area. It requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, taking into account social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects. Referring to the previous ESPON 2006 project SMESTO and to the central aspect of this research project, which is the context area in which of investigated towns, the project acronym will be REX SMESTO based on ‘R-urban contEXT of Small and MEdium-Sized TOWns.¹

The over-arching aim of the project is to contribute to a better understanding of roles, functions and potentials of small and medium-sized towns in European territorial contexts. In doing so, the project is aimed to develop supporting knowledge, evidence and policy recommendations related to (1) roles and functions of small and medium-sized towns in the European territorial structure; (2) their potentials and barriers for development in different territorial contexts; (3) the type of governance and cooperation agreements supporting their development. The underlying demand for such knowledge is to support targeted policy development, relating to the contributions to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as to strengthen their contributions to a more balanced territorial development.

In the context of a balanced and polycentric development in Europe as key developmental challenge, ESPON research has already provided a series of projects on cities and urban agglomerations, the roles of cities and secondary growth poles in territorial development as well as on different types of areas. Based on these results of targeted analyses and applied research projects, the main focus of the proposed project is to provide further research and additional evidence and data on the “functional roles of small and medium-sized towns and how they contribute to the development of their territorial context and bring added value to the Europe 2020 strategy”². The project’s practical policy considerations and recommendations should support a policy that can strengthen “the contribution of small and medium-sized towns in different territorial contexts to balanced development and territorial cohesion of the European regions. The relevant policy context can be derived mainly from four policy documents (see following sub-sections) which highlight the policy aim of territorial cohesion and the importance of small and medium-sized towns in the development of particularly intermediate and rural areas.

¹ In the Slavic languages *mesto* is the word for town, and the ‘s’ could also be associated with *stare*, hence *stare mesto* meaning old town or *Altstadt* in German. Being such an old town, or rather having a historic centre, might be one of the most intriguing features of small and medium-sized towns. The word ‘r-urban’ alludes to alternatives to the still frequently used rural-urban dichotomy. The ‘r-urban’ texture of Europe’s regions has a lot ‘in between’.

² Specification, p.4

Three key issues are fundamental to the project specification:

- The need to **identify small and medium-sized towns in the territorial structures of Europe**, their distribution throughout the territory of the ESPON space, in different territorial contexts and the ESPON Territorial Typologies, including also their performance in terms of demographic and economic development in relation to the European and national situation;
- The need to identify **the roles and functions** of small and medium-sized towns in their different territorial contexts, such as their specific functions in rural areas, metropolitan areas or in cross-border areas;
- The need to gather knowledge about the **governance and co-operation arrangements supporting the development of small and medium-sized towns**, including the identification of good practices related to issues of critical mass and merging of small local authorities.

Addressing these issues requires a research approach which fully reflects conceptual advances and constructs hypotheses derived from contemporary interpretations of processes in urban and rural development. At the same time it requires a comprehensive utilisation of available data sources and, therefore, also close cooperation with the TPG currently being in charge of the development of the ESPON 2013 Database. This approach will assure the development of practical policy recommendations based on robust and valid empirical findings.

This document starts with the concept outline elaborating and discussing the objectives of the research project and its policy context. This is followed by the presentation of work packages including responsibilities. Then the scientific approach and the detailed methodology are presented based on a discussion of relevant methodological problems and their possibilities of solution. Finally, the last section develops a plan for dissemination activities of the project results.

1.2 The policy rationale for the project

Almost 60% of the urban population in Europe lives in towns with 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants³ yet attention in urban research has been biased towards large, metropolitan cities making small and medium-sized cities both ‘undernoticed and undertheorized’⁴. Moreover, the few studies that exist of smaller centres are mostly case-studies⁵. This bias is not a recent phenomenon: similar criticism was voiced decades ago already.⁶ Recently, some researchers observe that small and medium-sized centres are obviously gaining importance in fields of urban research⁷ and of urban policy-making and planning in terms of competitiveness and sustainable development⁸. Nevertheless, our knowledge on the diversity of types of small and medium-sized cities, and their potentials and future prospects in regional and national planning policy is still very limited and fragmented.

³ ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1, The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)”. Final Report prepared by ÖIR, Nordregio and NOMISMA, p.38

⁴ Clancey, G. (2004) Local memory and worldly narrative: the remote city in America and Japan. *Urban Studies* 41.12, 2335–55. Compare also Van Heur, B. (2010) Small cities and the geographical bias of creative industries research and policy. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure & Events* 2(2), pp. 189-192

⁵ Erikcek, G.A. & H. McKinney (2006), “Small cities blues”: Looking for growth factors in small and medium-sized cities. *Economic Development Quarterly* 20(3), pp. 232-258

⁶ Hardoy, J. and D. Satterthwaite (eds.) (1986) Small and intermediate urban centres: their role in national and regional development in the third world, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

⁷ Adam, B. (2006), Medium-sized cities in urban regions. *European Planning Studies* 14(4), pp. 547-555

⁸ INTELI (2011)

The fifth Cohesion Report

As main instrument for pursuing harmonious development of the European Union Cohesion Policy plays a major role for strengthening Europe at various levels in the context of a more inter-related and globalised world. The fifth Cohesion Report “argues that an efficient Europe 2020 strategy requires close coordination between Cohesion Policy and other EU policies. In many domains, public policies have a greater overall impact if they are closely coordinated rather than being implemented in isolation.”⁹ The fifth Cohesion Report is the first under the Lisbon Treaty, which added territorial cohesion to the goals of economic and social cohesion. It emphasises that new programmes with a particular focus on “the role of cities, functional geographies, specific geographical or demographic problems and macro-regional strategies”¹⁰ are necessary for reaching the goal of territorial cohesion. Besides, it mentions the possibilities to prepare operational programmes also at the level of groups of towns and to reinforce a focus on strengthening local and regional partnerships. More specifically, the draft ERDF Regulation for the upcoming Structural Funds period foresees an ‘urban development platform’ for integrated projects in cities. It also highlights that urban-rural linkages should be addressed in terms of access to affordable and quality infrastructures and services and the reinforcement of local development approaches with a focus on strengthening local and regional partnerships.¹¹

The Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020

While the Fifth Cohesion Report does not mention small and medium-sized towns explicitly, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 – Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions (May 2011)¹² does so – although at a rather general level. Based on the concept of polycentric and balanced territorial development, the Territorial Agenda emphasises the importance of avoiding a polarisation between capitals, metropolitan areas and medium-sized towns on a national scale. Further to this, it states that “small and medium-sized towns can play a crucial role at regional level” (Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, May 2011, 7). Their significance is also highlighted in the context of encouraging integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions and, in particular, in the context of diverse links between urban and rural territories. “Urban-rural interdependence should be recognised through integrated governance and planning based on broad partnership. We welcome place-based strategies developed locally to address local conditions. In rural areas small and medium-sized towns play a crucial role; therefore it is important to improve the accessibility of urban centres from related rural territories to ensure the necessary availability of job opportunities and services of general interest.”¹³ Interestingly enough, the paper adds at this point, that

⁹ European Commission (2010) Investing in Europe’s future. Fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion. Foreword, summary, conclusions, maps and comments. November 2010, p.7

¹⁰ Ibid, p.28

¹¹ Ibid, p.29. In this context one must not forget that the urban dimension is a required part in all ERDF operational programmes in the Structural Funds period 2007-2013. The results of a first assessment of the urban dimension in the operational programmes 2007-2014, show that “in total, the Commission’s expectations for a full exploitation of the regulatory possibilities and for strong and integrated ‘urban’ strands in programmes have so far only been met partially.” (DG Regio (2008) Fostering the urban dimension. Analysis of the Operational Programmes co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (2007-2013), p.4. This result and potential hindrances to integrated approaches have to be taken into account in the elaboration of research questions on issues of governance in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

¹² Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020. Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions. Agreed at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development on 19th May 2011 Gödöllő, Hungary.

¹³ For a broad agreement at European level on the need to ensure legal certainty and consistency across EU policies, while respecting the diversity of sectors and situations see the Communication from the Commission on

“metropolitan regions should also be aware that they have responsibility for the development of their wider surroundings” (Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, May 2011, 8)¹⁴ and does not mention the agency of small and medium-sized towns in this regard. All in all, the Territorial Agenda points out a series of significant points related to policies and developments relevant for small and medium-sized towns.

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion

The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion¹⁵ (European Commission, 2008) recognises advantages and disadvantages of the specific settlement pattern in the European Union. The settlement pattern is characterised as a “relatively dense urban network” with only few very large cities and highlights the importance of small cities and towns for a balanced territorial development. The paper discusses key issues of development under the headlines of the phenomena of concentration, connectivity and cooperation. Dealing with the challenges arising from these phenomena is the key for the development. In the context of concentration, it highlights that “economic activity is more concentrated across the EU than population” and stresses the necessity of a balanced and harmonious development among and in agglomerations, “intermediate regions, which have more small cities and towns”, as well as in rural areas. “Towns and cities in intermediate and rural regions also provide essential services for the surrounding rural areas” and points out that in rural areas “small and medium-sized towns often play a more important role than their size might suggest”. They are central for the provision of infrastructure and access to services for people and enterprise and thus ensure that these areas “remain attractive places to live”.

Challenges arising from connectivity are the comprehensive and area-covering access to services of general public interest such as health care and education, reliable connections to energy networks, good intermodal transport and access to broadband internet. In order to provide these services and face the demands arising from issues of concentration, small cities and towns need cooperation at various levels. They “can benefit from increasing returns if they create a strong network”. Thus, cooperation strengthens potentials and resources for facing existing challenges. Moreover, as natural disasters and pollution do not halt at national borders, cross-border cooperation can be a central condition for (risk) management. However, cooperation across borders is also most important for economic and social development in the European Union and also related to the specific spatial and geographic features and given governance structures.

Excursus: The European Spatial Development Perspective

A decade before the policy aim of territorial cohesion has been strengthened as part of the Lisbon Treaty, a balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the EU was the topic of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)¹⁶, a document which was adopted by the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the Member States of the European Union and the member of the European Commission

¹⁴ Accompanying the Communication “A single market for 21st century Europe”. Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European Commitment.

¹⁵ This raises the question in which ways this has actually been implemented in agreements on specific governance structures and cooperation partnerships, but also the about the role of small and medium-sized towns as motors of partnerships and cooperation agreements – both with metropolitan and urban areas and with rural areas.

¹⁶ European Commission (2008) The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. Turning territorial diversity into strength. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. COM(2008) 616 final.

¹⁶ European Communities (1999) ESDP. European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union. Agreed at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in Potsdam, May 1999.

responsible for Regional Policy. Although its adoption was an important step forward and has the potential to bring the European integration a major step further, it was highlighted that the ESDP “does not provide for any new responsibilities at Community level”¹⁷ and will serve as a policy framework for actors at all levels “in their own respective spheres of responsibility”. In the context of polycentric spatial development and a new urban-rural relationship, this paper refers several times to the role of small and medium-sized towns, particularly their importance for structuring urbanised regions and rural areas. It also stresses their role of focal points for regional development and as important partners in (trans-)national cooperation projects and the role of suppliers of (a minimum of) public services and public transport. However, the ESDP describes small and medium-sized towns rather as “‘natural’ attributes to metropolitan regions”¹⁸ than as important actors with particular functions. In this context, it seems rather logical, that specific policy options directly for small and medium-sized towns have not been developed.

To conclude, the main actual contextual factors of the policy rationale are the strengthened policy aim of territorial cohesion through the Lisbon Treaty, the Europe 2020 strategy which calls for a better coordination between Cohesion policy and sectoral policies and the Fifth Cohesion Report which states the need for new programmes which better take into account the role of cities, functional geographies and strengthen towns in local and regional partnerships.¹⁹ In this context, the rationale for the project is anchored particularly in the Territorial Agenda and the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, which both emphasise a polycentric and balanced territorial development and the supply functions of cities and towns. While the Territorial Agenda focuses on urban-rural interdependences and the crucial role of small and medium-sized towns in rural areas, the Green Paper makes a difference as it also takes into account “intermediate regions, which have more small cities and towns”. To put it in a nutshell, in the light of the recent economic and financial crisis and with the given settlement structure in the European Union, it is more than obvious that small and medium-sized towns are of utmost important for a balanced development.

1.3 The framework of the ESPON Programme

While the ESPON 2006 Programme provided integrated analysis and long-term spatial scenarios, the ESPON 2013 can built on these results and go one stop further through a focus on applied research, targeted analysis, indicator development and data collection. It is strongly focused on the provision of empirical evidence for stakeholders and policy makers all over Europe at all levels. The demand for evidence on policy development and cooperation related to the territorial dimension is increasing not least because of the stronger integration of territorial cohesion in European policy documents.

The proposed project is an applied research project and shall, accordingly contribute to the related general objectives in the framework of the ESPON 2013 Pogramme. Thus it will “create information and evidence on territorial challenges and opportunities

¹⁷ Excerpt from the final conclusions issued by the German Presidency at the close of the Informal Council of EU Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning, Potsdam 10-11 May 1999, published in European Communities (1999)

¹⁸ Specifications, p.4

¹⁹ For a deeper investigation on the territorial dimension also the discussion about the place-based approach in Structural Funds and Cohesion policy reform has to be taken into account. Compare Barca, F. (2009) An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations. Independent Report for the Commissioner for Regional Policy.

for success for the development of regions”²⁰. Its analysis will have a cross-thematic character and include a future perspective of new themes. The project “holds a key position in developing evidence and awareness on small and medium-sized towns in their urban functional area.” While gathering and systematizing policy-relevant knowledge also in the light of the Europe 2020 strategy, the project can build on a series of relevant ESPON projects, including also the ESPON 2013 Database I and II projects.

1.4 The objectives of the research project

In this policy context, the main focus of the proposed project is to provide further research and additional evidence and data on the “functional roles of small and medium-sized towns and how they contribute to the development of their territorial context and bring added value to the Europe 2020 strategy”. This includes the provisions of a description of the general development of small and medium-sized towns at a European and regional level with specific attention has to be paid to four policy dimensions, namely the economic, the governance, the social and the environmental dimensions. The project’s practical policy considerations and recommendations should support a policy that can strengthen “the contribution of small and medium-sized towns in different territorial contexts to balanced development and territorial cohesion of the European regions.

More specifically, this project has three objectives:

- It has to develop a **methodology for the identification** of small and medium-sized towns. This methodology should be compatible with the new urbanisation classification at European level and comprise “places having an urban centre with a population between 5,000 and 50,000 inhabitants”. (Specification, p.6)
- It has to deepen the understanding of the **roles and functions** that small and medium-sized towns perform in the different territorial contexts and support policies with evidence on this topic. Thus, research has to be undertaken on the relations and interactions between the towns and their manifold surrounding areas and relevant indicators has to be found for their definition in terms of functional areas (e.g. population density, commuting). Moreover, it has to provide evidence in which ways roles and functions differ among the nine ESPON Territorial Typologies and pay particular attention to the economic, governance, social and environmental dimensions.
- It has to assess the different **governance and cooperation arrangements** used for the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of public policies and public services. Particularly policies aiming at increasing critical mass such as promoting cooperation, mergers etc. have to be taken into account.

In reaching these objectives and required outputs, the research project will develop a comprehensive conceptual framework. A basic outline is presented in the next sub-section.

1.5 Conceptual framework

Taking into account existing scientific research on small and medium-sized towns, in particular with regard to their functional areas and their performance in terms of economy, social and environmental aspects as well as and governance and cooperation arrangements and, most importantly, based on finalised and ongoing

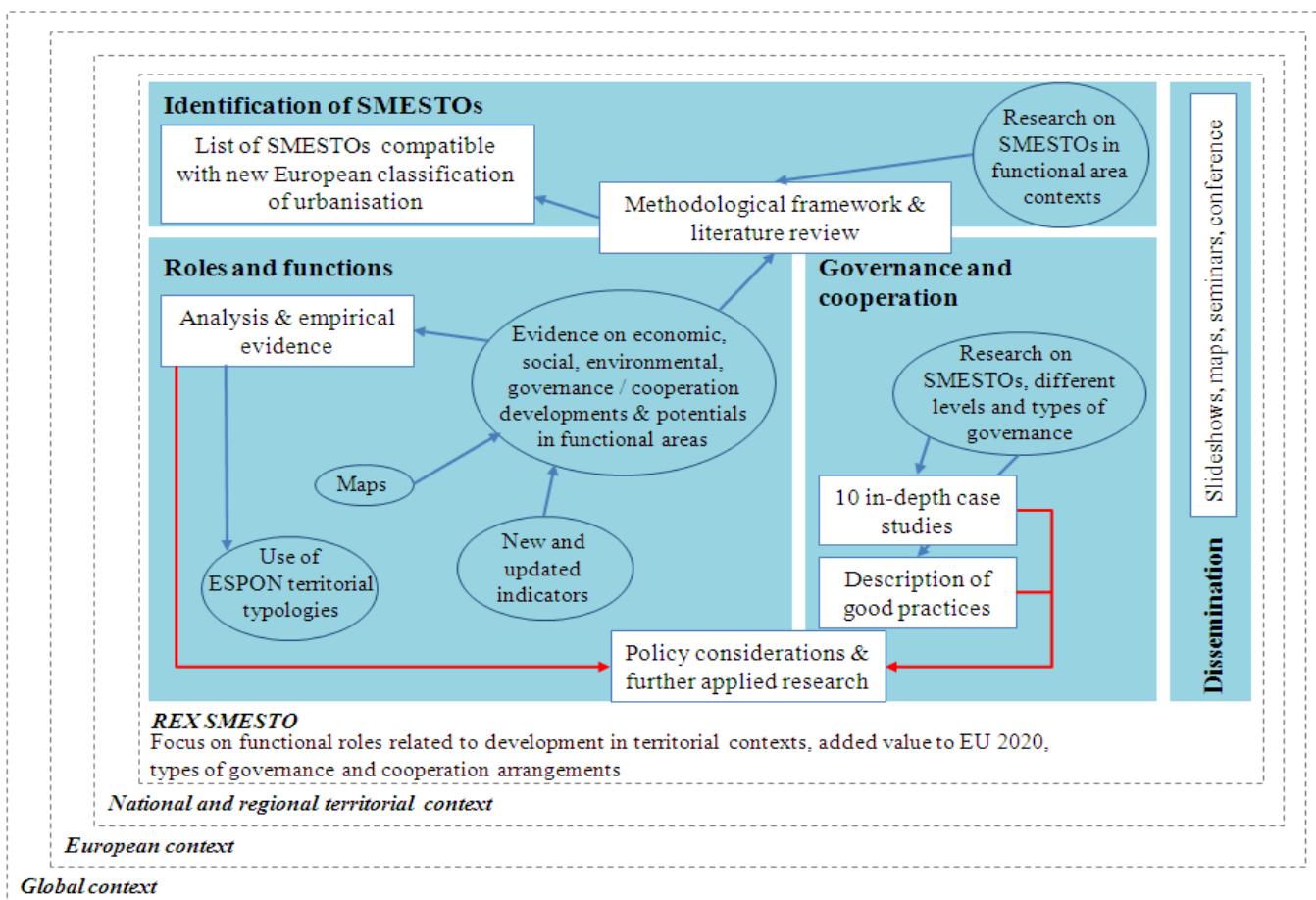
²⁰ Specification, p.3

research results from ESPON projects and databases, a thorough conceptual and methodological framework will be developed that shall allow to best reach the outputs and provide, on the one hand, policy makers with relevant policy recommendations and, on the other hand, the research community, with pathways for further research.

Among the key concepts to be developed and defined will be a clear-cut definition of small and medium-sized towns in their functional areas, a typology of these contexts that is relevant for policy-relevant performance and development analyses as well as the identification of developmental potentials in multi-level governance and cooperation arrangements. The identification of relevant indicators, comprehensive data collection, sophisticated multi-variate analyses of quantitative data and analysis of qualitative data will constitute a strong foundation for the evidence to be provided. The analysis will be based on a five-level approach commonly used by all ESPON applied research projects wherever data will allow.

Figure 1 shows an overview of this conceptual framework with main analytical steps and outputs. The upcoming sections discuss and structure this complex and demanding research work to be undertaken and present how the proposed integrated research approach will serve to provide evidence for a policy dedicated to balanced territorial development and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



2. Description of Work Packages (WPs)

2.1 WP1 Coordination

2.1.1 Work organisation

The project assembles four partners with an average of 4 to 6 persons involved in each partner organisation. A project team of roughly 20 persons needs a clear structure of responsibilities for the execution of the scientific work and for the integration of the different tasks related to three work packages (WPs). This starts with a distribution of roles for each partner in each individual WP, which is presented in Figure 2 as it has been agreed between the partners. Certainly, the distribution of tasks has to be further detailed upon the actual start of the work. For planning purposes and for the design of the project management it is sufficient though.

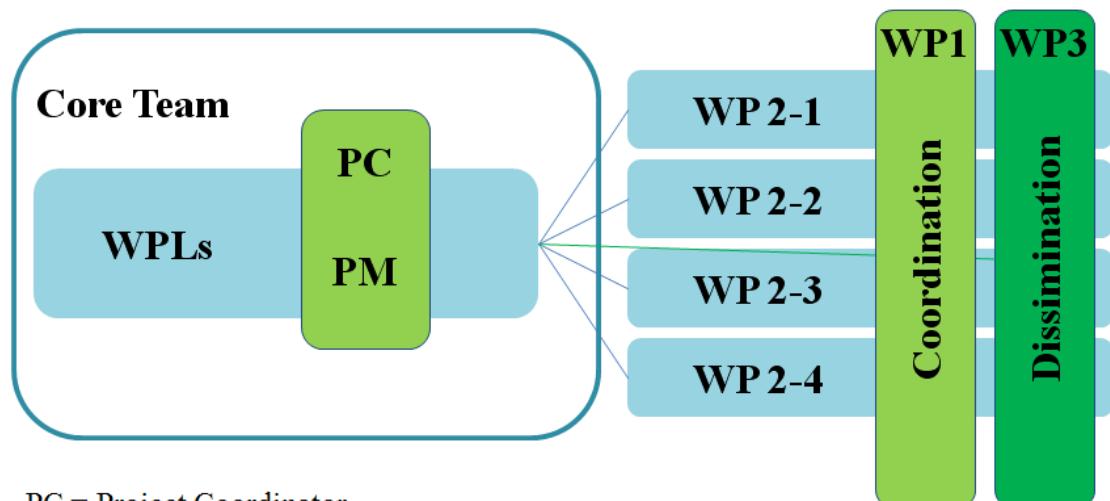
Figure 2. Distribution of responsibilities within the TPG

Work Package	LP	P2	P3	P4
WP1 - Coordination	blue			
WP2 - Research Activities				
WP2.1 Methodology and Identification	blue	green	green	green
WP2.2 Roles and Functions		green	blue	green
WP2.3 SMESTO-Governance	green	green		blue
WP2.4 Case Studies	green	blue	green	green
WP3 - Dissemination	blue	green	green	green

 responsible
contributing

All four research WPs are organised along the same lines with a WP leader (WPL) from the responsible partner taking care of the execution of the WP and the delivery of the agreed outputs. Across the four research WPs two vertical WPs (Coordination, Dissemination), particularly with the reporting task as part of WP1 Coordination, will make sure that the research work is integrated appropriately. This is also reflected in the compilation of the core team, which is assisting the project coordinator with the task of project management in respect to technical and scientific issues. Figure 3 shows the composition of the core team, which consists of the project coordinator (PC), the project manager (PM) and all work package leaders (WPLs).

Figure 3. The composition of the core team



PC = Project Coordinator

PM = Project Manager

WPL = Work Package Leader

In order to support the management of the partnership and the completion of the ESPON Programme, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be set up as foreseen in the Partnership Agreement. The PSC will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the project. The PSC will be chaired by the LP and – besides the LP – its members will be project partners and other organisation or individuals if deemed appropriate. Also the CU might be invited to attend meetings.

2.1.2 Communication

Communication within the TPG will mainly be organised through a common web-based communication platform, where all data and information, both input and output documents, will be stored and kept accessible. This platform will be structured as follows:

- LITERATURE – material used for the literature review and the methodology;
- GIS DATA – collection of relevant geo-data, draft maps and other visualisations;
- STATISTICAL DATA – collection of statistical data at various regional and local levels;
- COMMUNICATION – joint discussion forum on technical and scientific issues, draft papers from partners;
- PROJECT MANAGEMENT – all project information and documents necessary and for the project management (including financial documents)

Besides this electronic communication tool, face-to-face communication is regarded as essential for the discussion of the main issues of the project. For this purpose four TPG meetings will be organised by the LP and attended by the whole core team and important collaborators of individual WPs.

- The first meeting will take place at the project start and serve the preparation of the Inception Report.
- The second meeting will take place after the approval of the Inception Report and will have the purpose of a common understanding of the analytical tasks ahead in the first research phase.

- The third meeting will take place after the approval of the Interim Report with the aim of discussing a common understanding of the analytical tasks in the second research phase.
- The fourth meeting will take place well before the delivery of the Draft Final Report and the Draft Handbook when the bulk of the quantitative work has been completed.

The project language will be English. Accordingly, all outputs and documents will be delivered in English. However, the project team will comprise capacities in a wide range of European languages, which can be used for field research in WP2-3 and WP2-4 if necessary.

2.1.3 Timing

The project specification stipulates a very tight schedule for the main activities, basically demanding the project to provide preliminary results already within the first 10 months. The timetable in Table 1 below shows how the proposed project intends to conform to this requirement and also how the individual WPs are sequenced.

Table 1. Timetable

WORKPACKAGE	Milestone	2012												2013												2014																			
		calender m		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12						
		project m		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35							
	Milestone																																												
1	Coordination																																												
	TPG-meetings																																												
	Payment claims																																												
	Reporting																																												
2	Activities																																												
2.1	Methodology & Identification																																												
2.2	Roles and Functions																																												
2.3	SMESTO-Governance																																												
2.5	Case Studies																																												
	CS Methodology and Selection																																												
	individual case studies																																												
3	Dissemination																																												
3.1	(ESPON) Seminars																																												
3.2	Conference																																												
3.3	Web-Communication																																												
3.3	Research Papers																																												

1 Inception Report

4 Final Report

2 Interim Report

5 End of dissemination

3 Draft Final Report + Draft Handbook

6 End of project duration

2.1.4 Reporting

All four reports envisaged (Inception Report, Interim Report, Draft Final Report (including the Draft Handbook) and the Final Report (including the Final Handbook)) will be coordinated by the LP. Building on inputs from these WPs (text, tables, figures, maps) a quality-controlled, authorised version will be delivered to the ESPON CU. Also for other dissemination material the production will run through the same process, thus also guaranteeing the adherence to all ESPON (publication) standards.

2.1.5 Financial Management

Coordination also includes the organisation of the whole financial reporting obligations, to instruct and assist the project partners with this process and to deliver the necessary information to the CU on time. The LP will also take the role of clarifying questions and problems related to financial reporting with the partners and the CU.

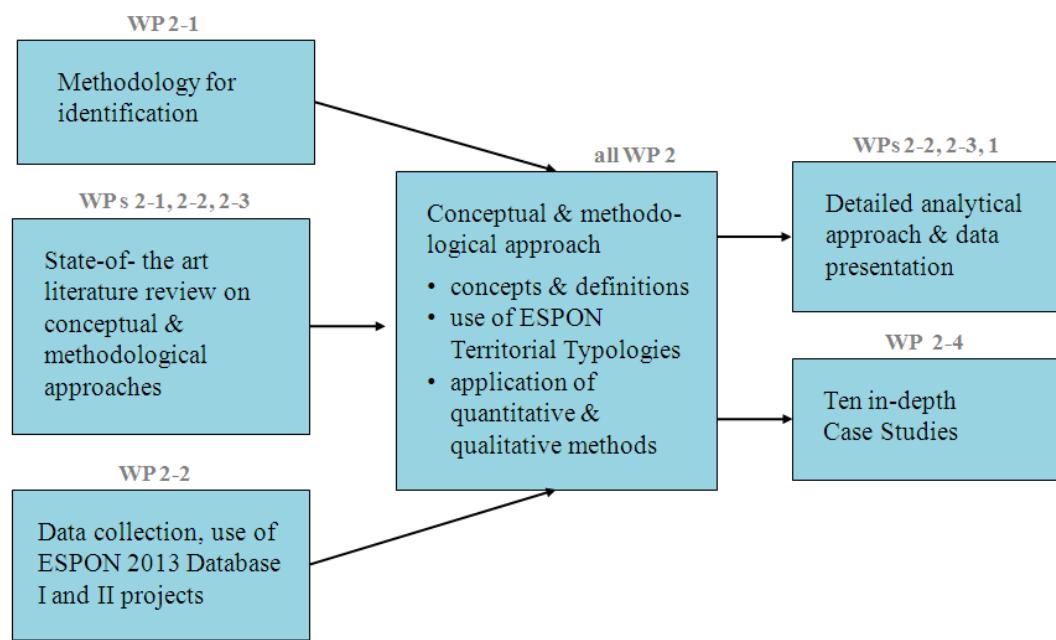
2.2 WP2 Research activities

The research activities comprised in WP 2 are subdivided into the following four headings:

- Methodology and identification(WP2-1)
- Functions and roles (WP2-2)
- The governance dimension (WP2-3)
- Case studies (WP2-4)

As for the structure of the research activities the temporal sequence of all research activities as presented in Figure 4 has to be considered. This is based on the steps required in the Specification.²¹

Figure 4. Temporal sequence of research activities



²¹ Specification, p.10

The overview of main outputs has already been given in the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1. In the subsequent sections the detailed division of activities in WP 2 is presented together with relevant research questions.

2.2.1 WP 2-1 Methodology and identification

The objective of this WP is to provide a comprehensive conceptual and methodological framework for the project's definition of small and medium-sized towns and for their identification. WP 2-1 is set up to answer the following research questions:

Research questions to be addressed

How can small and medium-sized towns which have an urban centre between 5,000 and 50,000 inhabitants be identified using a methodology that is compatible with the new classification of cities and towns at European scale developed by the European Union and the OECD?

How are small and medium-sized towns distributed throughout the territory of the ESPON space?

For this, it will undertake the following work steps:

- First, it will contribute to the state-of-the art literature review based on the concepts and definitions relevant for the definition and identification of small and medium-sized towns in Europe. Among the main sources will be studies and academic literature on relevant issues of urban and rural development as well as relevant policy documents.
- In this regard the main challenge will be to define the territorial contexts to be taken into account;
- Second, the detailed methodological steps for the identification of small and medium-sized towns will be elaborated;
- Third, the TPG will identify indicators relevant for the definition and verify the data availability for all ESPON countries and, based on this, decide on the territorial scope for this research project;
- Fourth, relevant data needed for the actual preparation of an exhaustive list of small and medium-sized towns in Europe will be collected and appropriate analyses of quantitative data conducted. In doing so, the practicability of data will be tested.

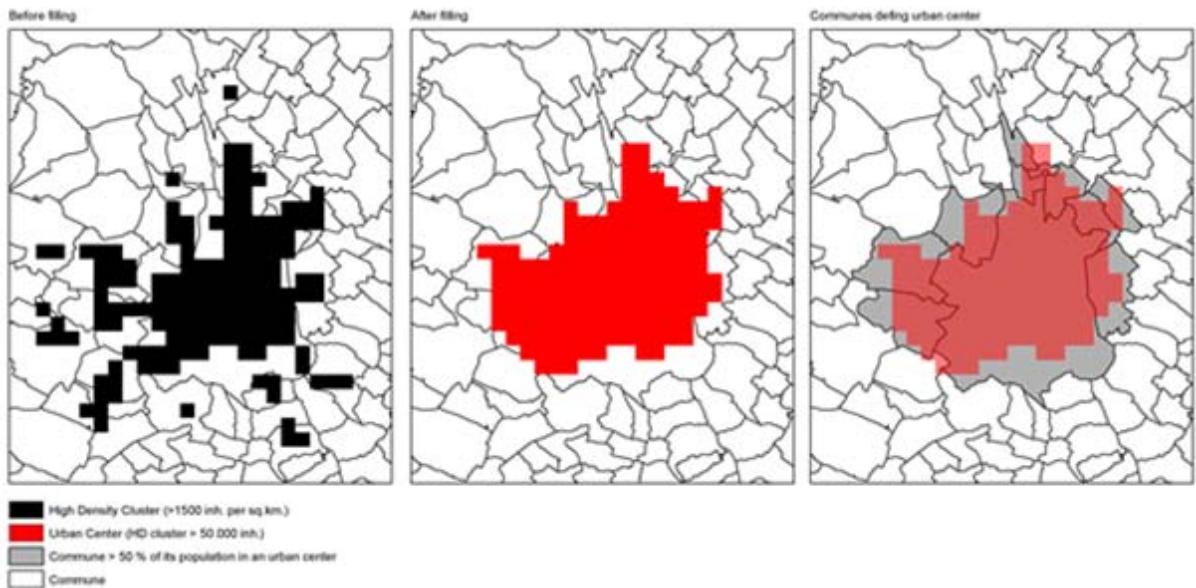
The methodology proposed in section 2.2 is based on the **harmonised European Commission and OECD definition of a city²² and a commuting area**:

- The lack of harmonised definition of a city and its functional area has hindered the analysis of cities in Europe. In cooperation with the OECD, the European Commission has developed a relatively simple and harmonised definition:
 - A city consists of one or more municipalities (local administrative unit level 2 LAU2).
 - At least half of the city residents live in an urban centre (Image 3 in Figure 5)

²² This text is adapted from the methodological description provided by the European Commission, DG Regio.

- An urban centre has at least 50,000 inhabitants. It consists of a high-density cluster of contiguous grid cells of 1 km² with a density of at least 1,500 inhabitants per km² (Image 1 in Figure 5) and the filled gaps (Image 2 in Figure 5).

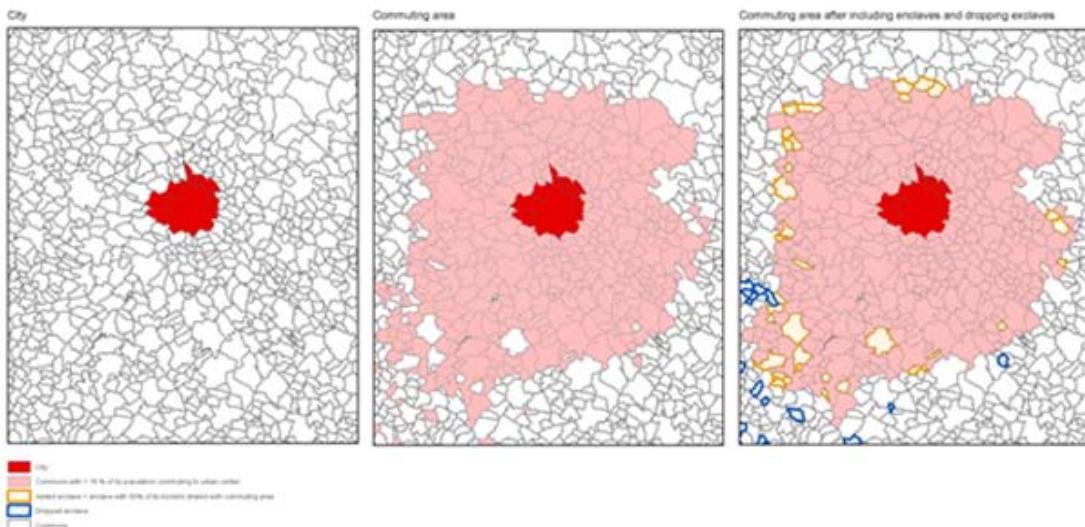
Figure 5. High density cluster, urban centre and city (example of Toulouse)



Source: Adapted from European Commission, DG Regio

- The defining criteria for a commuting zone are:
 - Once all cities have been defined, a functional area can be identified based on commuting patterns using the following steps:
 - If 15% of employed persons living in one city work in another city, these cities are combined into a single destination
 - All municipalities with at least 15% of their employed residents working in a city are identified (Image 2 in Figure 6)
 - Municipalities surrounded by a single functional area are included and non-contiguous municipalities are dropped (Image 3 in Figure 6).

Figure 6. How to define a commuting zone



Source: Adapted from European Commission, DG Regio

2.2.2 WP 2-2 Functions and roles

This WP aims at a conceptual discussion of functions and roles that small and medium-sized towns perform, including considerations about possible typologies taking into account the different territorial contexts. Based on a literature review of existing analyses and studies related to small and medium-sized towns, this WP will provide, on the one hand, hypotheses on roles and functions as well as characteristics potentially relevant for typologies of small and medium-sized towns. On the other hand, this WP will develop a methodology for the data analyses and methods to be applied in order to verify hypotheses and exploratory research. Thus, this WP is the core of the empirical part of the project and will provide all quantitative data analyses. It is set up to answer the following research questions:

Research questions to be addressed

How are small and medium-sized towns distributed in different territorial contexts and the ESPON Territorial Typologies?

How have small and medium-sized towns performed over time with regards to demographic and economic development? How has their development been comparative to the European and the national situation?

What roles and functions do small and medium-sized towns perform in their different territorial contexts? For example, what are the specific functions that can be identified for small and medium-sized towns in rural areas, metropolitan areas or in cross-border areas?

In which type of territorial contexts do small and medium-sized towns play a particularly important function?

For this, it will undertake the following work steps:

- First, it will contribute a major part to the state-of-the art literature review and elaborate on conceptual and methodological concepts related to functions and roles of urban settlements, particularly it will consider the different territorial contexts (e.g. metropolitan areas, cross-border areas) of small and medium-sized towns, their functions in the development of these areas in terms of economic, social and environmental aspects. (The cooperation and governance aspect will be contributed by WP 2-3.) Among the main sources will be studies and academic literature on relevant issues of urban and rural development as well as relevant policy documents.
- Second, the detailed methodological steps for the development of typologies relevant for the analysis of specific developmental functions will be outlined. Detailed research questions and hypotheses will be elaborated and major challenges identified together with ways to overcome these. Research questions will be most important on the following aspects:
 - Typologies relevant to analyse the development potential
 - ESPON Territorial Typologies
 - Economic dimension
 - Social dimension
 - Environmental dimension

- Third, relevant indicators will be identified and respective data collected. This will be undertaken in collaboration with ESPON projects, in particular with the ESPON 2013 projects Database I and II and the European-wide population disaggregation grid developed by the Joint Research Centre²³. This step comprises especially:
 - Data collection for analysis of development of potential and barriers of SMESTOs in their territorial contexts
 - Data collection and analysis of added value to EU 2020 strategy – four dimensions
 - Data analysis based on ESPON Territorial Typologies
- Fourth, comprehensive and complex data analyses, such as multivariate analysis, cluster analysis, regression analysis, will be conducted for the purpose of verification of formulated hypotheses. Moreover, cartographic analysis will be undertaken.
- Fifth, analytical results, empirical evidence and cartographic data will be used for the production of maps, figures and other ways to visualise complex information and make it easy accessible to stakeholders, politicians and to the interested scientific community.
- Finally, this WP will contribute major parts to the formulation of overall conclusions and policy recommendation of this research project.

2.2.3 WP 2-3 The governance dimension

The objective of this WP is to elaborate the governance issues in particular relevant for the governance dimension in small and medium-sized towns while taking into account also the economic, the social and the environmental dimension. Based on theoretical considerations, empirical evidence will be gathered through data collection (e.g. survey among mayors etc.). Among the most important issues might be, for instance, cooperation forms, demands, potentials and challenges related to supply services. On this basis, a thorough methodology for the case study selection will be prepared. This WP is set up to answer the following research questions:

Research questions to be addressed

How have small and medium-sized towns performed over time with regards to demographic and economic development? How has their development been comparative to the European and the national situation?

What type of governance and cooperation arrangements exist at various levels aimed at improving public policies and service deliveries in small and medium-sized towns and their surroundings?

What kind of good practices exist with regard to governance and cooperation arrangements aimed at increasing critical mass through cooperation arrangements or the merging of small local authorities? What practices have not worked well for small and medium-sized towns?

For this, it will undertake the following work steps:

²³ Joint Research Centre & European Environmental Agency (2009) Population density disaggregated with Corine Land Cover 2000.

- First, it will contribute a major part to the state-of-the art literature review and elaborate on conceptual and methodological concepts related to multi-level governance and cooperation arrangements, taking into account particularly research and scientific analyses of different types of governance arrangements and the experience of mergers for a more effective delivery of services of general interest.
- Second, a web survey on governance and cooperation arrangements will be undertaken in order to gather substantial evidence from small and medium-sized towns from all over Europe. For this a questionnaire will be developed.
- Third, the gathered qualitative data will be analysed based on working hypotheses, especially related to the elaboration of different types of governance and cooperation arrangements and their potential for the development of small and medium-sized towns.
- Fourth, analytical results and empirical evidence will be used for the production of visual material in order to make the results easily accessible to stakeholders, politicians and to the interested scientific community.
- Finally, this WP will contribute major parts to the formulation of overall conclusions and policy recommendation of this research project.

More details on the methodology are provided in section 3.3.

2.2.4 WP 2-4 Case studies

This WP aims at the preparation of 10 in-depth case studies. Based on the methodology developed in WP2-3 both desk research and field research will be conducted. For the latter interview will be particularly important. WP 2-4 is set up to answer the following research questions:

Research questions to be addressed

How have small and medium-sized towns performed over time with regards to demographic and economic development? How has their development been comparative to the European and the national situation?

What kind of good practices exist with regard to governance and cooperation arrangements aimed at increasing critical mass through cooperation arrangements or the merging of small local authorities? What practices have not worked well for small and medium-sized towns?

Due to the tight timetable, the case studies will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will comprise desk research and its preliminary results will be fed into the Preliminary Report. The second phase will build on the expectedly comprehensive material to be analysed in desk research and gather additional data and information through field work, i.e. interviews and workshops. In the remainder of this section, the detailed methodological steps and research principles for the preparation and conduction of the case studies are elaborated.

The standardised case study research will be based on a case study manual specifying the main topics, related research questions, sources of information (including different categories of interviewees) and methods to be applied. The case study manual will be

comprehensively developed during the actual research process and after the preliminary results of the previous research activities. The case study report should be written in a way so as to allow the reader immediate access to relevant information and to the particular situation of the project and provide an understanding of the research project as a whole.

It is proposed that the **case study manual** should involve the following main parts:

Table 2. Content and structure of the case study manual

I	General description of the administrative-territorial structure of the country and the spatial/territorial context within which the SMESTO is located providing necessary background information for more specific analysis	Desk research with academic publications, previous empirical studies, documentary review (legal texts, policy documents, evaluation studies, participation in EU cooperation programmes, other programmes), analysis and coordination with ESPON studies and other relevant sources identified during the work. Interviews with local stakeholders.
II	Role and functions of SMESTOs within their territorial contexts, in particular taking into account the following functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative • Decision • Transport • Knowledge • Tourism Analysis of economic (economic exchanges, commuting, comparative advantages, networks and cluster development etc.), social (public and private services provided, regional cultural functions etc.) and environmental (climate change and natural hazards, issues related to transport) dimensions of these functions.	Desk research with local materials; interviews with key stakeholders.
III	Governance and cooperation arrangements of SMESTOs for their development, including multi-level governance arrangements, (trans-) regional cooperation and networks, ways of policy implementation and monitoring.	Desk research, field work with interviews. Interviews play most important role for providing additional information about these issues.
IV	SWOT analysis	Conclusion and synthesis of data from previous steps in the case study; a workshop with local stakeholders.
V	Summary and key lessons for policy considerations and recommendations	Field work and assessment of the information.

All case studies will be conducted according to the following **main principles**:

- Research will combine desk research with materials describing the specific town contexts (quantitative data, respective studies, data from cooperation programmes etc) and field research.
- The main method in field research will be interviews with key stakeholders, such as mayors, officials responsible for different activity areas (economy, tourism, transport, social, education, environment etc), main cooperation partners etc. Around 5-10 interviews with local stakeholders (depending on the particular town) will be carried out in each case study.
- Specific interview questions (semi-structured and open questions) will be developed for the case study manual.
- One workshop with local stakeholders will be organised in each case study, which is particularly deemed necessary for the SWOT analysis and for the drafting of conclusions at case study level.

2.3 WP 3: Dissemination

Referring to Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme ‘Capitalisation, building, dialogue and networking’, four groups of activities are foreseen under the heading of dissemination. The activities of the WP on dissemination activities are described in some detail in section 4. The TPG will coordinate its dissemination activities closely with the ESPON CU.

3. Scientific Approach and Methodology

The project outlined in the preceding chapter is comprehensive and complex. It will be implemented in different working steps and will use a variety of research method in each WP. The most important of these are:

- Literature review (WPs 2-1, 2-2, 2-3)
- Research and analysis of quantitative data (WPs 2-1, 2-2)
- Research and analysis of qualitative data analysis (WP 2-3, 2-4)
- Cartographic analysis (WP 2-2)
- Visualisation of complex information (WP 2-2, 2-4, 2-3)

The complexity of the requested and planned research needs clear-cut structures. The temporal sequence of all research activities is presented in Figure 3 in section 2.2. Moreover, section 2.2 allocates all research questions listed in the Specification to the WPs that shall answer these questions.

3.1 Methodology for the identification of SMESTOs

3.1.1 Starting points

The main starting point for this research projects is the harmonised definition of a city developed by the European Commission and the OECD in the framework of the revision of the degree of urbanisation. Details on this have been provided in section 2.2.1.

The research tasks ahead of the ESPON project REX SMESTO have to take into account and build on the advantages and disadvantages of two basic (and complementary) approaches to the definition of small and medium-sized towns. These were developed in the ESPON 2006 project SMESTO and their potentials are summed up in Table 3.

Table 3. Potentials of two (complementary) approaches²⁴

Urban centre-points (built-up areas) – URBAN STRUCTURES Spatially continuous data		Urban administrative units – GOVERNANCE ENTITIES Discrete data describing geographical zones	
+	Ways of structuring contributes to evidence for policy making, e.g. transport infrastructure development	+	Statistical analysis allows for relatively straightforward comparisons of social and economic weight
+	Can reveal structural characteristics of urban systems at country level	+	Governance entities implement territorial development policies (also inter-municipal level is relevant)
+	Provides insights to understand differences in rural development trends, cluster dynamics and other spatially related economic and social evolutions		
-	Functional characterisation of each individual node is complex (difficult to identify factors of economic growth within town's vicinity which are	-	Does not provide geographical evidence, but only characterisation of the established territorial governance entities (multiple towns can be part of

²⁴ ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1, "The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)". Final Report prepared by ÖIR, Nordregio and NOMISMA, pp.137-139

Urban centre-points (built-up areas) – URBAN STRUCTURES Spatially continuous data		Urban administrative units – GOVERNANCE ENTITIES Discrete data describing geographical zones	
	effectively mobilised for development		the smallest administrative unit)
-	Characterisation of nodes can rather be expressed in terms of potentials and limitations	-	Can include both urban and rural areas, possible differences in the developments would be ignored

3.1.2 Review of existing notions and concepts

The research project will thoroughly review existing notions and concepts on the definition of cities and towns. Considering the demands of the Specification, it should at this stage be highlighted that a series of notions are being used to describe the territories to be analysed by the project:

- ‘**Places**’ (cities being identified as ‘places with a centre’);
- ‘**Urban Centres**’. For cities, the urban centre is defined as “high-density cluster of contiguous grid cells of 1 km² with a density of at least 1,500 inhabitants per km² and the filled gaps”, which totals over 50,000 inhabitants (see section 2.2.1). The project will first need to check what results are obtained applying the same methodology with a population threshold of 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. It is possible that one would have to use another population density threshold, insofar as the urban centres of small and medium-sized towns tend to be less densely populated than centres of cities. Furthermore, the approximation of urban centres to municipal boundaries, considering only municipalities where the urban cells constitute over 50% of the area of the municipality, may not function for small and medium-sized towns insofar as their spatial extent is more limited.
- ‘**Surrounding areas**’ and ‘**hinterlands**’ are implicitly defined as the catchment areas for public and private services of small and medium-sized towns, e.g. in the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* where their role providing ‘essential services’ for ‘avoiding rural depopulation and ensuring that these areas remain attractive places to live’. At the same time, the difference between towns in a rural or sparsely populated context, on the one hand, and within the sphere of influence of larger cities, on the other, is emphasized.
- As far as ‘**Functional Areas**’ are concerned, the Specification asks whether ‘commuting is the appropriate indicator’. As all approaches of functional urban areas in ESPON²⁵ have been based on commuting, the TPG considers this terminology should continue to designate commuting-related issues. The latest delineation of Functional Areas within ESPON has been produced by the ESPON Database project on the basis of commuting data from the SIRE Database of Eurostat. The TPG will define commuting areas on the basis of the cities and towns at European scale developed by the European Commission and the OECD (see section 2.2.1). Applying this methodology, it is likely that many small and medium-sized towns will appear as a component of the commuting area of a neighbouring city. In these situations, it is not meaningful to try to delineate functional areas within a wide commuting area.

²⁵ E.g. in the ESPON 1.1.1., ESPON 1.4.3 and ESPON FOCI projects, as well as in the ESPON Database project

However, one may on a case study basis analyse how some key types of private and public service provision are organised territorially.

3.1.3 The issue of thresholds

Initially, the Specification suggests that the focus of the project should be on towns whose population is comprised between 5,000 and 50,000 inhabitants. These thresholds correspond to the population of the urban centres, rather than that of functional urban area. Settlement patterns will therefore have a significant influence on the selection of functional urban areas. Small urban centres that are nodes for service-provision and transportation for extensive, non-continuous residential areas or for relatively densely populated rural areas could fall below the threshold of 5,000, in spite of offering the same type of functions as other nodes above this threshold.

An alternative approach, seeking to define small and medium-sized towns on the basis of functions, would face a tautological challenge. Indeed, as emphasised in the ESPON 1.4.1 Final Report, “the account of the functions present is necessarily based on a certain delimitation of the city or town, while this delimitation should ideally be based on the hinterlands of these very functions”²⁶. Applying simple population thresholds for urban areas therefore appears as a sound, pragmatic starting point for the analyses. However, subcategories of SMESTOs may be identified on the basis of a relation between the urban core area and that of surrounding areas (e.g. delimited by identifying areas accessible within 45 minutes by road from the urban core), rather than considering population thresholds as such. This would be one of the steps the TPG would take to consider the “position and functionality of towns” within each country, taking into account “the population density and the structure of the national urban system”²⁷.

3.1.4 Considerations on data and indicators

The methodology of the European Commission and OECD is based on grid data. Available pan-European grid datasets are based on estimates. These estimates are more or less reliable, depending on the methodology that has been applied and on the European region that is being considered. Grid data based on registers are available only for a few countries²⁸. Considering the importance of grid data in the classification of cities proposed by the European Commission and the OECD, the TPG will compare results drawn from estimates to those obtained on the basis of register-based data. In this subset of countries, a variable range of socio-economic data is available. This data availability will be exploited to analyse spatial patterns of settlements and workplaces in and around small and medium-sized towns and their change over time, within and outside the influence areas of larger cities. Whenever possible, these analyses will be carried out so as to produce results that can be generalised at the European level.

For pan-European analyses, the project will need to rely on LAU2-data. ESPON has only to a limited degree exploited data at this resolution up to now. However, the ESPON GEOSPECS project has compiled a seamless LAU2 map covering all of the

²⁶ ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1, The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)”. Final Report prepared by ÖIR, Nordregio and NOMISMA.

²⁷ As specified in the Specification, p.8

²⁸ For Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Northern Ireland.

ESPON study area except Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Turkey. A limited range of data at the same resolution has been compiled²⁹.

The ESPON project REX SMESTO will build on this platform in view of further compilation of data. It should be noted that trend data are practically impossible to compute at this scale for individual LAU2-units, because of the numerous changes in LAU2 boundaries. However, the GEOSPECS study has shown that it is possible to calculate how the territorial context of towns or municipalities is evolving, by delineating an area accessible within 45 minutes from each of them.

The primary objective of using such a high resolution is not to identify structures and trends in individual LAU2-units or small and medium-sized towns across Europe. Their complexity is of little relevance for European territorial policy. The objective is rather to identify patterns and typologies that may help addressing the specific development opportunities and challenges of SMESTOs from the European and national points of view. This objective is addressed mainly in WP 2-2 (see section 3.2). However, conceptual and methodological issues related to the calculation of commuting and time distances are discussed in this section.

Flows, spatial interactions and possibilities of mutually beneficial functional integration and cooperation are therefore of key importance. While access to public modes transportation is unfortunately difficult to analyse quantitatively across Europe because of limited data availability, the ESPON community can now use a detailed road network of Eurogeographics covering the entire ESPON study area except the West Balkans, Bulgaria, Turkey and the French Outermost Regions. Alternative road models are available for these areas. The ESPON project REX SMESTO will use this model to analyse SMESTOs in their territorial context, using time-distance calculations (see Map 1).

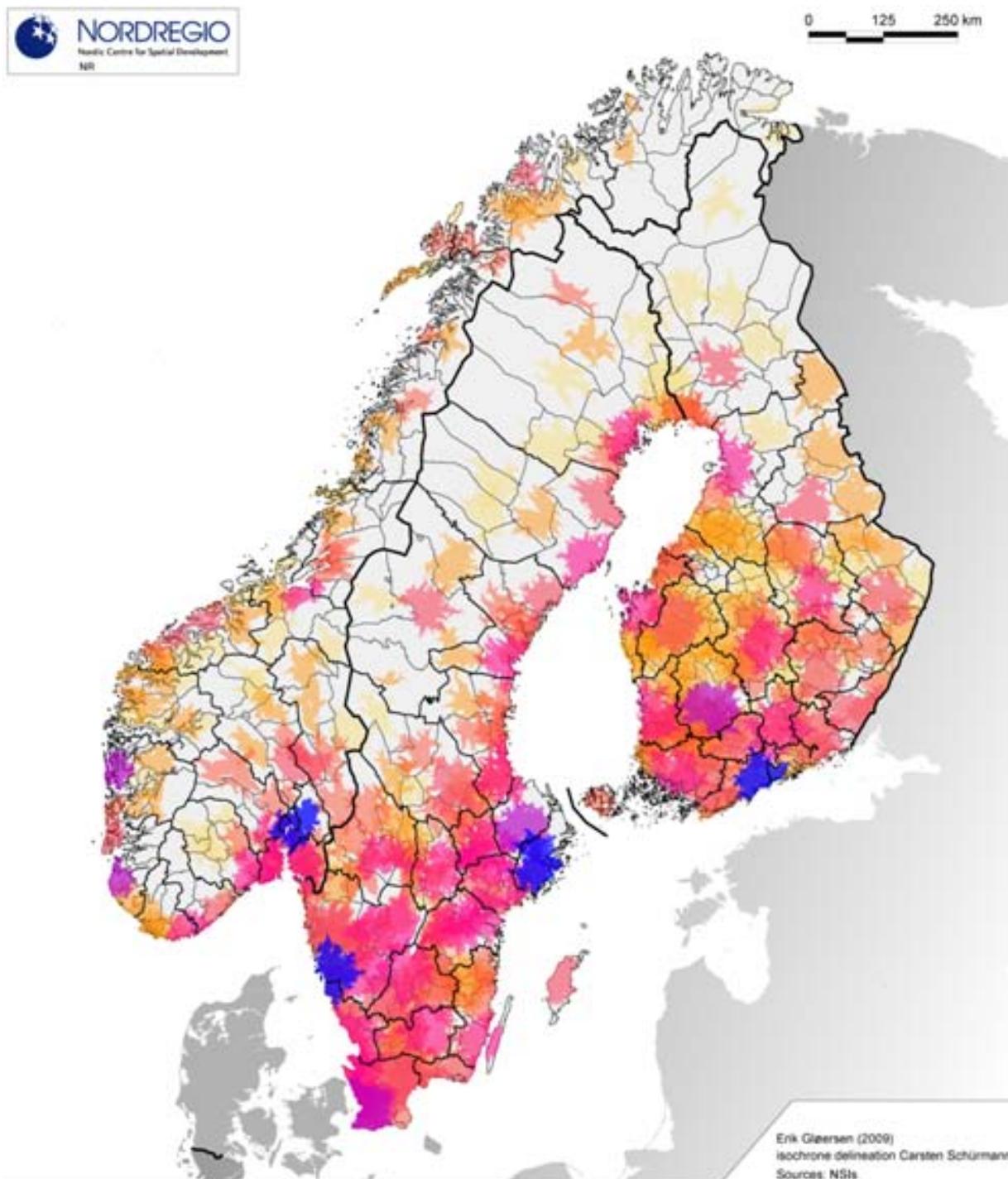
Time-distance can also be calculated from key points of service provision and infrastructure, such as airports, higher education institutions and hospitals. The ESPON community currently has access to a map of airports with more than 150,000 passengers per year, compiled by Eurostat for the TRACCs project. For many small and medium-sized towns, smaller regional airports may be relevant; the existence of these airports is of critical importance in remote and peripheral parts of Europe. The ESPON project REX SMESTO project will therefore seek to identify all airports across Europe with regular, year-round scheduled flights in view of assessing which small and medium-sized towns have access to air transportation within reasonable travel time.

According to the knowledge of the TPG, no European map of institutions of higher education and hospitals has been produced since the one compiled for the Study of Mountain Areas in the European Union and in Norway in 2004³⁰. As these types of infrastructure play an important role in the development of small and medium-sized towns, e.g. allowing young people not to migrate to another region to access higher education, the TPG will seek to update these maps.

²⁹ These include total population (2001 and 2006), age structure (0 to 14, 15 to 60, over 60), gender and employment by branch of activity (with variables subdivisions from country to country, but numerous possibilities of carrying out pan-European analyses).

³⁰ Nordregio (2004).

Map 1. Isochrone areas around centres of Functional Urban Areas



45 minute isochrones around the centres of Functional Urban Areas of more than 5 000 inhabitants



Source: Gløersen, Erik (2011 forthcoming) La centralité à la marge de l'Europe, Presses Universitaires de Rennes

Map 1 illustrates an alternative approach, where the focus is not on isolating urban areas from the rest of the territory. Instead, one considers that most of Europe's

inhabitants are ‘urbanites’ to a lesser or greater extent, insofar as they interact with a neighbouring town or city in their daily life. The intensity and quality of this interaction can depend on many elements, but travel distance to the nearest town or city is an important factor. On this map, a travel time of 45 minutes is applied on the basis of studies showing that this is the longest generally accepted daily commuting distance. It shows that in the most densely populated areas, people have a choice to commute to different cities and towns. In most remaining populated parts of northern Scandinavia, one can commute to one small or medium-sized town. Only a limited proportion of the population is beyond commuting range from any town or city. However, a weakness of this map is that the travel time is calculated from the city centres. However, the ESPON project GEOPECS project has produced corresponding maps taking the external borders of the Morphological Urban Area as the origin. Similarly, ESPON project SMESTO will use the outer borders of the small or medium-sized town identified on the basis of an adapted version of the European Commission/OECD criteria for identifying towns and cities.

3.2 Functions and roles

3.2.1 Methodological outline

Conceptualising functions and roles of small and medium-sized towns in Europe means to put them both into their territorial context (i.e. functional areas) and the policy context³¹ and to discuss their importance for structuring urbanised regions and rural areas. In this regard, the concept of polycentricity³² is a central starting point. Polycentric development in Europe is regarded as crucial for a regionally balanced development in a global economy, argues the ESDP. “Pursuit of this concept will help to avoid further excessive economic and demographic concentration in the core area of the EU. The economic potential of all regions of the EU can only be utilised through the further development of a more polycentric European settlement structure. The greater competitiveness of the EU on a global scale demands a stronger integration of the European regions into the global economy.”³³ As elaborated in section 1.2, the ESDP mentions the following functions and roles of small and medium-sized towns at a rather general level:

- Focal points for regional development;
- Important partners in (trans-)national cooperation projects;
- Suppliers of (a minimum of) services of general interest (public services and public transport)

Approaches to structure and identify functions of cities vary.³⁴ While Bataini et al. (2002) focuses on medium-sized towns with an industrial background and analyses the institution-objectification function, the anchorage in built-up area function, the

³¹ This is the logical link between WPs 2-1 and 2-2 for the work on the literature review and the resulting conceptual and methodological approach.

³² Compare Roca, J., Marmolejo, C., Moix, M. (2009) Urban Structure and Polycentrism: Towards a Redefinition of the Sub-center Concepts . Urban Studies, 13, 46, p.284 and Green, N (2007) Functional Polycentricity: A Formal Definition in Terms of Social Network Analysis. Urban Studies, 11, 44, p. 2077-2103.

³³ European Communities (1999) ESDP. European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union. Agreed at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in Potsdam, May 1999. Executive Summary, p.20

³⁴ Compare for instance Burger, M., Meijers, E. (2010) Form Follows Function? Linking Morphological and Functional Polycentricity. GaWC Research Bulletin, 344 and Cerda, J., Marmolejo, C. (2011) The use of the city in space and time as a new social approach for the prioritising transport corridors in the metropolitan area of Barcelona (Spain). In: Brebia, C.A. The Sustainable World. Southampton, UK, WIT Press, p. 459-468. http://www.witpress.com/images/stories/content_images/contents/c45045.pdf

symbolisation function and the productive combination function, Elsasser (1998)³⁵ for instance distinguishes and discusses the following functions:

- Supply function: provision with necessary goods and services;
- Housing function: provision of sufficient habitat and building grounds;
- Labour market function: provision with work places in small structures and local economic entities
- Cultural function: leisure and tourism, can be reinforced by marketing and branding³⁶

The Specification also mentions the ESPON 2006 project 1.4.3 which has defined and collected data on five major functions³⁷:

- Administrative functions (national and international);
- Decision functions (localisation of headquarters and their subsidiaries of national and international import companies);
- Transport functions (connectivity: road, rail, air traffic, sea transport);
- Knowledge functions (localisation of universities, research centres, high-technology production); and
- Tourism functions (touristic activities).

During the consideration of different typologies in the literature review also the results of the ESPON 2006 project SMESTO will be taken into account as mentioned in the Specification. This project distinguished four types of small and medium-sized towns: dynamic/growing; declining; restructuring; and potential developing.³⁸

Further to the discussed approach in section 3.1., the TPG proposes a functional approach to territoriality. The traditional paradigm used for territorial analysis is based on the concept of ‘contained activities’ and allows the recognition of centralities, or sub-centres’ structures, supported by other methodologies like morphologic models or econometric approaches.

The analysis of functions and roles can be basically divided into an economic aspect and a social aspect. The analysis of the economic aspect of small and medium-sized towns in the respective contextual area will be conducted on the basis of available data. The following points can be understood as a long list of possible indicators which will be revised on the basis of data availability. In terms of economic activities, potentially the following indicators will be considered:

- Differentiation of economic aspects so that they are coherent with census information (including mobility matrices) and other available data or studies;
- Characterisation of the work population by economic activity and occupational category;
- Characterisation of workplaces by economic activity and occupational category;

³⁵ Bataini, S.-H. et al. (2002) A new approach to the attractiveness: The case of medium-sized industrial cities. In: Jahrbuch für Regionalwissenschaft, 22, p.41-59; Elsasser, H. (1998) Ist eine Kleinstadt mehr als eine kleine Stadt? In: Kleinstädte – Motoren im ländlichen Raum. Tagungsband, Murau, p.10-18. Both concepts are discussed in the ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1, The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)”. Final Report prepared by ÖIR, Nordregio and NOMISMA, p.105-110.

³⁶ Compare also City Branding. Lessons from medium sized cities in the Baltic Sea Region (2005) (in the framework of the INTERREG IIIB project Medium Sized Cities in Dialogue around the Baltic Sea (MECIBS), <http://www.mecibs.dk/brochures/05Branding.pdf>

³⁷ ESPON 2006 project Study on Urban Functions; Specification, p.8
³⁸ Specification, p.8

- Construction of the most probable matrices of commercial relations between activities (spatial input-output flows);
- Determination of the attracting area of the labour market, in the relation home-work, based on the application of an assignment model to the different commuting matrices, and the interaction network of the territory;
- Definition of functions and roles related to the functionality of the labour market and the commercial area, of each small and medium-sized town in each activity. The functions and roles to be detected in the functionality of the labour market are: production, administration, sales, and the areas that are crossed by commuting (flow areas). The functions and roles in the commercial areas are: production, final demand, intermediate demand, and flow areas.

The analysis of social activities will be performed based on the development of the following points:

- Definition of social activities to be considered, depending on available information in census or other EU information database;
- Determination of the functional social areas based on the application of gravity models (spatial interaction), and/or optimisation models, considering real interaction thresholds from different transport studies;
- Definition of the functions and roles of each town in the social functionality for each activity analysed. Here, the functions and roles to be detected are in general service centre, and also flows areas.

Beyond this, also the consideration on indicators and data availability in section 3.1.4 will be taken into account for the analysis of functions and roles. In general, all indicators and classifications will be integrated by using multivariate statistical techniques, in particular factor analysis and cluster analysis, which allow for agglomeration and concentration of information and can serve as an important basis for typologies relevant for the development of small and medium-sized towns in their respective territorial context. These synthetic indicators will be included in simple and spatial regression models and allow determine the influence of the different roles and functions in the aggregate economic and demographic behaviour of each small or medium-sized town.

3.2.2 Potential typologies and particular challenges

The resulting functional types differ from traditional typologies as they incorporate the spatial dimension in each function or role. They will be studied and discussed thoroughly in the requested literature review taking into account also the vast literature on the role of cities (and towns) in regional development. As an example the type of management centre of local economic activity can be mentioned, which is different from a management centre of national activity, and also different from a local scale production centre.

One advantage of the functional approach is the capacity to identify local economic activities which frequently have only low numbers of jobs and space and, therefore, frequently do not appear in statistics although they can be locally and regionally of importance. At the same time this example points at the challenge of data availability which is discussed in the next paragraph. The more general challenge that has to be mentioned at this point is the question about the purpose of typologies. Although the Specification clearly identifies the need to analyse the development and potential of

small and medium-sized towns in their functional areas, the question of the purpose will be further specified and conceptualised in more detail based on the literature review. In doing so, the project will seek an optimal balance between the need to reduce complexity and the need to retain the variety of roles and functions (see also section 3.2.3).

Last but not least, the issue of data availability will be challenging. In order to overcome this, the TPG will cooperate with relevant ESPON projects, in particular with the ESPON 2013 Database I and II projects and take into account the existing material and results from already finalised ESPON projects, mainly taking into account those listed in the Specification.³⁹ The REX SMESTO project can also build on the data collected in the ESPON 2006 project 1.4.3 on five functional dimensions (administrative functions, decision functions, transport functions, knowledge functions, tourism functions).

3.2.3 A three-dimensional model

The necessity to reduce the complex reality while maintaining the most important characteristics of variety has already been mentioned above. As one possibility for this undertaking, the TPG proposes to develop a three-dimensional model for the analysis of relevant functions and roles based on the model of the ‘EDORA Cube’⁴⁰. The three dimensions should be:

- The developed REX SMESTO Typology which is most important for the analysis of the development potential of small and medium-sized towns in their respective territorial contexts;
- ESPON Territorial Typology
- The performance of investigated towns taking into account the economic, social and environmental aspects based on the EU 2020 strategy (possibly including also governance and cooperation types identified by the research undertaken in WP 2-3 and WP 2-4).

3.3 The governance dimension

The third objective of the project is to assess the different governance and cooperation arrangements of small and medium-sized towns in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies and public services. In particular, policies aimed to increase critical mass, which range from promoting cooperation between local authorities to the merger of small local authorities, will be considered in this study. For answering the research questions relevant for this task (see section 2.2) a multi-level governance concept will be incorporated and cooperation arrangements will be scrutinised in different contexts. As stated in ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1 for such an analysis the administrative dimension should be added to the definition of small and medium-sized towns.⁴¹

3.3.1 General scientific and methodological approach

As a starting point, broadly used ‘governance’ concepts (e.g. Knill 2005, Marks 1993, O’Toole and Burdess 2004) and the approach described in previous ESPON studies

³⁹ Specification, p.16.

⁴⁰ ESPON 2013 project ‘European Development Opportunities for Rural Areas’ (EDORA). Final Report, August 2011.

⁴¹ According to SMESTO, the ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1 small and medium-sized towns are defined as “continuous built-up areas with a structuring effect for the territory”. This will be elaborated in WP2-1.

have been considered.⁴² Governance capacity refers to the formal and factual capability of public or private actors to define the content of public goods and to shape the social, economic and political processes by which these goods are provided (Knill 2004, 356). While analyzing the types of governance Knill (2004, 357) makes a distinction of governance along two dimensions, the participatory structures and the degree of legal obligation shaping regulatory activities. Meuleman (2010)⁴³ distinguishes between hierarchical, network and market type governance. O'Toole and Burdess (2005) stress on communitarianism which shifts responsibility from the state and the market to the voluntary sector in civil society. Thus a variety of ways according to which governance and cooperation mechanisms have been studied exist. It covers the range of activities and powers in which small and medium-sized towns are engaged, like participation in the policy formulation process in local, regional, national and EU level, networking and cooperation in provision of services, defining optimal functional area for delivering services which may require stronger cooperation or merger of administrative units etc.

Two key themes have to be considered throughout the research on issues related to governance and cooperation arrangements. First, different typologies of small and medium-sized towns determine the level of cooperation arrangements and might support groupings of towns related to governance mechanisms. Rights and duties of towns under investigation vary tremendously⁴⁴ and, although the much of the distribution of financial (and other) resources to towns is nationally regulated, towns have partly considerable room for bargaining. Existing studies, therefore, show that the territorial politics of European states vary considerably, and the application of the multi-level governance concept has been substantially mediated and determined by national constellations and resource situations. Second, the role of cooperation and mergers of local authorities for the effective provision of services has to be analysed. Although good practices for mergers exist (e.g. in Scandinavian countries), a series of them did not function as supposed. Mergers can have strong effects on the development of small and medium-sized towns depending for instance on the actual geographic area and the population density. Small and compact territory instead favours networking in municipalities which is ultimately needed for the total development of the unit, not to mention that small unit is also more responsive to local needs.⁴⁵ However, international evidence also suggests that decentralisation has placed

⁴² Knill, C. (2004) Modes of Governance and Their Evaluation. *Trames*, Vol 8 (58/43), 4, pp. 352-371. Marks, G. (1993) Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC, in Cafruny, A. W. & Rosenthal, G. C. (eds) (1993) *The State of the European Community: The Maastricht Debates and Beyond* (New York: Longman), pp. 391–410. O'Toole, K. and N. Burdess (2005) Governance at Community Level: Small Towns in Rural Victoria, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 40, No. 2, June, pp. 239–254. ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1. „The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)

⁴³ Meuleman, L. (2010) The Cultural Dimension of Metagovernance: Why Governance Doctrines May Fail. *Public Organization Review*, Vol 10, pp. 49–70.

⁴⁴ ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1; Bache, I. & Jones, R. (2000) Has EU Regional Policy Empowered the Regions? A Study of Spain and the United Kingdom, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 10, 3, pp. 1-20. Börzel, T. (2002) *States and Regions in the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Goldsmith, M. & Klausen, K. (eds) (1997) *European Integration and Local Government* (Cheltenham; Lyme, N.H: Edward Elgar Pub). Hooghe, L. (ed.) (1996) *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Keating M., & Jones, B. (eds) (1995) *The European Union and the regions* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press). Kelleher, J., Batterbury, S. & Stern, E. (1999) *The Thematic Evaluation of the Partnership Principle: Final Synthesis Report* (London: The Tavistock Institute Evaluation Development and Review Unit).

⁴⁵ This was successfully illustrated in Germany by the Supreme Court of the Land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which struck down the county reform for 2009 proposed by the state government with the reasoning that creating so called mega-counties violates the right to municipal/county autonomy and responsiveness to citizens' needs which ultimately outweighs the assumed efficiency gains from larger units. See Drechsler, W. (2007) Safeguarding Municipal Autonomy by the Supreme Court. *Juridica International: Law Review*, Vol 12, pp. 111-115.

increasing pressure on financial viability, and thus on the provision of appropriate services and on the ability to attract skilled people in small and medium-sized towns.⁴⁶

As networking, cooperation and governance patterns have extremely varied pictures among European local and regional authorities, it is scientifically extremely challenging to generate a valid picture of types of governance and cooperation mechanisms in European small and medium-sized towns in their territorial contexts which enables them to strengthen their contribution to a more balanced territorial development of the European regions. However, systematic research will be undertaken and the contributions of cooperation will be analysed also in the light of added value for the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. For this systematic research, the thorough literature showing the state of the art, will be accompanied by a web survey. This method is also proposed in order to provide broader evidence for policy recommendation related to the role of governance and cooperation arrangements supported the development of small and medium-sized towns. Moreover, it can strengthen the illustrative results from the ten in-depth case studies, which will also focus strongly on governance and cooperation mechanisms existent in the examined towns. A web survey enables to engage a maximum amount of target group representatives and provides necessary base for structured, quantified and generalisable information.

3.3.2 Literature review

A thorough state-of-the-art literature review on existing research in the ESPON countries about governance and cooperation aspects of small and medium-sized towns within their territorial contexts and functional urban areas will be conducted. This should help to assure that the problem formulation has been set correctly and is a necessary input for the later discussion of the findings and formulation of recommendations. In addition to the secondary source analysis attended in previous WPs, this research will build upon most prominent studies and research articles conducted on EU multi-level governance concept, governance and cooperation patterns, local government agglomeration in different national contexts, conducted evaluations of Territorial Cooperation Programmes covering ESPON countries (trans-regional and cross-border cooperation) etc. Possible sources can be studies, reviews, opinions, and other publications and documents such as:⁴⁷

- Documents on national legal environments related to intergovernmental practices, governance aspects, cooperation opportunities at European level and at the level of ESPON countries;
- Policy documents related to the implementation of the EU wide strategic documents (e.g. Europe 2020, ESDP, Territorial Agenda etc.);
- Studies and academic literature on the principle of partnership and multi-level governance;
- Monitoring and evaluation reports on the topic;

As previous experience with similar research work shows, desk research with materials accessed via internet is an effective means towards the goals of the research to set the context and answer a large part of strategic level questions. In addition to

⁴⁶ The smaller local governments are, the greater disparities in per capita local taxable resources and expenditure needs and so the greater the need for central government intervention in the form of intergovernmental grants. See Bailey, J.S. (1999). *Local Government Economics: Principles and Practice*. Hounds Mills: Macmillan Press, p.32.

⁴⁷ This list of data sources is non-exhaustive. A more thorough review of relevant sources will be composed in desk research during the actual work process.

relevant strategies, policy documents and statistics available online, all research team members have also access to a wide range of academic databases and they also benefit from well-established personal contacts with ministerial offices and local and regional authorities in almost all ESPON member states. All relevant materials from national, supranational and international sources will be thoroughly scrutinised and analysed. Google Scholar and publication databases of various academic publishers (e.g. ISI Web of Science) will be utilised as the main means for identifying recent documents and studies besides gathering secondary source data from the ESPON, Committee of the Regions and DG Regio websites and from national data bases.

The literature review and inputs from WPs 2-1 and 2-2 (concepts, definitions and typologies of small and medium-sized towns) are necessary for the full development of the qualitative indicators which are needed in order to assess the extent and quality of governance and cooperation aspects in investigated towns in ESPON countries. For generalisations and for the support of concrete policy recommendations, the research team will seek to provide groupings of small and medium-sized towns based on analytical factors that are supposed to influence governance and cooperation arrangements. This is important as the picture of sub-national mobilisation in the EU is quite colourful and there seems to be no congruence in the political role of local authorities in the EU. Moreover, as European integration legitimates such different forms of regional and local mobilisation, it does not actually allow any real theory of regional mobilisation and for conceptualising governance and cooperation effects. Rather an analytical distinction between the ‘simple’ and ‘compound’ polities⁴⁸ reflecting the division between more centralized (e.g. UK, France, Greece, Ireland, the Baltic States) and decentralised or federal states (e.g. Poland, Italy, Spain, Germany) can be drawn. This distinction is definitely useful when trying to capture some elements of convergence or divergence of the governance patterns in towns across the EU. Typologies of this kind have been developed also in the course of ESPON programme.⁴⁹ Therefore, this will be one of the starting point for the launch of the suggested web survey.

3.3.3 Web survey on governance and cooperation arrangements

The main steps involved in the web survey design and implementation will be the following:

Development of the questionnaire and survey conduction

The questionnaire will be based on the main research questions and address the following key themes and related issues:

- Legal responsibilities and authoritative power and legal constraints of towns;
- Intergovernmental relations, EU level mobilisation;
- Cooperation arrangements – experience with mergers (in particular their results), public-private partnerships, cooperation with the third sector, cross-border and trans-regional cooperation projects etc;
- Areas of service delivery where these arrangements work well (best practices) versus do not working very well (problems, failures);

⁴⁸ Schmidt, V.A (2006) Democracy in Europe: the EU and national polities, Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹ E.g. ESPON 2.3.2 typology of State Structures and Regionalisation or in Tosics , I. et al. (2010) National Spatial Planning Policies and Governance Typology, available at: <http://www.plurel.net/images/D221.pdf>

The detailed questionnaire will be developed based on the literature review. However, the following criteria will generally be applied throughout the preparation of the questionnaire:

- Primarily closed questions combined with a few open or semi-open questions provided a list of options for answering. This combination of questions can be useful for ensuring that issues overlooked by the research team at the outset are not excluded from the eventual analysis if they emerge as being important for the addressees of the survey.
- The time for answering the questionnaire will be kept as minimal as possible (around 15 minutes).
- Simple, non-technical language with clear instructions and provision of a contact person for the clarification of questions; provision of examples where relevant.
- Some so questions of control in order to check the coherence of the required information with the available theoretical data.

In general, the questionnaire will be developed in close cooperation with the whole research team in order to confirm its suitability with survey goals and to ensure that all relevant issues will be taken into account. Before the launch of the web survey, the questionnaire will be tested with 3-5 representatives of the target group

Survey sample

The target group of the survey will be local authorities (e.g. mayors respectively their departments, officials responsible for cooperation etc.) in the selected towns as the research question on governance and cooperation arrangements can be analysed by investigating mechanisms which can be found at institutional level (administrative authorities in given administrative boundaries). Due to limited resources, the language challenge at the level of local authorities will have to be overcome through creative solutions. It is intended to prepare the questionnaire only in English and to compose the sample with sufficient language capacity with the support of the Committee of the Regions.

The structure and composition of the survey sample will be derived logically from the results of the WPs 2-1 and 2-2. Thus it will take into account the empirical findings of the typology analyses. Based on the generated list and taking into account the finding on typologies of small and medium-sized towns and their roles and functions, the sample will remain as minimal as possible but as representative as necessary for making scientifically valid conclusions. If manageable, the research teams will strive for a stratified sample based on different governance types. In any case, all ESPON 31 countries will be taken into account.

Analysis and interpretation of results

The analysis and interpretation of the survey results will be an important input for the overall analysis in the project with a particular view to the horizontal research issues. The research team has a wide experience in analysing quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaires and using the data procession tools. These results will be interpreted in the broader analytical framework and along the main research questions and consider also the general limitations of a survey, for instance related to the sample size, the response rate and the reliability of the responses. In order to make the results more easily readable and understandable, data will be also presented in a graphical and tabular form where deemed necessary.³

3.3.4 Overcoming the main challenges

The most common risks with surveys are related to the response rate and to different language contexts. In order to raise the number of respondents, follow-up e-mails will be sent and if urgently needed, non-respondents will be invited to answer the questionnaire via phone. Also the support of the Committee of the Regions will be sought in order to keep the response rate high. Considering the resource base of the project, the TPG assumes that the advantages (considerable and possible representative data of good quality) outweigh the risks of a survey.

3.4 Case studies

3.4.1 Objectives of the case studies

“In order to go beyond the challenges related to statistically measuring the small and medium-sized towns”⁵⁰, the project will carry out ten in-depth case studies, capturing the position and development of small and medium-sized towns, and identifying various roles and functions they perform in their diverse territorial contexts. The case studies will be “based on an integrative approach and cover, in particular, the economic, governance, social and environmental dimensions”⁵¹ of the functions the investigated towns perform. Moreover, they will serve as a basis for a report on chapter on Good Practices as part of the Final Report and will provide also an analysis on economic, social and environmental aspects.

The activities in this task will be carried out primarily as desk research combined with field research (mainly interviews, workshops with local stakeholders) to understand how the legal and administrative framework is implemented at the local level, how it affects the range and power of local decision making, who are decision makers and which stake-holders are involved. In the field of governance, the influence of public administration, legal system, cultural tradition, and planning systems provides different governance styles. Essential information will be acquired from existing analyses of legal, administrative, and planning systems and the descriptions of national governance situations identified in WP 2-3 and in earlier research activities will be used.

Ten case studies are clearly not enough to make comprehensive conclusions about the theme. However, based on the findings from the remaining research WPs and embedded into their broad quantitative research, the qualitative results of the case study have an important function in illustrating, some of the most important typologies and regularities that exist with regard to roles and functions of small and medium-sized towns and their governance and cooperation patterns.

3.4.2 Methodology for the case study selection

The methodology will be based on the literature review and the definition of small and medium-sized towns which will be developed in WP 2-1 and 2-2 as one of the first research steps in the project. Basically, the selection will take into account the nine ESPON Territorial Typologies in order to ensure a diverse sample in terms of territorial contexts. These typologies comprise⁵²:

⁵⁰ Specifications, p.9

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² While the first three typologies have been developed by DG Regional Policy, the latter three have been developed by the ESPON Scientific Platform Typology Compilation.

- urban-rural regions
- metropolitan regions
- border regions
- islands regions
- sparsely populated regions
- outermost regions
- mountainous regions
- coastal regions
- regions in industrial transition

Two case studies will be selected for the urban-rural typology (one with urban, the other with rural context) and one for each of the remaining typologies. However, the case study selection also has to consider a series of further aspects, among which are, for instance, population density, the need to illustrate recommendations, the necessity to demonstrate good practices in particular in relation to the governance aspect. Possibly, also the analytical findings of the ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1⁵³ relating to different development paths should be taken into account. In this regard, the project found four basic characteristics, namely *dynamic and growing* towns (most of the analysed quantitative indicators positively related); *potential developing* (new trends emerging for different endowed resources, e.g. geo-physical, historical, location related, quality factors); *declining* towns (most of the analysed indicators negatively related); and *restructuring* towns (several indicators show deterioration of functions but a process of up-grading of the functions is ongoing).

These aspects will have to be weighted and further specified during project implementation based on the literature review and preliminary research activities of the project. The final selection of case study sample will be made after the literature review and preliminary research activities of the project. The details for the preparation and conduction of the case studies including the structure of the case study manual are presented in section 2.2.4.

3.4.3 Overcoming main challenges

The conduction of the case studies is expected to face some major challenges. First, the selection of most representative and illustrative cases from a large number of small and medium-sized towns is expected to be challenging, in particular so, as the timetable is very tough. This puts a strong emphasis on the first part of this research project which exclusively deals with data collection and indicator setting in order to develop relevant concepts and typologies.

Second, the language aspect poses challenges to the case study conduction as field research is supposed to be conducted in the country languages. This is of outstanding importance as local stakeholders in various territorial contexts and different settings will have to be approached, which often do not have sufficient knowledge of English. Also, relevant documents and quantitative data might be available only in the respective country language. This challenge should be overcome through a careful management of language skills available in the research team. The internationally composed research team enables a flexible approach to the envisaged tasks, especially the ones requiring considerable familiarity with the local context.

⁵³ ESPON 2006 project 1.4.1, The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)". Final Report prepared by ÖIR, Nordregio and NOMISMA, p.134

4. Dissemination

Referring to Priority 4 of the ESPON 2013 Programme ‘Capitalisation, building, dialogue and networking’, four groups of activities are foreseen under the heading of dissemination. These are:

- Active participation in the ESPON seminars during the whole project duration;
- Organisation of a scientific conference towards the end of the project;
- Production of a (quarterly) electronic news-letter; and
- Drafting of research papers by individual team members.

ESPON-Seminars

There will be at least four seminars organised by the ESPON Programme. These seminars will be attended by the core team and possibly additional team members. For the project team these seminars will not only serve as a platform for dissemination of the project results among the ESPON community. At the same time the (first and the second) seminar will also support the exchange of experience and facilitate the necessary cooperation with other ESPON projects particularly concerning issues of data availability.

Conference

We intend to hold this conference between project month 25 and 33 at one of the partners’ location. The conference themes should be defined in close coordination with the ESPON schedule and the EU policy calendar. The conference will have a scientific character with presentation of the theoretical and empirical findings and evidence gathered. It should identify scientific agents on the topic and guiding functions for further research.

The detailed programming of the conference topics should allow for both political practitioners and analysts being interested alike. The main target group, however, will be the scientific community working on ESPON projects and beyond this.

Web-communication

The internal web-based communication platform (see section 2.3) has an option for the production and dissemination of electronic information to (large numbers of) individual (e-mail) addresses. Potentially, it can also be linked to different social networks. This will be used to edit a newsletter going to the joint mailing list of all partners. The electronic newsletter will:

- report on the project’s progress,
- discuss selected issues of the territorial dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy and
- offer an opportunity for feedback