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Work Package 11

*Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional
Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund
(CF)*

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Case study: Interreg IVC

Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, financed by the European Regional
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European Territorial Cooperation (Work Package 11)

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Executive Summary

The case study carried out as a component of the ex post evaluation of the ETC under cohesion policy programmes 2007-2013, aims to address two main questions: 1) *has the Interreg IV C programme developed the capacity and structures to make knowledge and concepts gained in their projects available to other regions?;* and 2) *what evidence is there that other regions used this knowledge, in which sectors and in which areas?*

Together with the development of cross-border activities and of transnational cooperation, the 2006 regulation has established a third priority for ETC: promotion of interregional cooperation focusing on innovation and the knowledge economy, and on environment and risk prevention, as well as exchanges of experience on the identification, transfer and dissemination of best practice with the aim of reinforcing the effectiveness of regional policy.

The Interreg IVC programme was set up to address this third priority and thereby, as specified in the OP, to foster cooperation and exchanges of experience between regional and local authorities from the EU, Norway and Switzerland with a view to improving the effectiveness of regional development policies.

The programme funds two types of project: "Regional Initiative Projects" (Type 1) aiming to improve the performance of the participating regions through exchange of experience (184 projects) and "Capitalisation Projects" (20 including "Fast Track" projects (Type 2) (20 projects of which 11 are fast Track projects) which specifically focus on the transfer of good practices into Structural Funds programmes.

The Interreg IVC has faced two main challenges, the first being to demonstrate the territorial impact of the exchange of experience and of the policy changes for the regions participating in the projects; the second not to limit the transfer of practice within the participating regions but to disseminate to a wider audience.

The assessment of the effectiveness of the two initiatives shows that dissemination and learning have taken place. With 508 good practices successfully transferred within Regional Initiative projects, among more than 5,500 good practices identified, and 210 action plans developed under Capitalisation projects, with nearly a billion EURO of mainstream funds (Cohesion/ERDF/ESF) dedicated to implementation of good practices coming from Capitalisation projects¹, the records of those projects in terms of exchanges of experience and transfers into mainstream or regional programmes were good. According to the figures of the 2014 AIR, 590 regional and local policies have been improved following the Interreg IVC initiative, under which 304 policies fell under priority 1 (Innovation and the knowledge economy) and 286 under priority 2 (Environment and risk prevention).

The Interreg IV C has led to the identification and dissemination of numerous good practices and lessons from experience, mainly within projects partners. There was extensive learning and exchange of experience. However, the evaluation found it less clear to establish how this led to concrete policy changes.

Interviews and focus groups set up for this evaluation have confirmed findings from past evaluations and studies regarding learning process and implementation of knowledge gained through projects in policies:

- Within RIP, significant results have been achieved in terms of individual learning while group and organisational learning were less frequent mainly because of differences in administrative cultures, in the involvement of partners or because a lack of resources and time for initiating processes.
- The capitalisation projects have led to a large number of action plans which were partly implemented. The main constraints which have hampered implementation into concrete measures were difficulties in preparing the action plans, changes in objectives from one programming period to another or a lack of funding;
- The involvement of relevant regional organisations and policy makers in the learning process was a key condition of success for knowledge transfer;
- Good practices and knowledge generated within projects partnerships need to be screened and validated before transferring as well as to fit with policy and funding cycles.

Overall, the learning process remained to a very large extent within the participating regions. It has been very difficult to find evidence of use of knowledge outside the regions participating to the two main initiatives, RIP and Capitalisation projects. As effective transfers beyond the partnership were not a primary objective of the programme, the projects have thus concentrated their resources on impacting the policies of the participating regions and, in the case of fast projects, on the adoption of action plans by partner regions. Dissemination outside was not a prior objective and was mainly achieved through organization of events and conferences, the results of which are very difficult to capture.

The tentative assessment made in the case study confirms the difficulty of finding evidence of transfer and use of knowledge outside the partnerships even if the search for evidence has nevertheless permitted, on the one hand, identification of a limited number of spin-off activities developed from projects and, on the other hand, collection of a few ad hoc examples of use of knowledge gained through Interreg IVC projects outside the project partnerships.

To give more emphasis to external diffusion, the programme has implemented in June 2012 a Thematic Capitalisation Initiative at programme level that covered twelve topics and consisted of collection, analysis, and sifting of good practices with the highest value for further dissemination, as well as dissemination of knowledge gained from projects.

The initiative has contributed to improve capitalisation and external dissemination. The extent to which it has resulted in an effective use of knowledge transfer is difficult to assess as this was not the primary objective of the initiative.

According to the stakeholders met during interviews and focus group meetings, a key value of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative was to create inter-project linkages, notably during the thematic workshops organised with a view to producing the reports. Such opportunities for face-to-face interactions were highly valued by project partners and were mentioned more often than the value of access to reports.

The evaluation survey carried out in April 2015 with a view to collecting feedback and evaluating the overall impact of the Thematic Capitalisation Initiative, has shown that materials and results were considered highly relevant to the policy-making process and very useful to get new ideas and inspiration even if conclusions and recommendations were not so easy to use and apply in specific context as being too generic.

It occurs regularly that European institutions or initiatives refers to Interreg IV C projects as inspiring examples while the Committee of Regions use thematic capitalisation reports to prepare Committee of Regions advice, notably in the fields of energy and innovation. But many European or national networks interviewed also admit to be not so interested in Interreg IV C activities, except in a few cases where projects are directly related to their area of interventions.

Policy-makers and regional associations interviewed during the evaluation shared the opinion that knowledge capitalization exercises are valuable if they help defragment the many sources of information, and organize them around clear topics rather than around sources. This means that opportunities exist for such capitalisation exercises encompassing more sources of knowledge beyond Interreg IVC, joining forces with other EU programmes delivering relevant policy knowledge in the same areas.

The successor of Interreg IV C has already addressed some of those issues. In particular, more attention and resources have been devoted to the transfer process within the partnerships as well as to a wider audience through the Policy Learning Platforms which directly address this issue.

1. Introduction

This case study is part of the *ex post* evaluation of all programmes undertaken during the period 2007-2013 aimed at promoting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) with a view to creating synergies and European value-added by eradicating internal borders and capitalising on the existing assets of the whole territory of the Union. The case study covers Task 4 of the *ex post* evaluation. It is the only case study covering a programme in Strand C – namely inter-regional cooperation – of ETC (nine cases belong to Strand A – cross-border cooperation; and two to Strand B – transnational cooperation).

This case study provides an assessment of Interreg IVC from the angle of capitalisation, diffusion and use of knowledge gained through the programme. Task 4 of the overall evaluation is based on a series of interviews and a survey with a variety of programme stakeholders, which complement a first documentary analysis and an interview with the Managing Authority already carried out under Task 1.

This report proceeds in Section 2 with an account of the methodology adopted for the case study. [Annex 1](#) provides an analysis of the main characteristics of the programme, which is helpful for understanding its specific features.

Section 3 is the core of the report. It is structured according to the two Evaluation Questions mentioned in the Terms of Reference. Section 3.1 assesses whether the programme has developed the capacity and structures to transfer the knowledge and concepts gained in projects within the partnerships and to other regions (“capitalising on knowledge”). Section 3.2 addresses the question of the use of knowledge transferred and its incorporation in policies and programmes in the main sectors concerned.

2. Methodology

The team has developed a methodology for responding to the Evaluation Questions which covers three types of activity:

- documentary analysis: reports and other outputs (such as websites) produced by the programme were screened and analysed;
- consultations: discussions and interviews took place with a range of people and organisations playing a role in capitalising on, diffusing and using knowledge gained in Interreg IVC. This entailed interviews with programme stakeholders and organisation of focus groups with project leaders and partners;
- enquiry: a survey was carried out targeted on project leaders and partners for a selection of projects.

The cooperation of the programme Secretariat (JTS) has been very helpful in identifying interviewees and organising the focus groups of project leaders.

2. 1. Interviews with stakeholders

A list of stakeholders has been drawn up, based on documentary analysis and interactions with the JTS, and also through drawing on the programme database including 2,700 addresses of individuals and organisations directly or indirectly connected with the programme. This database was prepared for and used by JTS for an enquiry on thematic capitalisation published in 2015; it notably included “thematic communities” identified in the programme capitalisation exercise. The full list of interviewed people is presented in [Annex 2](#); it includes two types of stakeholder:

1. Stakeholders closely linked to Interreg IVC, typically JTS and programme evaluators;
2. Representatives of European associations active in the thematic fields covered by Interreg IVC and of particular importance in the field of shared policy learning. Those people and associations are likely to play the role of diffusers and users of Interreg IVC knowledge.

In total several stakeholders were interviewed by the evaluation team during the period June-September 2015, either by phone or face-to-face, using the following questionnaire (Box 2.1), covering the two Evaluation Questions.

Box 2.1. Questions for Interreg IVC stakeholders’ interviews

1. Are you familiar with the Interreg IVC programme 2007-2013 (renamed Interreg Europe in 2014-2020)?
2. What do you know about the various types of Interreg IVC activities, and how did you get this information:
 - Inter-regional projects (“regional initiative”)
 - Inter-regional projects (“capitalisation”)
 - Programme capitalisation exercises (12 reports)
3. Among the following 12 topics (details to be provided on the 12 capitalisation topics), which one do you:
 - Know about
 - Follow regularly
 - Use information/publications
 - Transfer/share with others stakeholders (to whom?)
4. To your knowledge, what are the main channels used by the Interreg IVC programme to make knowledge available to other regions?
5. How do you evaluate the quality of information provided?
6. What was the most interesting knowledge gained in your field of intervention?

7. How far has your organisation been engaged in these activities/projects? As participant? As facilitator for project development? As diffusion agent?
8. Do you know cases of regions or actors that have made use of Interreg IVC knowledge while not being part of a specific project? If yes, how did this take place, what were achievements and problems? Who were the main partners? In which fields were they active?
9. Are you informed about uptake of Interreg IVC results at EU level (European Commission initiatives, policies, platforms...)?
10. Do you have some recommendations for improving the diffusion of Interreg IVC knowledge?
11. Do you have some recommendations for increased adoption of Interreg IVC knowledge?

2.2. Focus group of Interreg IVC project leaders and partners

The team has taken the opportunity offered by the Interreg Europe workshop for lead applicants, organised by the JTS in Brussels on 10-11 June 2015, for organising three focus groups with Interreg IVC project leaders or key partners. The aim of the discussions was to explore ways and means by which knowledge gained through inter-regional exchanges is being used not only by regions participating in the projects but also by other regions. The presence of a variety of projects within each group is expected to foster discussions and exchanges of opinions with respect to the questions investigated.

In total 21 project leaders and partners participated in three focus groups (full list in [Annex 2](#)). Participants in focus groups came mainly from nine EU MS (FR, ES, BE, NL, IT, NE, BG, HU, LV), representing the range of types of organisation involved – national, regional and local authorities and sector organisations, para-public thematic bodies, universities and research centres, and private companies. The questions used to foster debates in the groups are listed in Box 2.2.

Box 2.2. Questions for Interreg IVC focus groups

1. What were the activities organised by your projects in terms of diffusion outside of the project partnership? Note: make a clear distinction between project of type 1 (Regional Initiative projects) and of type 2 (Capitalisation projects). How did you decide about the mode of diffusion and target groups? What are the main instructions/obligations given by the programme?
2. What kind of support did you receive from the Joint Technical secretariat?
3. How do you evaluate the role of the team of capitalisation experts?
4. What is your opinion regarding the “good practices database”? Selection of practices? Usefulness?
5. Who were the key partners mobilised for diffusion outside of the project partnership? Is there any specialisation according to sector and geographic area?
6. What information/feedback do you have on the reach of those diffusion efforts?
7. How do you reach policy makers inside your own region and outside? At which level (local, regional, national)? What are the main difficulties of mainstreaming the good practices into regional policies and into the main EU structural funds programme?
8. Do you know cases of regions or actors that have made use of the results of your Interreg IVC knowledge while not being part of the project? If yes, how did this take place, what were achievements and problems? Who were the main partners?
9. Did your project have impacts at EU level (EC initiatives, guidance)?
10. Did your own organisation make use of the programme capitalisation outputs (knowledge gained from projects in which you did not participate)? How?
11. Do you have some recommendations for improving the diffusion of Interreg IVC knowledge?
12. Do you have some recommendations for increased adoption of Interreg IVC

knowledge?

2.3. Enquiry to selected project leaders in order to evaluate wider dissemination of knowledge

The whole range of documentation produced by the JTS has been screened to identify projects with a wider outreach. Overall, information on projects with identifiable external outreach was not easy to find, in particular:

- projects mentioned in the AIR as giving rise to “spin-off” activities have been subject to closer scrutiny, but these typically involved preparation of follow-up projects rather than diffusion of knowledge gained in projects beyond project partnerships;
- projects are described in the Interreg IVC web database under two headings: “objectives” and “achievements”. In the latter, the text describes activities within the project partnership (study visits, workshops, identification of good practices...) and results achieved (adoption of good practices, or regional Action Plans to be funded by the mainstream ERDF) for the regions involved. It is only under the “dissemination” theme that some insights are given on diffusion outside the partnerships: this typically involves (a series of) conferences, either those specifically organised by the projects or existing conferences attended by project partners, as well as project handbooks, brochures, newsletters and websites. There is thus some information on dissemination efforts but no information on uptake of knowledge by stakeholders external to project partnerships.

A small number of projects (eight) with “spin-offs” at EU level were identified. The strategy adopted has been to select these eight projects in addition to the 20 capitalisation projects which were more directly oriented towards the transfer of results and tools developed into Structural Funds programmes. (list in [Annex 3](#)).

In total the leaders of 28 projects were surveyed in September 2015 (questionnaire in [Annex 4](#)). The survey was followed by systematic reminders, first by email, and thereafter by phone. The objective was to raise awareness of the survey and ensure that it was sent to the right person. However in the end we received only eight replies.

3. Answers to the Evaluation Questions

3.1. Capitalisation on knowledge gained by Interreg IVC

EVALUATION QUESTION

Has the programme developed the capacity and structures to make knowledge and concepts gained in their projects available to other regions (“capitalising on knowledge”)?

Together with the development of cross-border activities and of transnational cooperation, the 2006 regulation has established a third priority for ETC: promotion of interregional cooperation focusing on innovation and the knowledge economy, and on environment and risk prevention, as well as exchanges of experience on the identification, transfer and dissemination of best practice with the aim of reinforcing the effectiveness of regional policy.

The Interreg IVC programme was set up to address this third priority and thereby, as specified in the OP, to foster cooperation and exchanges of experience between regional and local authorities from the EU, Norway and Switzerland with a view to improving the effectiveness of regional development policies.

Thanks to the funding of “soft” projects with an interregional character, Interreg IVC provided a framework in which local and regional institutions from different Member States could exchange experience and good practice in relation to the challenges they faced.

The programme funded two types of project:

- **Type 1 : Regional Initiative projects** (108 in innovation and the knowledge economy and 76 in environment and risk prevention) are projects initiated by regional actors aiming to exchange experience in a specific policy field in order to identify good practice and develop new tools and approaches for implementation;
- **Type 2 : Capitalisation projects** (20 projects of which 11 are Fast Track Projects) are projects that go one step further than Type 1 projects, as they aim to ensure that identified good practices are implemented as Cohesion Policy programmes. These projects are characterized by a tighter association of policy- and decision-makers and by the use of mainstreaming tools as well as actions contributing to wide dissemination. A subset of those projects are “fast track” capitalisation projects, which benefit from specific Commission assistance and expertise and directly target implementation of good practice in the Structural Funds programme.

The assessment of the effectiveness of those two initiatives shows that dissemination and learning have taken place. However, the learning process remained to a very large extent within the participating regions. To give more emphasis to external diffusion, the programme has implemented a Thematic Capitalisation Initiative at programme level that covered twelve topics and consisted of collection, analysis, and sifting of good practices with the highest value for further dissemination, as well as dissemination of knowledge gained from projects.

This section first summarizes the main findings on the effectiveness of the two main types of interregional cooperation projects (RIP and Capitalisation Projects) funded by

Interreg IV C in terms of knowledge gained and transferred within partnerships. Then it focuses on the contribution of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative to make knowledge available to other regions.

3.1.1 Effectiveness of the Interreg IVC projects in terms of knowledge gained and transfer into concrete actions within the partnerships

Within Interreg IVC the transfer of practice mostly consisted of one region adopting a practice developed in another. The main challenge faced by Interreg IVC projects was to go beyond pure exchange of experience and develop concrete action including good practices and lessons learned in the regional and cohesion policies of the regions participating in the projects. The efforts of the programme targeted this “within project” exchange and implementation of good practices. According to the OP, “a project is considered successful if the participating regions are able to renew their policies thanks to the knowledge gained through the cooperation” (OP p.41).

With 508 good practices successfully transferred within Regional Initiative projects, among more than 5,500 good practices identified, and 210 action plans developed under Capitalisation projects, with nearly a billion EURO of mainstream funds (Cohesion/ERDF/ESF) dedicated to implementation of good practices coming from Capitalisation projects, the records of those projects in terms of exchanges of experience and transfers into mainstream or regional programmes were good. According to the figures of the 2014 AIR, 590 regional and local policies have been improved following the Interreg IVC initiative, under which 304 policies fell under priority 1 (Innovation and the knowledge economy) and 286 under priority 2 (Environment and risk prevention).

The mid-term evaluation of the Interreg IV C programme and a study on Exchange of Experience have highlighted the following findings regarding learning on the one hand, and effective incorporation of good practices and lessons learned into the regional and cohesion policies of the regions involved in the **RIP projects**, on the other. In detail:

- Specific learning processes have taken place to a larger extent within RIP and were an important part of their wider outcome. Significant results have been achieved in terms of individual learning. Group learning also took place but has been affected by differences in administrative cultures, language proficiency and the involvement of partners with different competences and responsibilities in fields under review. Learning has been mainly generated by traditional networking activities and combined networking activities.
- Organisational learning, which is central to achieving concrete policy improvements, was less evident: a survey conducted by the study on the experience exchange process has shown that two-thirds of respondents consider that the learning benefits were incorporated into the planning processes and operational routines of their organisations while 45% indicated that their organisations also organised a wider and structured internal learning process for sharing the direct project learning benefits more widely. The main factor which limited organisational learning was a lack of resources and time for initiating processes.
- Collective policy learning and change were complex to measure but the involvement of external actors often pro-actively supported the transformation of project outcomes. In over 50% of cases, other local and regional administrations from the project partners’ countries were associated with the interregional exchange of experience process of the RIP. According to the

survey mentioned above, in half of the cases the importance of the policy theme addressed by the project has increased in the local or regional agenda.

- It is even more difficult to capture how far RIP project-level outcomes have been integrated into the EU Cohesion Policy's wider learning process on territorial development or by other regions or local authorities in Europe. There are few examples of projects having produced effects at EU level. Although from the outset most of the RIP did not pursue the primary objective of directly producing outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or added value, there are examples of projects which worked intentionally towards such outcomes and thus also towards generating benefits for interested third parties in the EU. A few projects have also established a direct working relationship with other interregional or EU-level cooperation projects.

Capitalisation projects were found to focus more on transfer of good practices, each region developing an "Action Plan" describing how the good practices would be implemented in their OPs (and funded by regional OP).

According to a survey conducted by the update of the mid-term evaluation, among 6 of the 20 capitalisation projects implemented, the majority of action plans have been either implemented, were being implemented or were planned to be implemented. Most of the regions stated they had benefited from the interregional cooperation, and that this would not have occurred without Interreg IV C.

Nevertheless they faced various challenges and constraints which have hampered implementation into concrete measures, for example:

- Difficulties in preparation of the Action Plan
- Changes in objectives and priorities from one programming period to another
- Adaptation and transformation of good practice to fit not only local or regional needs, but also to ensure national or international replication (in general good practices which have proved their effectiveness have to be carefully adapted to better suit each local need)
- Absence of thematic capitalisation at programme level in the initial operational programme at the start of the programme, no mechanism having been planned to ensure coherent exploitation and consolidation of project results by theme
- Lack of funding

All projects included dissemination activities aimed at informing a wider audience, not only within the participating regions but also beyond (websites, conferences, publications). No information is available on the reach of those diffusion activities beyond the project partners (as this was not a goal set for projects). However some capitalisation reports provided comments on the use of certain project-specific outputs, pointing to problems of lack of quality validation and fragmentation of the knowledge base, e.g.: *"Synergies can be realised by integrating the project-specific insights into a wider body of experience and communicating it to third parties interested in innovation systems. There is a multitude of good practice guides available. Most of them are hardly read and even less often are the insights implemented. A comprehensive guide based upon a pretty wide variety of INTERREG projects in neighbouring fields could make a difference for a number of reasons. The existence of the guide would be known to many relevant stakeholders due to the combined network dissemination activities of all engaged partners. Furthermore, the individuals and institutions that are aware of its existence would be tempted to read the guide and take it seriously, because it would offer a comprehensive overview of*

good practices to study. It would not just be one more guide, but would become a compendium. Lastly, the readers would be motivated to consider and implement the ideas and recommendations as they would be sure that the published good practices will have been thoroughly studied and cross-validated not only by field experts, but also by other practitioners.” (Thematic capitalisation report Innovation systems, p.55).

Overall, the assessment of Interreg IV C effectiveness has shown that to ensure external capitalisation, it was important to ensure the following:

- good functioning of the partnerships (in terms of organisation of the learning process, time and resources available, communication skills,...);
- involvement of external actors throughout all stages of the exchange of experience process, some working explicitly towards generating outcomes of EU-wide relevance;
- addressing of the link with national and EU-level policy priorities in the field;
- development of new practices leading to new approaches or new policy instruments beyond the project partnership, taking on board lessons from diverse practices in a variety of regional environments;
- access to funding sources.

Moreover, past experience has shown that it is crucial to have the policy responsible organisation directly involved in the learning process to ensure ‘exchange of experience leads to policy impact’.

Those findings are confirmed by interviews and focus groups set up for this evaluation. These have permitted identification of the main barriers to implementation of knowledge gained through projects in actual policies during the last programming period. A few key points emerged:

- Involving relevant regional organisations and policy-makers in the learning process was a key condition of success for knowledge transfer (this was already mentioned in the OP and in the lessons from Interreg IIIC). For example, a problem arose when projects included only ‘implementation oriented bodies’ but no policy-makers at appropriate level² (see extract below): when this condition was not met, diffusion within, but also outside, the project partners regions was hampered; *“Project partners who themselves can make policy decisions and implementation as they see fit, have less of a gap from plan to action compared to those that in turn must convince regional decision-makers. It could also be that partners come from member states where many of the policy decisions are made on a centralised level, leaving regions with little freedom to make policy changes independently”* (extract from “Innovation systems” Capitalisation report).
- Transfer into regional policies required that a strategic framework was in place into which the new practices could be incorporated; when such a framework was missing, this made incorporation difficult.
- Partners in projects needed to have the right profile (good linkage with policy makers and thematic communities which could act as diffusers): when this was not the case they could neither act as implementers nor play the role of diffusers of knowledge generated within their projects to the outside world.

² In Interreg IVC projects have also targeted a policy improvement at local level (e.g. municipal or city level).

- There is a need for screening and validation of the quality of the pool of knowledge generated within project partnerships.
- The successful transfer of good practice depended on many factors which determine its reproducibility in another system.
- Different projects within the same theme were often carried out independently with little interconnection: this creates too patchy a basis for external diffusion and a problem of visibility of the good practices for the external world.
- Definition of transferable good practices needs to be well-timed so as to fit with policy and funding cycles.

To address some of those challenges, the programme implemented a **Thematic Capitalisation Initiative** at programme level that covered twelve topics and consisted of collection, analysis and sifting of those good practices with the highest value for further dissemination, as well as dissemination of knowledge gained from projects.

3.1.2 Tools developed for making knowledge available to other regions and EU actors

While dissemination and transfer at a wider level was not the initial goal of the programme, this outreach dimension was nevertheless taken into account at programme level towards the end of the implementation period: in 2012, the programme launched a **Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative** which aimed precisely at sharing the knowledge accumulated in the programme with an audience of regional policy stakeholders more extensive than those merely involved in the projects generating specific knowledge. In addition, diffusion efforts are pursued at both programme and project levels in the form of classical dissemination tools such as websites, conferences, seminars, brochures, and so forth.

Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative

The updated Operational Programme for Interreg IVC included the following specific horizontal objective (Objective 5): "To ensure that the good practices identified within interregional cooperation projects are made available to other regional and local actors and are transferred into regional policies in particular into EU Structural Funds mainstream programmes" (OP p.37, emphasis added). The text of the OP states that "there is scope for improvement regarding thematic programme capitalisation and the dissemination of results to the key stakeholders, the wider public..." (id.). The OP thus recognizes that individual projects' success needs to be complemented by the capacity of the programme to diffuse these results to a wider audience.

To support this objective, a Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative was launched in June 2012 "in order to exploit and consolidate the projects' results, increase the visibility of the programme's thematic achievements and to improve the influence of Interreg IVC on the policy-making process at regional, national and EU level".

Concretely, the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative consisted of collecting, analysing and disseminating knowledge gained from projects focusing on the same topics. Twelve topics that were covered by a sufficient number of projects were included in the capitalisation exercise (Box 3.1.1.). In total 111 projects were covered by this initiative (a little more than 50% of Interreg IVC projects). External experts were hired for a three-year period to collect and analyse the content of an average of

ten projects clustered under each theme. The specialised experts analysed project features and results and identified their added value in each specific thematic field. A core element of their task was to sift out the “most interesting” good practices with the highest value for further dissemination (i.e. with high “upscaling possibilities”). They did so through documentary analysis, surveys and interviews of project partners, expert workshops and site visits. The exercise was coordinated at JTS level by the Capitalisation Officer with the support of the Project Officers and, during the first year, also by the Information Points. The project partners contributed by providing relevant information on thematic issues and participating in two thematic workshops. The initiative was being followed by stakeholder groups by topic, drawing together interested parties (Member States, national & EU experts etc.) who could contribute to the discussions.

Box 3.1.1. Themes for the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative of Interreg IVC

1. Innovation systems
2. Innovation capacity of SMEs
3. Eco-innovation
4. Creative industries
5. Entrepreneurship
6. E-government services
7. Demographic changes
8. Rural development
9. Climate change
10. Energy efficiency
11. Renewable energy
12. Sustainable transport

Source : Interreg IVC website

The exercise resulted in four types of document for each of the 12 themes (available in electronic or paper format, or both):

- Analysis reports: 70-100 page reports, depicting the EU context and recent trends and challenges for the theme; an overview on the focus of the Interreg IVC projects dedicated to the theme (including factsheets for all projects); an analysis and typology of collected good practices and of their link with the key challenges identified for the theme; an analysis of the pre-requisites for successful good practice transfer; key policy messages for regional and EU level policy-makers; targeted policy recommendations for all levels of governance and general conclusions.
- Summary reports: eight-page brochures providing the key points from the full reports.
- Policy recommendations: four-page brochures focusing on policy recommendations extracted from the full reports.
- Policy papers: two-page concise presentations of the main issues and recommendations for policy-makers.

The Programme Thematic Capitalisation Initiative achieved the targets set for this activity in the OP (Table 3.1.1.) in terms of outputs (with more presentations than expected at conferences). The targets for results indicators were obviously underestimated: only two recommendations per theme and only 200 downloads for 48 publications are not realistic figures, therefore they were largely exceeded³. Some

³ JTS explained that initial targets about the outreach were prudently defined, considering that such initiative was never tried before.

data have been collected by the JTS on the use of these capitalisation reports in the policy-making process: these will be discussed in the next section.

Table 3.1.1. Output and result indicators for the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative

	Target	Achievement 2014
Output indicators		
Number of topic workshops	24	36
Number of topic reports	24	24
Number of topic publications	24	24
Number of presentations made at other conferences (programme events, EU events)	24	50
Results indicators		
Number of thematic policy recommendations resulting from programme capitalisation	24	343
Number of thematic publications downloaded from the programme website	200	10733

Source : Interreg IVC OP 2011 and AIR 2014

According to the stakeholders met during interviews and focus group meetings, a key value of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative was to create inter-project linkages, notably during the thematic workshops organised with a view to producing the reports. Such opportunities for face-to-face interactions were highly valued by project partners and were mentioned more often than the value of access to reports. Opportunities for inter-project exchanges were found to be too limited, notably in the Capitalisation report on innovation systems.

The evaluation survey carried out in April 2015 with a view to collecting feedback and evaluating the overall impact of the Thematic capitalisation Initiative, has provided some interesting findings on the contribution of the initiative in terms of capitalising on knowledge:

- Materials and results were considered highly relevant to the policy-making process and very useful *"to get new ideas and inspiration for drafting new projects or to improve running initiatives"*. *.."The lessons learnt from the capitalisation analysis were useful for preparing strategic documents as well as for planning future services"*.
- 76% of the respondents indicated that they expected to use or apply further the capitalisation results in their future activities and programmes.
- The full analysis reports were read by a limited number of stakeholders (11% of the sample) but were considered to be of good quality even if rather too general to facilitate putting into practice of some of the recommendations.

- Analysis results were not so easy to use and apply in specific context as the conclusions and recommendations sometimes seemed too generic.

Interviews and focus groups have also confirmed that the initiative was mainly appreciated for its gathering of relevant information on the “state of the art” in the various fields covered as well as on already existing projects, thereby helping stakeholders prepare new projects and strategic documents.

Another issue that emerges from the Programme Capitalisation Initiative is that of synergies between Interreg IVC and other EU programmes and knowledge sources. Several capitalisation reports recommend creating more synergies with other EU programmes or knowledge bases targeting similar topics and target groups:

“It seems relevant to have common tools between the two programmes and more links when defining the calls for proposals and organising events. Indeed, it can be fairly difficult for project partners (INTERREG or URBACT) to stay abreast of the GP benchmark that they should do when there are several different programmes and several hundreds of projects. In order to capitalise and to find synergies within these programmes and projects, capitalisation tools and expertise should be further developed. One could imagine innovative solutions where the frontiers between the programmes become transparent to the users, and GPs are promoted independently of their programme of origin (i.e.: a user searching for GPs would not have to look into the INTERREG database and the URBACT database, he would search one global database)”. (Thematic capitalisation report on Innovation capacity of SMEs, p.49).

Programme website and other diffusion activities

The programme has set up a well-elaborated website providing access to programme outputs in the form of project summaries, “best of” publications, and a database of good practices. Specific campaigns (mailings on capitalisation events and results of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative as well as on the new programme launch) and harmonisation with a social media presence recently significantly increased the traffic on the programme website. While the web visits in 2012 totalled over 28,000⁴ and in 2013 over 37,000, in 2014 the figure was close to 112,000⁵. The top six countries, totalling around 50% of web visits per year between 2012 and 2015, are mainly EU15 MS including France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium.

During the last two years the presence and the visibility of the programme on social media also increased: the Facebook page on day-to-day activities reached 679 fans in 2014 (vs 200 in 2013); the Twitter account, focused on events and relevant information from *ad hoc* followers, reached 1,354 followers in 2014 (vs 206 in 2013); the LinkedIn professional community based around project management accounted for 94 additional members (325 in 2013).

During 2013-2014 the Good Practices database was launched and updated with nearly 1,200 good practice descriptions. At the end of 2013, after three months of existence, this database had been visited by more than 1,500 users, while during 2014 over 5,500 unique page views were registered. This page was ranked 13th among all the pages in 2014. In comparison, the approved projects database was used more intensively (nearly 6,000 unique page views in 2012, and 3,400 in 2013). One

⁴ Source for all data on web statistics is documentation provided by the JTS of the programme.

⁵ This positive dynamic was also at play during January-May 2015 – 78 000 visits, linked to the new programming period and the launch of the new Interreg Europe programme.

interesting message from the focus group discussions, which is in line with the above figures, is that the use of the project database was mostly geared to preparation of new partnerships with a view to developing new projects (to be funded by Interreg IVC or other programmes).

The analysis conducted on some projects during the Programme Thematic Capitalisation exercises offers interesting insights on the value of programme diffusion activities:

"The INTERREG IVC website has a GP database, which is useful for an initial benchmark, but it is not detailed to the extent of this report (and to the level of the other thematic reports). Partners in the analysed projects would like to see a more sophisticated capitalisation tool with a regularly updated database and personnel to provide professional advice to EU countries and regions, similar to the S3 platform hosted by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies⁵⁶. Workshops and open days have also been mentioned by projects partners as great ways to get to know other regions and GPs". (Thematic capitalisation report on Innovation capacity of SMEs, p.47).

In addition to the web-based diffusion activities, Interreg IVC also ensured diffusion of its activities through organisation of and participation in a variety of seminars and workshops, notably during the annual DG Regio Open Days events and in relation to the Thematic Programme Capitalisation initiative towards the end of the period. It also undertook media monitoring.

Unfortunately, for all these programme diffusion activities, and despite satisfaction enquiries carried out at some events, there is no systematic evidence on how the audience used or introduced the knowledge gained into their practices.

3.2. Use of Interreg IVC knowledge

EVALUATION QUESTION

What evidence is there that other regions have used this knowledge? Who are the key partners for implementation in Member States and at EU level, in which sectors and geographical areas?

3.2.1 Introduction

The Interreg IVC has led to the identification and dissemination of numerous good practices and lessons from experience, mainly within the project partners. The use of this knowledge in concrete action has been shown to be more complex and the effective incorporation of such practices and lessons into policy programmes has remained limited, for various reasons explained above.

In parallel, some efforts have been made to diffuse this knowledge outside the projects, especially since 2012 with the launch of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative. Before that, no specific arrangements were adopted to promote wider diffusion, each project having developed its own approach. As shown in the previous section, the efforts made up to now have permitted improvements in access to relevant information in the fields covered and were mainly used by various stakeholders to improve the quality of project formulation or of strategic approaches.

The use of knowledge accumulated during the 2007-2013 programming period by other regions and its incorporation into policy programmes (regional, national or mainstream) appears in that context still limited and very difficult to promote.

The INTERREG IVC programme does not define explicitly what is covered by the concept of 'knowledge'. Nevertheless, the programme monitoring system distinguishes three types of use of knowledge gained:

- a. **Transfer of good practice:** a good practice is defined as an initiative (*e.g. methodologies, projects, processes, techniques*) which has already proved successful (*tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective*) and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographical area. Transfer of 'operational' practices should be considered as a result (short-term effects of cooperation).
- b. **Policy improvement** leads to structural policy change in regions and relates more to impacts (long-term effects of cooperation). This is the final objective of the programme since "all the INTERREG IVC projects should contribute to improving the regional/local policies or instruments they address". This improvement can take different forms, such as (i) a policy document which is modified to take into consideration some of the lessons learned, or (ii) a new approach which significantly influences the way in which the policy or instrument is applied.
- c. **'Spin-off activities'** are defined as unexpected new 'projects', 'activities' or 'approaches' resulting from the exchange of experience. These typically involve preparation of follow-up projects.

3.2.2 Evidence of knowledge implemented in other regions, Member States and at EU level

Different sources were mobilised to identify clear evidence of use of Interreg IVC knowledge outside the regions initially involved in the projects. These are briefly described in Chapter 2; more details on the approach and its outcomes are listed below:

1. First, stakeholders closely linked to the programme were interviewed, including the Joint Technical Secretariat and the authors of some of the thematic capitalisation reports. This was useful for obtaining more insider details on the issues at stake and for exploiting the underlying knowledge of programme managers.
2. Second, the Interreg Europe workshop organised in Brussels in June 2015 was taken as an opportunity for organising focus groups with Interreg IVC project leaders. They were questioned on the use of the results of their projects in other regions, or at European level. No significant pattern emerged from those discussions.
3. Third, the large documentation base on Interreg IVC has been screened, with a particular focus on the AIR 2014 and its Annex 5. Indeed, programme managers have systematically reported cases of transferred good practices (554), policy improvements (464), and "spin-off activities" (462) identified through the monitoring of the 204 projects, as well as the estimated amounts of mainstream funds (Cohesion/ERDF/ESF) dedicated to implementation of good practices (EUR 972 million). However, as described below, almost all reported diffusion outcomes take place within the regions initially involved in the projects, with few examples of "spin-off activities" at European level.
4. Fourth, the 20 capitalisation projects and a selection of eight projects with external activities identified in the first screening of documents have been

subject to the survey described in Chapter 2. The latter was sent to leading partners of these 28 projects in September, followed by systematic reminders, first by email and thereafter by phone. In the end we received only eight replies, which did not deliver useful evidence on the topic. Indeed most of the examples were either within the partner regions or too 'anecdotal' to qualify as 'evidence'. Nevertheless each of the respondents was contacted to ensure a clear understanding of their responses and to attempt to elicit more detail.

5. Fifth, the results of the "Survey Evaluation of the Thematic Capitalisation Interreg IVC" were exploited. The survey was sent by the Interreg IVC Secretariat to more than 2,000 stakeholders⁶ in December 2014. It aimed to obtain feedback and assess the overall impact of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation Initiative (described in section 3.1 above). One question addressed more specifically the use of the results of the Thematic Programme Capitalisation. This document is interesting because it confirms that capitalisation efforts percolate down and in some cases have influenced programmes and policies (including provision of new ideas and the "state of the art"), at least in some beneficiary regions. The survey provides However, this survey does not provide the evidence needed to answer our question as it doesn't permit to identify which knowledge have been transferred and from which projects.
6. Finally, representatives of European associations active in the thematic fields covered by Interreg IVC and of particular importance in the field of shared policy learning were interviewed. In general, associations have a very limited view of what was done under Interreg IVC in their field, which is an indication of the extent of dissemination.

The number of good practices successfully transferred between partners was estimated at more than 500 as at the end of June 2015 (See section 3.1.1). The main areas where transfers were made are by decreasing order:

1. Energy and sustainable transport
2. Entrepreneurship and SMEs
3. Innovation, research and technology development
4. Natural and technological risks
5. Information society
6. Employment, HC and education
7. Cultural heritage & landscape
8. Water management
9. Biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage
10. Waste prevention and management

It is much more difficult to find evidence of use of knowledge outside the regions involved in the projects. As already mentioned, dissemination and effective transfers were not an objective of the first two components of the programme (Regional Initiative Projects and Capitalisation projects) even if for fast-track projects this could have been made more explicit at the start. The projects have thus concentrated their resources on fine-tuning and elaboration of methodologies and good practices and, in the case of fast projects, on the adoption of action plans by partner regions.

⁶ Beyond the stakeholders and regions involved in the Interreg IVC projects, the survey was sent to "thematic Communities", i.e. existing networks, platforms, communities, EU initiatives, as well as policy makers, practitioners and representatives of relevant EC Directorates-General working in the 12 analysed policy fields; all the Regional offices of the EU member States in Brussels; members of the INTERREG IVC Committees; INTERREG IVC Newsletter subscribers.

Dissemination outside was not a prior objective and was mainly achieved through organization of events and conferences, the results of which are very difficult to capture.

The tentative assessment made in the case study confirms the difficulty of finding evidence of transfer and use of knowledge outside the partnerships. There was no systematic record of such transfer which is understandable as the programme did not focus on that aspect. The search for evidence has permitted, on the one hand, identification of a limited number of spin-off activities developed from projects and, on the other hand, collection of a few ad hoc examples of use of knowledge gained through Interreg IVC projects outside the project partnerships have been identified (Table 3.2.3).

One of the indicators monitored by the programme is the number and type of spin off activities developed. They can take diverse forms such as:

- the submission of new applications in other EU programmes
- The adoption of new tools
- The development of new joint services
- The adoption of new cooperation convention
- The integration in an existing EU network.

The 2014 annual report when referring to those activities indicates that "the detailed analysis of these spin-offs shows that a majority are related to the development of new projects between partners often in the context of EU programmes" (p.78)

Table 3.2.1 - List of Spin offs at EU level

BORDWIIS+	Innovation & RTD	closed	Five partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a future cooperation after the end of BORDWIIS+ project. - FR
CHARTS	Cultural heritage & landscape	PR5	Project level: new project idea: 'Experience Economy' participation in online consultation process of the European Commission DG Enterprise - PR5
CITEAIR II	Biodiversity & natural heritage	PR7	Cooperation with European Environment Agency: CiteAir index used to present air quality information to European public - PR5
CITEAIR II	Biodiversity & natural heritage	-	CiteAir introduced the concept of air quality forecasting to the development team of obsAIRve - PR5
CLIQ	Innovation & RTD	closed	Eurotowns University Network Task Team created (6 CLIQ partners involved): Erasmus placement project plan finalised - PR5
CLIQ	Innovation & RTD	-	URBACT case study of Jyväskylä drafted (idea started at a CLIQ meeting) - PR5
CLUSNET	Entrepreneurship & SMEs	closed	Eurocities - interactive cluster mapping on the CLUSNET website - PR2
DC	Information society	PR7	new project with a Municipality of Vranje, Serbia - PR7
ENTREDI	Entrepreneurship & SMEs	closed	AER established a working group on "Entrepreneurship and Innovation" - PR3
EuroPROC	Entrepreneurship & SMEs	closed	European and African partners of PROINVEST project on public procurement use the euroPROC guide of good practices - PR6

NOSTRA	Biodiversity & natural heritage	PR6	Bilateral cooperation between Pas-de-Calais county council and Region Vlora (Albania)
NOSTRA	Biodiversity & natural heritage		Region Vlora (Albania) - 'Green Bridge Through Adriatic' project together with Province of Lecce (IT), Legambiente Puglia (IT) - PR6
PLUS	Energy & sustainable transport	closed	Creation of PLUS Database - PR6

Source: Annex 5, Annual report 2014

Table 3.2.2 – Examples of use of knowledge gained in Interreg IVC by other regions

Project	Type	Evidence of dissemination	Sector	Key partners for implementation	Where	Source of information
SufalNet4EU	CP	Methodology for the reconversion of landfill became a reference for numerous authorities in Europe and even beyond	Waste management	Campania region/consortium Salerno EuropeAid	Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Brazil, Paraguay, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Jordan, UNDP interested	Annual report 2014
EuroPROC	CP	European and African Partners of PRO€INVEST initiative on public procurement use EuroPROC guide of good practices	Entrepreneurship & SMEs	CDE - EuropeAid and Office for EU cooperation	ACP Countries Large diffusion	Annual report 2014
SCINNOPOLI	CP	This Capitalisation Project is based on the insights and good practices of 4 interregional projects on 'Regional Innovation Policy Impact Assessment and Benchmarking'. The evaluation methodology developed in the SCINNOPOLI project has been exported to the region of Castilla y Leon (Spain), which was not originally part of the SCINNOPOLI network.	Innovation	The contacts with Castilla y Leon were established through peer reviews that took place relative to another INTERREG IVC project in which the Castilla y Leon region took part.	Region of Castilla y Leon (Spain)	Survey + phone interview
GEO.POWER	CP	Two follow up projects, one LEGEND financed under the IPA Adriatic CBC programme and LUDIS under the IEE programme will implement GCPH investments inspired by the GEO.POWER practices	Energy and sustainable transport	Province of Ferrara	Italy, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia	Annual report 2014
CLIMACTregions	RIP	Exchange of good practices concerning	Natural and	FEDERANE	Large diffusion	Interviews

Project	Type	Evidence of dissemination	Sector	Key partners for implementation	Where	Source of information
		<p>the monitoring of the Green House Gases (GHG), the regional strategy to mitigate those GHG and the good governance involved in that strategy</p> <p>New network created: Energy Efficiency Watch. EEW3 screens the progress of national policies, looks into legislative documents, seeks expert knowledge via an EU-wide survey and creates new consultation platforms with a wide spectrum of stakeholders (parliamentarians, regions, cities; European, business and expert stakeholders)</p>	<p>technological risks (including climate change)</p>			FEDERANE + web site
CITEAIR II	CP	<p>CiteAir II aims to improve regional polices in the domain of air quality. The EEA has established a strategic partnership with Microsoft and developed the Airwatch system (http://eyeonearth.cloudapp.net) When developing this system, the EEA decided to adopt the CiteAir Air Quality Index (CAQI) to present Air Quality information to the public in Europe.</p>	Environment	European Environment Agency (EEA)		

Source: ADE survey and interviews and Interreg IVC documentation.

Note: CP: Capitalisation projects; RIP: Regional Initiative projects; FT: fast tracks.

In addition, it occurs regularly that European institutions or initiatives refers to INTERREG IVC projects as inspiring examples. This is the case with the ENGAGE project. Following a cooperation meeting with DG Connect and DG Regio, the regions cooperated with the three experts charged with the update of the European Broadband Investment guide. Another case is the Regional Innovation Monitor (RIM, www.rim-europa.eu), which aims to provide a reference framework for the development of more effective and efficient regional innovation strategies. During their analysis, the experts in charge of the initiative provided three different examples of INTERREG IVC projects approved under priority 1 (i.e. SCINNOPOLI, EuroPROC and RAPIDE). Some Interreg IVC projects are also listed as examples at the end of DG REGIO thematic guidance files for desk officers (e.g. C2CN, ERIK Action, Surf-Nature). In February 2012, WINNET 8 was invited to Brussels for a joint COCOF (Coordination Committee of the Funds) and ESF Technical Working Group meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the Structural Funds. The project is also listed as an example of 'cohesion policy success stories 2007-2013' in a DG REGIO publication entitled 'Cohesion Policy and Bulgaria'. When developing the 'AirWatch' system, the European Environment Agency (EEA) adopted the CiteAir Air Quality Index (CAQI) as the European standard to inform the public about air quality. Some Interreg IVC projects were also invited to various events organised at EU level. At Open Days 2014, 5 out of 38 side events were organised by Interreg IVC projects. Some project results are also disseminate beyond EU borders through EuroAid, such as SufalNet4EU or EuroPROC.

Furthermore, administrators of the Committee of Regions know and use thematic capitalisation reports to prepare Committee of Regions advice, notably in the fields of energy and innovation.

Above the fact that dissemination outside project partnerships was not an objective of the programme, various factors may also have contributed to reduce the incentives and the interest to share the knowledge accumulated:

Several information sources (e.g. the Evaluation Survey and interviews) show that dissemination tools do not always seem suitable for transfer to external stakeholders, for the following reasons: (a) the precise definition of a need or problem is often not the entry point for knowledge; (b) while good practices are an interesting source of inspiration, they are in many cases too specific to be transferred to another context; (c) the thematic capitalisation reports are considered as providing a good overview of the state of the art in the area and useful formulate new projects, but they remain too general and theoretical in their recommendations to be an operational tool for improving regional policies or instruments.

There were not so much interactions between projects in the same area: few exchange across projects working on similar topic were organized with no transfer of ideas or knowledge between regions yet involved in exchanging practices in an Interreg project (there are nevertheless counter example such as CLIMACT regions having shared their experiences with ENNEREG project funded by the Intelligent Energy - Europe programme).

What regions/sector actors seem to look for is (large) network with regions/actors facing common needs: within the EU or at a more international level (examples: network of outermost regions, TCI (network for competitiveness, clusters and innovation), CECICN (European platform of eight city networks) organizing common events, practical workshops).

Other EU programs also offer the opportunity of exchange and transfers within or outside projects in the same fields (ex: Horizon 2020); some overlapping may appear with Interreg IVC.

Moreover European or national networks interviewed⁷ are not so interested in Interreg IV C activities, except in projects directly related to their area of interventions:

- they do participate in some projects but it is not considered as a core activities (ex: MOT applied for 2 projects but with no success);
- most often they don't know how projects they follow are funded and mix up Interreg IV C with other programmes such as Urbact;
- they don't follow up regularly the activities and don't participate to events with a few exceptions (MOT because few concerns regarding cross border issues except NOSTRA; EBN: knows ERIKACTION);
- they do not consider that Interreg IV C projects are working on dissemination. they are obliged to organize a final conference but this doesn't intend to do real transfer of knowledge. On a whole, they consider that the outputs of Interreg IV c projects are not really transferable and are not being designed to be useful for an external actor.
- they are more keen to follow up Interact and ESPON
- the fact that participation to the programme was limited to public bodies (public agencies, local/regional authorities) had reduced their interest in the programme.

3.3 Interreg Europe: a new approach for transfer and use

Interreg Europe is the successor of Interreg IVC. Several changes have been introduced for the 2014-2020 period that are tackling some of the issues stressed above.

First, the objectives of Interreg Europe are more focused and clearer regarding the target: the core objective of Interreg Europe is to enhance the effectiveness of mainstream Cohesion policy (rather than regional policies as a whole) thanks to the promotion of policy learning from inter-regional exchanges and transfer of experiences. The programme support actions in four priority fields of intervention: research and innovation, SME competitiveness, low carbon economy and the environment and energy efficiency.

Second, the approach to be implemented gives more attention to the learning transfer process, notably by distinguishing "the transfer of existing knowledge between partners" and the "common development of new knowledge of wider relevance". Especially, the second dimension which was in its infancy under Interreg IVC as demonstrated above, is more thoroughly considered.

Thirdly, the two main types of activities implemented integrate some specific actions to facilitate the effective transfer of knowledge gained. The Interregional cooperation projects fund a first phase of the projects, i.e. the exchanges of experience and the production of an Action Plan in each region and a second phase focusing on the monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plans in each region. The policy learning platforms are a new feature aiming to encourage the development and use of new knowledge of wider relevance, and the continuous learning among organisation dealing with regional development policies in Europe. This new type of actions is

⁷ EBN, MOT (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière), FEDERANE (European Federation of Agencies and regions for energy and environment)

meant to provide a response to the dispersion of Interreg IVC projects and the difficulty to draw lessons that extend beyond the limited circle of partners involved in these projects.

While the evolution of Interreg C programme is addressing some of the shortcomings of Interreg IVC, ensuring that the capitalisation and transfer process will effectively lead to cohesion policy improvements, remains a challenging objective which requires among others:

- First, to ensure the relevance of experiences and knowledge regarding EU policies and the main challenges faced by regions especially in terms of research and innovation policies, SME competitiveness, low carbon economy and the environment and resources efficiency.
- Second, to develop synergies and complementarities with other EU-level policies and programmes. Several EU programmes are supporting policy learning and inter-regional cooperation in the same fields, such as Horizon 2020, European Cluster Initiatives managed by DG Enterprise, the LIFE programme, URBACT. It is crucial to avoid dispersion and multiplicity of initiatives.
- Third, to continue to improve learning process with the aim to involve all necessary stakeholders at a right stage and to provide the necessary elements and incentives for leading to concrete actions and improvements of cohesion policies.

4. Conclusions

The goal of Interreg IVC was to improve the effectiveness of regional policies through interregional cooperation and learning. Thanks to the funding of “soft” projects with an interregional character, Interreg IVC provided a framework in which local and regional institutions from different Member States could exchange experience and good practice in relation to the challenges they faced. The programme funded two types of project: “Regional Initiative Projects” (Type 1) and “Capitalisation Projects” including “Fast Track” (Type 2) projects, the latter aiming at the transfer of policy lessons and practices into Structural Funds Operational Programmes.

Dissemination and learning have taken place in both RIP and Capitalisation projects. The records of those projects in terms of exchanges of experience and transfers into mainstream or regional programmes were good leading to more than 500 regional and local policies considered as improved. Learning in the case of “Regional Initiative projects” has clearly occurred at an individual level, while group and organisational learning, which is of particular importance for the exchange of practices and for leading to policy action, has been less frequent and impeded by strong differences among the respective administrative cultures and by the involvement of partners with different competences and responsibilities in any given policy field.⁸

As good practices had already been identified in the regions, the focus of Capitalisation project activities was on preparing their transfer into regional operational programmes. According to the mid-term evaluation undertaken in 2013, around 75% of the action plans developed by six of the 11 fast-track projects were completely or partly implemented. The evaluation also highlighted some difficulties, including:

- Changes in objectives and priorities from one programming period to another
- Adaptation and transformation of good practice to fit not only local or regional needs, but also to ensure national or international application
- Absence of thematic capitalisation at programme level in the initial operational programme at the start of the programme; no mechanism was planned to ensure coherent exploitation and consolidation of project results by theme
- Lack of funding.

To give more emphasis to external dissemination, the programme has implemented a Thematic Capitalisation Initiative at programme level that covered twelve topics and consisted of collection, analysis, and sifting-out of those good practices with the highest value for further dissemination, as well as dissemination of knowledge gained from projects.

The main value of the programme was to create inter-project linkages, notably during the thematic workshops organised with a view to producing the reports and helping overcome the problem created by lack of connection between the projects. The Thematic Capitalisation Initiative has permitted to reach out to a new audience, enlarge external diffusion, and improve visibility of useful knowledge. The extent to which it has resulted in an effective use of knowledge transfer is difficult to assess, as this was not the primary objective of this initiative.

The transfer of knowledge appeared most useful when it addressed policy practice that had first been shared within the project partnership. The latter in turn depended of many factors that were only rarely found to exist, such as the involvement of relevant

⁸ However, the JTS underlined in this respect that a significant number of projects set up local stakeholder groups, an initiative that was not compulsory under Interreg IVC and that without organization learning, the programme would not have achieved so much.

regional policy-makers; the existence of a strategic policy framework in the recipient region; the presence in projects of partners with the right profile; a screening and validation process ensuring the quality of the pool of knowledge generated; the reproducibility of good practices identified; the timing of policy-learning to fit in with political and funding cycles; and the effectiveness of the learning process not only at individual level but also at organisational and regional stakeholder levels.

Policy-makers and regional associations interviewed during the evaluation shared the opinion that knowledge capitalization exercises are valuable if they help defragment the many sources of information, and organize them around clear topics rather than around sources. This means that opportunities exist for such capitalisation exercises encompassing more sources of knowledge beyond Interreg IVC, joining forces with other EU programmes delivering relevant policy knowledge in the same areas.

The successor of Interreg IV C has already addressed some of those issues. In particular, more attention and resources have been devoted to the transfer process within the partnerships as well as to a wider audience.

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Annexes

ANNEX 1. Main features of the programme

The goal of INTERREG IVC is to improve the effectiveness of regional policies through interregional cooperation and learning. Thanks to the funding of projects with an interregional character, INTERREG IVC provides a framework in which local and regional institutions from different Member States can exchange experience and good practice in relation to the challenges they face. Hence the programme funds “soft” actions which are complementary to the projects funded in the two other strands of ETC and the mainstream Cohesion programmes.

The programme targets actors in the whole of the EU as well as in Switzerland and Norway. An ERDF contribution of €321 million has been allocated to the programme. Interreg IVC focuses on two themes: ‘Innovation and knowledge economy’ (58% of the projects’ funds) and ‘Environment and risk prevention’ (42% of the projects’ funds).

The programme funds two types of projects: “Regional Initiative Projects” (Type 1) and “Capitalisation Projects” including “Fast Track” (Type 2), the latter aiming at the transfer of practices into Structural Funds Operational Programme. In addition the programme has implemented a thematic capitalisation initiative at programme level, through which lessons learned in projects gathered under 12 themes were synthesized and diffused in the form of long and short reports to a wide audience.

The programme funds policy learning actions targeting:

- exchanges of experience between regional policy-makers across Europe;
- identification and diffusion of good practices between regional stakeholders;
- integration of good practice in mainstream Cohesion policy programmes.

Main achievements of the programme are: 508 good practices successfully transferred; 590 local and regional policy instruments improved; EUR 972 million of national/regional funds dedicated to the implementation of good practices coming from capitalisation projects; 467 “spin-off activities” (covering follow-up activities in partner regions, networks and new project launches, some funded by Interreg A B or C); 210 Action Plans developed under capitalisation projects; 12 Programme-level capitalisation reports including 343 policy recommendations and 1 good practices database (the selection of good practices rests with partners).

ANNEX 2. Programme of Interviews

1. Interview of stakeholders

Type of stakeholders according to their involvement in the programme	Identification of the stakeholder	Type of interview
	Joint Technical Secretariat	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
Closely linked to Interreg IV C	Team in charge of the study on exchange of experience processes "EureConsult S.A." Capitalisation reports (CR): CRs - <i>Innovation capacities for SMEs and Innovation systems</i> – Inno-group, FR, Séverine Deléarde CR - <i>Eco-innovation</i> – Technopolis group, FR, Asel Doranova CRs - <i>Rural development and Energy efficiency</i> – Ecorys NL, Marie-José Zontag CR - <i>E-gouvernement and services</i> – Inovamais, PT, Gil Gonçlaves	<i>Phone interview</i>
Active in thematic fields covered by Interreg IV C and of particular importance in the field of shared policy learning	ERRIN, the network of innovative regions in Europe Richard Tuffs	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	EURADA, the network of regional development agencies Christian Saublens	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	AER, Assembly of European Regions Pascal Gloergen	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	The IPTS S3 Platform, which organises exchanges of experience in the field of innovation policy. Matthieu Doussineau, Andrea Conte	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	Committee of Regions Thomas Wobben and Alfonso Alcolea Martinez	<i>Phone interview</i>
	European Business Netowrk Philippe Van Rie	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	Euro-Institute for cross-border cooperation (in Upper Rhine) www.euroinstitut.org	<i>Phone interview</i>
	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (France) www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/	<i>Phone interview</i>
	European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies, Brussels	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>
	EUROCITIES Anna Lisa Boni	<i>Face-to-face interview</i>

2. Focus group participants

Firstname Lastname	Organisation	Country
Focus group 1 – 13 participants		
Fiona Craddock	ORDIF, Ile-de-France	France
Annick Vastiau	I-Cleantech Vlaanderen	Belgium
David Crombie	The Hague University	Netherlands
Annabelle Favreau	Regional Authority of Economy, Extremadura - Spain	Spain
Laura Dimitrijeva	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Regional Policy Departement Regional planning division	Latvia
Janez Nared	Scientific research center of the Slovenian academy of sciences and arts, Researcher	Slovenia
Rima Djikstra	International Innovation Consultancy IIC, Director	Netherlands
Per Erik Soras	SOR-TRONDELAG county authority, Senior Advisor, Department for Regional Development, Norway	Norway
Nikolina Mandic	ALOT Innovation for sustainability S.r.l, project manager	Italy
René Beijnen	Project coordinator EU, Provincie Noord-Brabant	Netherlands
Plamen Mavrov	Bulgarian Management Association, Member of the board	Bulgaria
Roberto Vanucci	CENTROCOT, Project department manager	Italy
Danielle Baetens	Grantavice, Sterk Innovatiewerk, Director	Belgium
Focus group 2 – 6 participants		
Maria Rosa Di Giocommo	Instituto di management, Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna	Italy
Elena Lugli	Centro Universitario de Cooperacion International para el Desarrollo, Project manager	Spain
Henri Varlet	European foundation for cluster excellence	Spain
Yavor Profirov	Association for Development of Mountain Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, Expert	Bulgaria
John Halvard Eide	Vest-Agder Fylkeskomunne, Department of regional development, Adviser	Norway
Péter Mogyorisi	Laser Consult, Hungary	Hungary
Focus group 3 – 2 participants		
Hélène Deresrowshi	ACOM, France	France
David Fernandez	SPRI	Spain

ANNEX 3. Projects surveyed

ACRONYM	PROJECT TITLE	TYPE	THEME	LP INSTITUTION
<u>B3 REGIONS</u>	Regions for better Broadband connection	Capitalisation Project	The Information Society	Piedmont Region
<u>C2CN</u>	Cradle to Cradle Network	Capitalisation Project	Waste management	Province Of Limburg
<u>CITEAIR II</u>	Common Information to European Air	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage (including air quality)	Airparif
<u>CLIQ</u>	Creating Local Innovation through a Quadruple Helix	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Innovation, research and technology development	City of Jyväskylä
<u>CLUSNET</u>	Clusters & Cities Network	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Entrepreneurship and SMEs	Greater Lyon
<u>CO2FREE</u>	Cooperating 2 Foster Renewables and Energy Efficiency	Capitalisation Project	Energy and sustainable transport	European regions network for the Application of Communications Technology
<u>DC</u>	DIGITAL CITIES: A network for rapid and sustainable ICT regional adoption	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Information Society	e-Trikala Municipality's S.A.
<u>EFFMIS</u>	European Forest Fire Monitoring using Information Systems	Capitalisation Project	Natural and technological risks (including climate change)	University of Western Macedonia
<u>ENTREDI</u>	Entrepreneurial Diversity	Capitalisation Project / with spin-offs at EU level	Entrepreneurship and SMEs	Kompass
<u>ERIK ACTION</u>	ERIK ACTION- Upgrading the innovation capacity of existing firms	Capitalisation Project	Innovation, research and technology development	Regional Government of Tuscany
<u>ESF6 CIA</u>	Capitalising Innovative Approaches	Capitalisation Project	Employment, human capital and education	Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig GmbH

ACRONYM	PROJECT TITLE	TYPE	THEME	LP INSTITUTION
	towards Demographic Change			
<u>EU 2020 going local</u>	From detached Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies to a regionalised indigenous EU 2020	Capitalisation Project	Energy and sustainable transport	Sormland Regional Council
<u>EUFOFINET</u>	EUROPEAN FOREST FIRE NETWORKS	Capitalisation Project	Natural and technological risks (including climate change)	Regional Union of Municipalities of Attica (PEDA)
<u>EUROPROC</u>	EU Regional Cooperation for SMEs access to Public Procurement	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Entrepreneurship and SMEs	Catalonia Competitiveness Agency (ACC10)
<u>GEO.POWER</u>	Geothermal energy to adress energy performances strategies in residential and industrial buildings	Capitalisation Project	Energy and sustainable transport	Province of Ferrara
<u>ICHNOS PLUS</u>	Innovation and Change: Network of One-stop Shops for Business- PLUS	Capitalisation Project	Entrepreneurship and SMEs	ANCITEL SARDINIA
<u>IMMODI</u>	IMPLEMENTING MODI	Capitalisation Project	Information Society	Association TECLA
<u>MKW</u>	Making Knowledge Work	Capitalisation Project	Innovation, research and technology development	Brainport Development NV
<u>MORE4NRG</u>	MORE4NRG	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Energy and sustainable transport	Province of Flevoland
<u>NOSTRA</u>	Network of STRAits	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage (including air quality)	Pas-de-Calais County Council
<u>PIKE</u>	Promotion Innovation and the Kwoledge Economy	Capitalisation Project	Innovation, research and technology development	ERNACT EEIG

ACRONYM	PROJECT TITLE	TYPE	THEME	LP INSTITUTION
<u>PIMMS CAPITAL</u>	Capitalising on Partner Initiatives in Mobility Management Services	Capitalisation Project	Energy and sustainable transport	traffiQ- Frankfurt Public Transport Authority
<u>PLUS</u>	Public Lighting Strategies for Urban Spaces	Capitalisation Project / with spin-offs at EU level	Energy and sustainable transport	Eindhoven Municipality
<u>RAPIDE</u>	REGIONAL ACTION PLANS for INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE	Capitalisation Project	Innovation, research and technology development	South West of England Regional Development Agency
<u>SCINNOPOLI</u>	SCanning INNOvation POLIcy Impact	Capitalisation Project	Innovation, research and technology development	Lower Austrian Government Dept Economic Affairs, Tourism, Technology
<u>SEE</u>	Sharing Experience Europe - policy innovation design	Projects with spin-offs at EU level	Entrepreneurship and SMEs	Design Wales - UWIC
<u>SufalNet4EU</u>	Sustainable use of former and abandoned landfills network for you	Capitalisation Project	Waste management	Province of Noord-Brabant
<u>WINNET 8</u>	WOMEN IN NET 8	Capitalisation Project	Employment, human capital and education	Municipality of Alvdalen

Source: Interreg IVC web database of projects and AIR 2014

ANNEX 4. Key questions for survey of Interreg IVC projects

The survey aims to capture the role of the INTERREG IVC programme and more specifically of capitalisation projects in the transfer and use of knowledge gained not within regions initially involved in the project but in other regions.

1. Project interventions

- 1.1. Your project
- 1.2. Main theme addressed by the project
- 1.3. Please describe in more details your field of activities
- 1.4. Please indicate the main activities carried out by your project
- 1.5. Please classify by order of importance main activities carried out by your project (mentioned in Q1.4)
- 1.6. Which are the main results within the regions initially involved (scale 1) and within regions outside of the project (scale 2)?

2. Use of knowledge by other regions

- 2.1. Describe shortly the knowledge transferred and used by other regions than those involved initially in the project (a maximum of 4 main types of knowledge transferred and used by **other regions**)

For each of the knowledge, please specify :

- 2.2. the types of knowledge transferred and used by other regions
- 2.3. the sector of use
- 2.4. in which Member States was the knowledge used
- 2.5. which partnering regional public authorities have used the gained knowledge?
- 2.6. which partnering local public authorities have used the gained knowledge?
- 2.7. which other partnering organisations have used the gained knowledge?
- 2.8. Has the knowledge been used at EU level?

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