



**Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006**

**PROGRAMME: INTERREG III A PAMINA**

**"Establishment & Running of the Cross-border Special Purpose  
Association REGIO PAMINA"**

**Project Good Practice Study**

## **Project Study: "Establishment & Operation of the Cross-Border Special Purpose Association REGIO PAMINA (REGIO PAMINA GLCT)"**

### **1. General information**

**Keywords:** Cross-border governance, cross-border structures, management of INTERREG IIIA programmes.

**Region:** Upper-Rhine, German-French border

**Programme/strand:** INTERREG IIIA

**Priority Topic:** Co-operation in the Legal & Administrative Fields

**Duration:** January 2002 – December 2006

**Funding:** Total cost: € 1,625 million; ERDF-contribution: € 707,500.

**Partners:** The lead partner of the project was REGIO PAMINA GLCT. Other co-financing partners included Département du Bas-Rhin, Regionalverband Mittlerer Oberrhein, Landkreis Karlsruhe, Verband Region Rhein Neckar, Stadtkreis Karlsruhe, Landkreis Germersheim). Non-financing partners included Région Alsace, Landkreis Rastatt, Landkeis Südwestpfalz, Landkeis Südliche Weinstrasse, Stadt Landau.

### **2. Project Aim**

The project objective was to provide start-up support aimed at setting up, equipping and staffing the established structure, and, in so doing, also to further cross-border co-operation in the entire PAMINA region, through targeted information & communication measures and networking with strategic actors. The overall objective was to support and co-ordinate cross-border co-operation and supervise the implementation of joint projects or, where necessary, play a direct and leading role in implementing those joint projects in fields of activity where the partner regions have competences.

### **3. Project Description**

The partnership included a broad range of actors on the French and German sides, all interested in the setting up of a new cross-border body with a remit to promote regional cooperation. Due to the high strategic and political importance of the issue at stake, the project partnership went beyond involving regional strategic actors and covered the entire area of the PAMINA programme, as well as the French central government and German federal state authorities. Prior to submitting the application, the partners carried out a joint diagnosis of the key issues to be tackled together and defined the project content. The approved project included genuine common actions that would lead to the establishment and operation of a cross-border structure. This new body was to be jointly staffed. The lead partner REGIO PAMINA GLCT would recruit personnel from both France and Germany. At the end of the 2000-2006 programming period, the project was the largest financial operation approved under the PAMINA Programme, mobilising additional partner funding beyond the level of co-financing formally required, to 56.6% at the end of the project. Joint project activities included:

- Drawing up preparatory measures in the stage immediately preceding the final set-up of REGIO PAMINA GLCT
- Renovating and equipping offices at the headquarters of the cross-border body

- Ensuring a joint staffing of the cross-border body's administration and putting into place basic formal procedures and organisational structures for its operation
- Providing the cross-border special purpose association REGIO PAMINA with medium and long-term political guidelines with which to focus its future actions
- Developing awareness-raising actions towards closer networking with important strategic actors involved in cross-border co-operation within the PAMINA area

#### **4. Political and Strategic Context**

With the Karlsruhe Inter-State Agreement entering into force and promoting decentralised cross-border co-operation along the north-western and western borders of France with Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland in 1998, territorial authorities situated along all borders concerned engaged in broad and intensive reflection about the new legal possibilities offered by this agreement.

A similar process developed in the PAMINA area with strategic partners expressing their commitment to establish a new cross-border body with its own legal personality (i.e. REGIO PAMINA GLCT), as stated in the INTERREG IIIA programming document. This commitment was subsequently reinforced and formalised through a co-operation agreement concluded in December 2001, and formed part of the consolidated PAMINA Community Initiative Programme adopted at a later stage. Initial discussions and the more formalised political commitment also ensured that there was common understanding and agreement by project partners with respect to project aims and activities, and what they could expect the project to deliver.

#### **5. Project Implementation**

The project was regarded as complex, ambitious and experimental. The intricate regulatory details already in place, such as the Karlsruhe Inter-State Agreement (KI-SA), created some unexpected problems regarding the status of certain actors covered by the new cross-border body. Eventually the KI-SA was amended in order to allow all stakeholders to take part in REGIO PAMINA GLCT. Despite a one year delay, the partners finally succeeded in setting up the new cross-border body in 2003. The public cross-border body was immediately entrusted with all functions related to the INTERREG IIIA PAMINA programme (i.e. Managing Authority, Paying Authority, Joint Technical Secretariat). As a result, a fully decentralised and truly cross-border governance system for this programme was up and running in a short time and it is still functioning at this moment.

REGIO PAMINA GLCT had its headquarters in France and was a public entity in the form of a "public-private entity" ("syndicat mixte"), according to the French National Act on Territorial Authorities ("Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales"). From the outset, in 2003, the twelve founding members<sup>1</sup> agreed upon the "statutes" of the cross-border body which laid down the overall objective, tasks and all organisational matters related to REGIO PAMINA GLCT. The body was entrusted with the following tasks:

- The elaboration of different cross-border planning concepts (i.e. on spatial development, economic development, natural resources & environmental protection,

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<sup>1</sup> Département du Bas-Rhin, Région Alsace, Regionalverband Mittlerer Oberrhein, Landkreis Karlsruhe, Landkreis Rastatt, Stadtkreis Karlsruhe, Stadtkreis Baden-Baden, Planungsgemeinschaft Rheinpfalz, Landkreis Südliche Weinstraße, Landkreis Germersheim, kreisfreien Stadt Landau, Landkreis Südwestpfalz.

transport and the use of primary resources) and of related recommendations to ensure a coherent development of the PAMINA area

- The day-to-day co-ordination of cross-border co-operation in the fields of environment, tourism, leisure, sports, culture, bilingualism, public health and social matters and the prevention of natural or technological disasters
- The provision of information & advice to public or private actors and individuals on cross-border issues of day-to-day concern (INFOBEST)
- The preparation, monitoring and management of EU-programmes and the provision of support to project proposals (i.e. acting as Joint Technical Secretariat & as Managing and Paying Authority for the INTERREG IIIA programme PAMINA)

This range of tasks allocated to REGIO PAMINA GLCT clearly demonstrate that strategic cross-border co-operation was expected to go beyond just the management of INTERREG programmes, although EU-supported projects might well be carried out to achieve progress in the broad range of topics covered. Joint decisions adopted within REGIO PAMINA GLCT were either directly implemented by the (joint) administration of the cross-border body, or by GLCT members individually.

Until mid-2005, much of the body's work went into establishing REGIO PAMINA GLCT's formal and organisational procedures and putting them into place, for example: establishment & functioning of organisational and budgetary procedures for joint decision-making according to French regulations; recruitment of French and German personnel according to the staff delegation principle; public relations work. Furthermore, the project intensified networking with other strategic actors in the PAMINA area and carried out many information dissemination and publicity tasks.

The drawing up of internal procedures created the preconditions to start more politically focussed cross-border work. In December 2005, the REGIO PAMINA GLCT formally adopted a "catalogue of guideline objectives" for the balanced and sustainable development of the PAMINA area, which was derived from a previously elaborated "PAMINA cross-border spatial development concept". These guideline objectives were the long-term policy vision guiding the body's future cross-border activities, and are considered a first step towards establishing a new and more comprehensive "cross-border governance approach" based upon the "Eurodistrict" model<sup>2</sup>.

The REGIO PAMINA GLCT started quite early on with networking and exchanges of experience with other Eurodistrict-initiatives in the wider Upper Rhine Area and along other EU-borders, particularly, Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai F/B; Eurodistrict Catalan F/E; Eurodistrict Oderland-Nadorno D/PL. Finally, it recently decided to re-name itself "EURODISTRICT REGIO PAMINA".

## **6. Project Results**

Project funding helped speed up the establishment and operation of the new body. Without INTERREG III financing, the association would have only been fully operational in the 2007-2013 programming period. Community support was thus decisive in enabling things to get up and running earlier, during the 2000-2006 programming period.

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<sup>2</sup>Eurodistricts represent a specific model of cross-border governance, different from "Euroregions" that aim, in particular, to put into place more binding forms of cross-border co-operation at the local level (i.e. stronger integration of cross-border decision-making and implementation processes) and to ensure that cross-border co-operation occurs closer to citizens.

The successful institutionalisation and operation of REGIO PAMINA GLCT brought immediate advantages for the partners during the project lifetime. The solid legal status of REGIO PAMINA GLCT as a cross-border public entity allowed the bundling of all strategic co-operation activities of relevance for PAMINA under "one roof". This has also significantly improved the efficiency of day-to-day decision-making and management processes across the PAMINA Programme and led to a more client-oriented provision of advice and assistance to other project promoters. This was confirmed by a survey among project promoters which was realised under the up-dated mid-term evaluation of 2005.

Substantial synergy effects have included the much swifter intra-organisational clarification of open eligibility questions between the JTS and the MA during the project-application phase. This precluded previous misunderstandings which often came to the fore only during the elaboration of project subsidy contracts by the Managing Authority and which then tended to cause additional delays. Other examples are the more efficient handling of all reporting tasks, more effective support provided to the work of the Monitoring Committee and Working Group and, finally, a more flexible intra-organisational allocation of existing staff resources depending on the varying workloads that emerge during the lifecycle of the programme. Beyond these positive spin-offs that materialised fairly immediately, it was also observed that this organisational concentration and proximity has helped lower overall costs for the day-to-day management of the INTERREG III programme – the final expenditure for technical assistance (in 2007 approx. € 1,549 million) was lower than had been initially planned (in 2002 approx. € 1,677 million).

The setting-up of the new cross-border body, and practical experience gained through its day-to-day running, have generated substantial organisational learning for the original project partners who are now members of REGIO PAMINA GLCT. Towards the end of the project's lifetime, this technical and legal know-how was increasingly shared with other partners outside the formal project partnership. This exchange process generated, and continues to generate, external organisational learning with respect to the opportunities that new forms of cross-border governance can bring.

The principle of a decentralised and participatory cross-border democracy is at the core of the operations of the cross-border body. To put this idea into practice, REGIO PAMINA GLCT recently launched a voluntary and interactive virtual dialogue on its basic political strategy objectives. It makes all internal proceedings and decisions of interest to wider civil society transparent, which is directly accessible via its website (<http://www.eurodistrict-regio-pamina.com/pamina/>). As an umbrella body, it provides direct support to a broad range of people-to-people activities, stimulating inter-personal exchanges across borders (e.g. cross-border sports events, student exchanges, networks for elderly people etc.) and pro-actively promotes the PAMINA area as a common space for living and working.

The establishment of REGIO PAMINA GLCT and the information dissemination and publicity activities carried out within the project had a direct positive effect on the population living in the cross-border area. Since its start, the actual running of the "office for information & advice on cross-border questions" (INFOBEST) has been an essential part of REGIO PAMINA GLCT's own activities. This office annually handles more than 2000 direct requests from individuals or enterprises on cross-border administrative, social, tax-related or legal issues, and does so free of charge.

## **7. Conclusions**

The project significantly changed the established regional and local-level political and administrative processes on both sides of the border. Previously there had been informal cross-border co-operation in the PAMINA area, but the project transformed this into a legally binding and formal political co-operation process. Joint decision-making on cross-border matters now takes place in bi-lateral structures established between France and Germany for REGIO PAMINA GLCT. The day-to-day cross-border work is carried out by the body's administration, which is made up of staff from both sides of the border. This has furthered inter-cultural understanding, not only among project partners but also regional and local administrative staff and politicians.

The new cross-border body (i.e. the statutes establish a permanent cross-border body), is now completely financially independent – its 2009 budget is entirely self-generated. The EURODISTRICT REGIO PAMINA continues to create mutually beneficial advantages for all partners involved in the wider PAMINA area co-operation since the end of INTERREG III, truly a sustainable "win-win situation" for all.