

(from Flemish OP)

Priority: 5 Transnational and interregional cooperation

The emphasis on cross-border cooperation and sharing of knowledge is an important and unique element of the European Lisbon strategy and the ESF. Within the Flemish ESF-programme 2007-2013 this transnational approach gets a key role: as horizontal priority axis transnationality will provide input into each of three vertical thematic priorities, with a budget guaranteed at programme level.

With transnational cooperation we want to contribute to the learning process that is continuously taking place within the framework of the employment and labour market policy. We want, in an organised manner, learn from the experiences in other Member States and regions, exchange ideas, knowledge and staff members, develop, implement, finance, monitor and evaluate common projects with an added value.

Briefly, by means of transnational and interregional cooperation we want to contribute to the achievement of the revised Lisbon strategy and the Cohesion guidelines in the field of employment.

We want to achieve the following added values through transnational and interregional cooperation:

- ◆ To stimulate and support innovations through exchange of research, technical and practical techniques and experience. This way we want to reinforce formal and informal exchange of ideas and experiences between Member States. It will enable to achieve a broader view on the field and to be better informed concerning alternatives and comparable activities.
- ◆ To validate and disseminate knowledge and experience, as a result of which we can avoid duplication of investments. This way a broader basis for benchmarking is created. Common validation enhances communication between participating authorities and organisations, and increases mutual understanding. This enables the development and promotion of common standards and product development can be brought to a higher level.
- ◆ We want to increase the capacity of the participating administrations and organizations. This makes it possible to reduce the risks related to social and policy innovations through an exchange in real-time of information concerning success and failure.

Within the framework of this priority we want to facilitate several types of transnational and interregional cooperation:

- ◆ Partnerships between ESF authorities (Managing Authority, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and members of the Monitoring Committee). This may relate to exchange of experience, practice and ideas concerning the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all elements of the Lisbon process in general and those of the ESF in particular.
- ◆ Cooperation between organizations or geographical partnerships. This cooperation may relate to cross border matters concerning the development of the labour market, but can also relate to broader matters of cooperation.
- ◆ Cooperation of thematic networking concerning specific topics or problems. Several stakeholders or groups with a specific interest can cooperate on several topical themes.
- ◆ Cooperation between several projects. This cooperation aims at cooperation such as the one organized under EQUAL in the period 2000-2006.

Each type of cooperation can adopt several forms. We do not want to exclude any form. It can relate to simple exchange of knowledge or experience, to national, regional or local rules and procedures and experiences. But likewise common development of new instruments, methodologies, training, procedures, etc. are made possible.

Contentwise projects must fit within the Lisbon process and the scope of assistance of the ESF. As regards Flanders, they should in the first instance contribute to the Flemish policy as presented in the vertical priorities of this Operational Programme. These are the basis for the selection of the different themes within which transnational co-operation is promoted with a system of permanent possibility of access for projects at local, intermediate and policy level.

The specific interpretation has to be given by the responsible "Committee on Political Issues" and its working parties.

The ESF-Agentschap will establish and provide support to carry out transnational co-operation, to help with the translation of ideas for projects, to help with the search for partners, and to maintain and raise the quality of the implementation of projects. Moreover assistance will be provided for validation, mainstreaming and dissemination of products, practices and experiences, both at Flemish and European level.

The European Commission is asked to develop one or more platforms and to make them available to the Member States. These platforms should facilitate an exchange of knowledge, products and experiences that are present in the Member States at national, regional or local level, or of experiments and pilot projects that are set up and/or carried out. Such a platform should accelerate the search for thematic or organisational links.

A second platform should facilitate the implementation (by means of mutual agreements), monitoring and evaluation of the transnational and interregional projects.

For the financing of projects in the field of transnational and interregional cooperation we want to use the possibility for increased Community assistance. More specifically, 60% would come from the ESF resources, in accordance with art 8.1 of the regulation (EG) no. 1081/2006.

Indicators for priority 5 transnational cooperation

Indicator. 5.1	Range number of projects and type of actors
Starting point	Number of projects initiated under this priority
Aim	Follow-up of the number of projects and actors involved in transnational cooperation
Source	ESF-Agentschap
Measuring method	project approvals and –reports, on an annual basis

Indicator. 5.2	Number of validated products and project experiences
Starting point	Number of validated products and project experiences; experimentally developed in 2006,
Aim	To reflect the degree of external validation of a transnational product or project experience
Source	ESF-Agentschap
Measuring method	validation reports, on an annual basis, ongoing activity of the Monitoring Committee