



European Territorial Cooperation

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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**Ex-post evaluation of
Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, financed by the
European Regional
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and Cohesion Fund (CF)**

Final report

Main report

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List of acronyms

AA	Atlantic Area
AIR	Annual Implementation Report
ASDP	Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective
BSR	Baltic Sea Region
CB	Cross-Border
CBC	Cross-Border Co-operation (strand "A")
CF	Cohesion Fund
CT	Core Team
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment funds
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
ETC	European Territorial Co-operation
EU	European Union
EUSBSR	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INTERACT	Interreg Animation, Communication and Transfer
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MA	Managing Authorities
MS	Member States
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP(s)	Operational Programme(s)
QC	Quality Control
REG	Regulation
RTD(I)	Research and Technology Development (and Innovation)
SF	Structural Funds
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-related
SMEs	Small and Medium size Enterprises

SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical assistance
TNC	Transnational cooperation (strand "B")
ToRs	Terms of References
URBACT	European Programme for urban sustainable development
USA	United States of America
VASAB	Vision and strategies around the Baltic sea
WP	Work Package

Foreword

The evaluation team wishes to thank all the Managing Authorities and Joint Technical Secretariats of the Interreg programmes as well as all actors from the case study regions who devoted time for the interviews and fieldwork undertaken during the evaluation. We also thank the participants in the final stakeholder seminar held in December 2015 for their useful contributions.

Executive summary

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This document is the final report of the *ex post* evaluation of programmes aiming at promoting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), widely known as Interreg, during the period 2007-2013.

This evaluation was commissioned by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, and is part of a set of 14 thematic evaluations contributing to an overall *ex post* evaluation of the Cohesion Policy Programmes for 2007-2013.

The overall aim of the evaluation is to assess the results of Interreg programmes. It has a specific focus on co-operation in the fields of research, technology and innovation; environmental protection and enhancement; and capacity-building. It also aims at assessing the results of knowledge transfer across regions from Interreg IV C, and at assessing the contributions of the programmes to the Jobs and Growth agenda.

The evaluation covers Interreg Programmes implemented over the period 2007-2013, in all geographical zones.

The evaluation subject

Interreg has a long history prior to the evaluation period. The first cross-border programme was set up in the years 1987 and 1988. Up to 2006 three generations of Interreg programmes had been launched, each with specific priorities and implementation modalities.

The 2007-2013 period covers the fourth generation of Interreg programmes. It encompasses programmes¹ dedicated to cross-border (56), transnational (13) or interregional (1) cooperation, networking activities (3: URBACT, ESPON, and INTERACT), the pre-accession assistance (IPA, 8) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership (ENPI).

The programmes covered by this evaluation are²:

- 53 cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes, which aim at "*strengthening the competitiveness of the border regions*" and at contributing to "*economic and social integration*" (Strand A);
- 13 transnational cooperation (TNC) programmes, which have been conceived in parallel to CBC as a means of fostering cooperation between Member States at macro-regional level in order to address matters of strategic importance that cannot be effectively addressed at Member State level (Strand B);
- One inter-regional cooperation programme (Interreg IVC), which aims at promoting learning from inter-regional exchanges and transfer of experience (Strand C).

¹ EC, Regional and Urban Policy, *Territorial Cooperation in Europe. A Historical Perspective*, 2015.

² As defined by the Term of Reference, section 3.4.

Regulations on structural funds and on the ERDF specifically, adopted in 2006³, state that these programmes should explicitly focus on the priorities of the renewed Lisbon Strategy (2005), including on its “third pillar” (the environment) added by the agreement of the Gothenburg European Council (2001).

The total “decided⁴” EU budget for these programmes was €7.67bn, of which €5.53bn (72%) concerned the CBC Strand, €1.82bn (24%) was dedicated to TNC and €0.32bn (4%) to Interreg IVC.

The methodology

The team carried out the evaluation between January 2015 and March 2016 in three steps, as requested by the Terms of Reference:

- It started with an overview of the 67 Interreg programmes; for each programme, the team assessed the quality of objective-setting and the programme achievements, based on documentary analyses and interviews with Managing Authorities (MAs), then summarising these assessments in one-page documents, following a common structure for each of the 67 Interreg programmes;
- It then conducted case studies on 12 Interreg programmes (9 CBC, 2 TNC and Interreg IVC); this encompassed field work, including 105 individual or grouped interviews with representatives of Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats, project managers, and stakeholders from local, regional, and national public or private bodies, five focus groups, and surveys for Strands B and C. The team summarized the findings in 12 case study reports;
- In December 2015 the team organized a final stakeholder seminar to discuss the findings of the evaluation and confront them with the views of experts and practitioners.

The objectives of Interreg programmes

Interreg is a cornerstone of cohesion policy and European integration and is the only overarching instrument addressing sharing, integration and quality of life cross borders and on transnational level.

EU Regulation 1083 of 2006 defined European Territorial Cooperation as a separate objective of Cohesion Policy. The main goals of Interreg programmes funded under the 2007-2013 period were to:

- Strengthen cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives;
- Strengthen transnational cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Community priorities, and;

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions of the ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion fund. REGULATION (EC) No 1080/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 July 2006 on the ERDF.

⁴ The “decided” budget corresponds to the financial decision for each programme. We used data for 2014, the last available year according to the data source : SFC07_01(g)_Decided_PriorityThemes_Form_Territory_2008-2014 by op by year. The financial decision is recorded in the financial model of each operational programme. This is the planned budget available for allocation to projects.

- Strengthen interregional cooperation and exchange of experience at the appropriate territorial level.

In addition, Interreg programmes have been perceived and used as a complementary tool aimed at pursuing the three main priorities of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs:

- Improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities;
- Encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy; and
- Creating more and better jobs.

CBC and TNC were conceived to pursue specific objectives to contribute to the overarching goals, namely:

- CBC was intended to support economic and social integration in areas divided by national borders that face common problems requiring common solutions. It was designed to focus on *"strengthening the competitiveness of the border regions"* and contribute to *"economic and social integration, especially where there are wide economic disparities on either side"*.
- Transnational cooperation was designed to increase cooperation at a macro-regional level where there is a need to increase economic and social integration and cohesion on matters of strategic importance.

Main achievements of Interreg programmes

Outputs and results

CBC programmes (€5.574bn "allocated" budget) funded over 6,800 projects in the sectors targeted by the EU Regulation of 2006⁵, with a particular focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, environment, transport, tourism and culture. More than half of these related to "quality of life" themes (tourism, culture, sport, health, safety). Around 1,600 supported economic development, and focused for instance on clustering, on establishing cooperation networks, and on knowledge and technology transfers. The 1,292 environmental projects addressed among other things issues related to the management of natural resources, natural threats, climate change, and biodiversity.

These projects have yielded outputs and results that were in line with the specific objectives of CBC and oriented towards the main priorities of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. More specifically, they have contributed to enlarging the knowledge-based economy in border regions (mainly in programmes in the EU 12 MS), for instance by increasing R&D capacities and transfers across border, as well as by stimulating innovation capacities in SMEs in border regions. They also contributed to stimulating the diversification of local economies through tourism and culture. In terms of environment, CBC projects were more geared towards "soft" knowledge and policy improvement through analysis, research, and the sharing of best practices. This led to a more integrated management and protection of the environment, even if legal and administrative barriers remained. A number of programmes supported hard

⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

infrastructures and systems to increase accessibility across border, leading to travel time reduction, better accessibility of peripheral territories and improved security. CBC projects also contributed to improved access to healthcare and better education facilities. They contributed less to objectives such as increasing access to cross-border markets and developing cross-border trade, or integrating labour markets.

TNC programmes (€1.766bn “allocated” budget) were also in line with the Lisbon Strategy. They were used in a wide range of sectors to support joint activities at a transnational scale. TNC programmes funded 1,134 projects, mainly in the field of environment and climate change. They also addressed economic development and accessibility, even if for the latter, which was one of the main priorities, the number of transnational initiatives was smaller (140 projects under the 13 TNC programmes). TNC projects were mainly geared to implementing joint or articulated management of natural resources and environmental protection and to reinforcing networks or partnerships linking SMEs and research or technological centres at transnational level.

Overall, the specificity of TNC programmes was less clear. The nature of the projects was comparable to those implemented under CBC programmes but with a wider territorial aim. The evaluation did not find many examples of projects addressing matters of strategic importance for cohesion at transnational level.

Overall, the interregional programme Interreg IV C (€0.306bn) has made possible large exchanges of experiences and of practices. These exchanges have generated learning effects and led to transfer of knowledge between the partners involved, especially within capitalisation projects. The Thematic Capitalisation Initiative has allowed to reach a new audience, to broaden external diffusion, and to improve visibility of useful knowledge. The extent to which it has resulted in an effective use of knowledge transfer is difficult to assess.

Many of the cross border and transnational projects would not have been possible without the existence of Interreg, which remains a unique instrument to support joint initiatives across borders. In this regard, financial resources provided by Interreg represent the most prominent example of EU added-value from Cohesion policy, however requiring in the meantime a long term commitment for ensuring the sustainability of results.

Wider effects

Beyond the above described outputs and results at project level, the programmes also contributed to wider effects, notably in terms of **alleviating specific barriers to cooperation** (mainly cultural and distance barriers), and of **better social integration**.

One of the key results of the Interreg programmes was indeed their contribution to enhanced cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders (such as research centres and universities, SMEs, public authorities in charge of environment). This encompassed formal and informal networks, institutionalised links and more ad hoc connections (such as partnerships for joint research, and sharing of practices).

Such enhanced cooperation in turn led to the creation or consolidation of a regional identity in the sense of the increased acknowledgment by stakeholders in a certain area of the value of cooperating across borders and an improved social capital (including knowledge of the partners on the other side of the border and a better

understanding of the potential for cooperation). It contributed also, but to a lesser extent, to a better visibility of the area as a coherent entity.

Interreg programmes also contributed to lifting specific barriers, especially physical distance, cultural and mental barriers or language barriers. Whilst some barriers (mainly administrative and legal barriers) continue to hamper further territorial cooperation and integration, the evaluation found that existing borders were less and less seen as a barrier. This concerned mainly cultural and distance barriers and was less the case for legal, administrative and economic barriers.

Finally, the programmes also contributed to developing the institutional organisation across borders in CBC areas.

The EU Regulation⁶ also ambitioned a contribution of Interreg programmes to **economic integration** and **strengthened competitiveness** of border regions. In this respect, the evaluation found that CBC projects have contributed to strengthening innovation capacities, to improving protection of natural resources and more effective risk prevention as well as to easing transport accessibility or access to public services. But these contributions remained at a rather local level without generating clear effects on the territory as a whole.

Similarly, whilst the evaluation did find that, to a small extent, technological barriers were reduced, it did not find evidence that economic or legal/institutional barriers were reduced. This being said, it is reasonable to consider that legal barriers (especially those related to health services, labour regulation, taxes, business development), and barriers linked to differences in administrative culture and national legal frameworks, were difficult to address for the programmes (as they also required decisions at national or regional level).

The situation is comparable in terms of the effects of TNC programmes. There are examples of better integration in terms of environmental protection strategies and policies, especially related to shared environmental assets (typically shared sea basins and mountainous spaces). The evaluation also found a few results in terms of better connections of transport and ITC networks. But those results remained limited compared to the challenges and ambitious goals of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

Factors influencing the effect of Interreg programmes

The above mentioned results should be seen in the light of the factors that influenced the Interreg programmes' capacity to generate effects.

First, the objectives formulated at the start by the EU regulation were very ambitious especially when taking into account the **financial weight** of the programmes. As described in the main report, the amounts per capita allocated to Interreg programmes, especially in new Members States, were marginal to the amounts per capita for other ESIF programmes. Expectations in terms of impact beyond the specific project level should take this factor into account.

⁶ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

It is also important to note that the **EU regulations and guidelines**⁷ did not specify in detail how European Territorial Cooperation was expected to contribute to the Lisbon Strategy. They left room for both pursuing cooperation as an end in itself and as a means to economic and social integration.

CBC programmes have in that perspective often been used as an instrument aiming primarily at developing cooperation and linkages, without necessarily envisaging a strong leverage of this cooperation to a wider economic integration. This is clear from both the objectives and the output indicators they defined, and from what Managing Authorities considered to be the main results of their programmes (often expressed in terms of enhanced cooperation). Often, stakeholders themselves also quite explicitly mentioned better cooperation as the main objective of the programmes. This approach did not contradict what EU texts prescribe. Indeed, as said above, many of these official texts highlight cooperation as an objective, without necessarily making it a means to an end.

The fact that the programmes yielded little results in terms of enhanced competitiveness and integration at the level of the territory can furthermore be linked to **specific policy choices**. Indeed, regions and actors could identify themselves the priority obstacles and opportunities to be addressed by Interreg programmes. Such a demand-driven approach was useful in terms of fostering tailored programmes that addressed specific well identified cross-border challenges and the main barriers and opportunities in this regard. But this approach also had some drawbacks. First the Regulations⁸ were not so clear on the types of challenges that CBC and TNC needed to address. Within the concept of "common challenges", CBC programmes have indeed grouped specific challenges relating to border areas with more generic challenges that equally apply outside border areas and do not form barriers to integration (such as drug prevention, diabetes treatment, energy efficiency, renewable resources, recycling, etc.). Similarly the notion of "matters of strategic importance" in TNC programmes was not always well understood. More broadly there was little common understanding between Managing Authorities on the exact meaning and value of working at transnational level, especially in territories faced with wide diversity and weak institutional governance. This led to programmes that were driven rather by common concerns. Second the bottom up approach did not favour the prioritization of objectives. The programmes were rarely embedded in a global strategy geared to the strengthening of the competitiveness of the border region and to economic integration. Again, this did not contradict the Regulation, but it meant that individual projects, whilst successful in their own right, remained isolated from other activities – thereby diminishing their leverage and potential for generating a critical mass for change.

Intervening at the level of the "**most functional region**" was also a complex issue for Interreg programmes. First, because administrative areas at NUTS3 level ("small regions for specific diagnoses" in the nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) are not all relevant for dealing with cross border challenges. Moreover, programmes often lacked an analysis of what would be the most "functional" region for cooperation in a

⁷ COM(2005) 299, Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013

⁸ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

certain sectors. This was compounded by the fact that programmes intervened in a wide range of sectors: a geographical area may indeed be relevant for one sector and not for another one. Similarly, defining the most appropriate level is even more complex for TNC programmes, as the rationale for operating at this intermediary level (between EU, national, and regional level) was not always clear.

There was furthermore little **coordination** between Interreg and other ESIF programmes, nor was there much sharing of project results between regional stakeholders and central/regional authorities, the latter showing little interest in being involved. The potential leverage effect of Interreg programmes that such coordination could have favoured was therefore not fully realised.

Even though within each Interreg programme, **learning** has taken place across various levels (mainly in terms of individual cooperation and programme management) and Interreg IV C introduced the thematic capitalisation initiative (aiming to disseminate and transfer knowledge beyond the main actors involved), little knowledge sharing or transfer of practices, policy tools or learning has taken place, beyond the first circle of actors directly involved in projects. Most projects have in this sense been implemented in isolation.

Finally, it is important to note that in the **new programming period 2014-2020** the result orientation embedded in the regulations and programming ensured higher concentration of funds, stronger emphasis on defining a well-articulated intervention logic at the outset and on strengthening the results orientation of the programmes.

Résumé

Objectif et portée de l'évaluation

Ce document constitue le rapport final de l'évaluation *ex-post* des programmes visant à promouvoir la coopération territoriale européenne (CTE), aussi appelée Interreg, au cours de la période 2007-2013.

Cette évaluation a été commandée par la Direction générale de la politique régionale et urbaine et fait partie d'un ensemble de 14 évaluations thématiques constitutives de l'évaluation globale *ex-post* des Programmes de politique de cohésion pour 2007-2013.

L'objectif global de l'évaluation est d'évaluer les résultats des programmes Interreg. Elle se focalise particulièrement sur la coopération dans les domaines de la recherche, de la technologie et de l'innovation, la protection et l'amélioration de l'environnement et le renforcement des capacités. Elle vise également à évaluer les résultats du transfert des connaissances effectué par Interreg IV C dans toutes les régions et les contributions des programmes à l'agenda pour l'emploi et la croissance.

L'évaluation porte sur les programmes Interreg de la période 2007-2013, dans toutes les zones géographiques.

Objet de l'évaluation

Interreg a une longue histoire avant la période d'évaluation. Le premier programme transfrontalier a été mis en place dans les années 1987-1988. Jusqu'en 2006, trois générations de programmes Interreg ont été lancées, chacune avec des priorités et des modalités de mise en œuvre spécifiques.

La période 2007-2013 porte sur la quatrième génération des programmes Interreg. Elle englobe les programmes⁹ dédiés à la coopération transfrontalière (56), transnationale (13) ou interrégionale (1), les activités de réseautage (3 : URBACT, ESPON et INTERACT), l'aide de préadhésion (8) et la politique européenne de voisinage (PEV).

Les programmes inclus dans cette évaluation se présentent comme suit¹⁰ :

- 53 programmes de coopération transfrontalière (CT), qui visent à « *renforcer la compétitivité des régions frontalières* » et à contribuer à « *l'intégration économique et sociale* » (volet A) ;
- 13 programmes de coopération transnationale (CTN), conçus en parallèle à la CT comme moyen de favoriser la coopération entre les États membres au niveau macro-régional afin de traiter les questions d'importance stratégique qui ne peuvent pas être traitées efficacement au niveau des États membres (volet B) ;

⁹ CE, Politique régionale et urbaine, *La coopération territoriale en Europe. Une perspective historique*, 2015.

¹⁰ Selon la définition du terme de référence, article 3.4.

- Un programme de coopération interrégionale (Interreg IVC), qui vise à promouvoir l'apprentissage sur base des échanges interrégionaux et le transfert d'expérience (volet C).

Les règlements sur les fonds structurels et sur le FEDER, adoptés en 2006¹¹, précisent que ces programmes doivent être explicitement axés sur les priorités de la stratégie de Lisbonne renouvelée (2005), y compris sur le « troisième pilier » (l'environnement) ajouté par l'accord du Conseil européen de Göteborg (2001).

Le budget total 'décidé'¹² de l'UE pour ces programmes s'élève à 7,67 milliards d'euros, dont 5,53 (72 %) pour la CT, 1,82 (24 %) pour la coopération transnationale et 0,32 (4 %) pour Interreg IVC.

Méthodologie

L'équipe a effectué l'évaluation entre janvier 2015 et mars 2016, en trois étapes, comme l'exigeaient les termes de référence :

- Tout d'abord, un aperçu des 67 programmes Interreg : pour chaque programme, l'équipe a évalué la qualité des objectifs et les réalisations du programme, sur la base d'une analyse documentaire et d'entretiens avec les autorités de gestion (AG), puis en résumant ces évaluations dans des documents d'une page, selon une structure commune pour chacun des 67 programmes Interreg ;
- Ensuite, des études de cas de 12 programmes Interreg (9 CT, 2 CTN et 1 Interreg IV C), avec un travail de terrain, y compris 105 entretiens individuels ou de groupe avec les représentants des autorités de gestion, les secrétariats techniques conjoints, les chefs de projet et les parties prenantes des organismes publics ou privés locaux, régionaux ou nationaux, cinq groupes de discussion et des enquêtes pour les volets B et C. L'équipe a résumé les conclusions dans 12 rapports d'étude de cas ;
- En décembre 2015, l'équipe a organisé un séminaire final avec les parties prenantes pour discuter des conclusions de l'évaluation et les confronter aux avis d'experts et de praticiens.

Objectifs des programmes Interreg

Interreg est une pierre angulaire de la politique de cohésion et d'intégration européenne et constitue le seul instrument global traitant la mise en commun, l'intégration et la qualité de vie au niveau transfrontalier et transnational.

¹¹ Règlement (CE) n° 1083/2006 du Conseil du 11 juillet 2006 portant dispositions générales sur le Fonds européen de développement régional, le Fonds social européen et le Fonds de cohésion, et abrogeant le règlement (CE) n° 1260/1999. Règlement (CE) n° 1080/2006 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 5 juillet 2006 sur le FEDER.

¹² Le budget « décidé » correspond à la décision financière pour chaque programme. Nous avons utilisé les données pour 2014, la dernière année disponible, selon la source de données : SFC07_01 (g) _Decided_PriorityThemes_Form_Territory_2008-2014 par opération par année. La décision financière est comptabilisée dans le modèle financier de chaque programme opérationnel. C'est le budget prévu disponible pour l'affectation aux projets.

Le Règlement 1083 de 2006 a défini la coopération territoriale européenne comme un objectif distinct de la politique de cohésion. Les principaux objectifs des programmes Interreg financés dans le cadre de la période 2007-2013 se présentent comme suit :

- Renforcer la coopération transfrontalière grâce à des initiatives locales et régionales conjointes ;
- Renforcer la coopération transnationale au moyen d'actions visant à intégrer le développement territorial en lien avec les priorités de la Communauté ;
- Renforcer la coopération interrégionale et l'échange d'expérience à un niveau territorial approprié.

En outre, les programmes Interreg ont été perçus et utilisés comme un outil complémentaire visant à poursuivre les trois principales priorités de la stratégie de Lisbonne pour la croissance et l'emploi :

- Améliorer l'attractivité des États membres, des régions et des villes ;
- Encourager l'innovation, l'entrepreneuriat et la croissance de l'économie de la connaissance ;
- Créer des emplois plus nombreux et de meilleure qualité.

La CT et CTN sont conçues pour atteindre des objectifs spécifiques visant à contribuer aux objectifs généraux, à savoir :

- la CT vise à appuyer l'intégration économique et sociale dans les zones divisées par les frontières nationales qui font face à des problèmes communs nécessitant des solutions communes. Elle a été conçue pour mettre l'accent sur le « *renforcement de la compétitivité des régions frontalières* » et contribuer à « *l'intégration économique et sociale, surtout en présence de disparités économiques des deux côtés de la frontière* » ;
- la coopération transnationale vise à accroître la coopération au niveau macro-régional quand il est nécessaire de renforcer l'intégration économique et sociale et la cohésion sur les questions d'importance stratégique.

Principaux résultats des programmes Interreg

Réalisations et résultats

Les programmes de CT (5,574 milliards d'euros, budget « alloué ») ont financé plus de 6 800 projets dans les secteurs visés par le règlement européen de 2006¹³, en mettant l'accent sur l'innovation et l'entrepreneuriat, l'environnement, les transports, le tourisme et la culture. Plus de la moitié de ces projets ont porté sur des thèmes liés à la « qualité de vie » (tourisme, culture, sport, santé, sécurité). Environ 1 600 projets ont porté sur le développement économique, par exemple sur la mise en place de clusters, l'établissement de réseaux de coopération et sur les transferts de connaissances et de technologie. Les 1 292 projets liés à l'environnement ont notamment porté sur la gestion des ressources naturelles, les menaces naturelles, le changement climatique et la biodiversité.

¹³ Règlement (CE) n° 1083/2006 du Conseil.

Ces projets ont fourni des produits et des résultats conformes aux objectifs spécifiques de la CT et axés sur les principales priorités de la stratégie de Lisbonne pour la croissance et l'emploi. Plus précisément, ils ont contribué à l'élargissement de l'économie de la connaissance dans les régions frontalières (surtout les programmes dans les États membres de l'UE des 12), par exemple en augmentant les capacités de recherche et de développement et les transferts transfrontaliers, et en stimulant les capacités d'innovation dans les PME dans les régions frontalières. Ils ont également contribué à stimuler la diversification de l'économie locale grâce au tourisme et à la culture. En matière d'environnement, les projets de la CT ont été davantage orientés sur les améliorations des connaissances et des politiques par le biais de l'analyse, la recherche et la mise en commun des meilleures pratiques. Cela a conduit à une meilleure intégration de la gestion et de la protection de l'environnement, même s'il demeure des obstacles juridiques et administratifs. Un certain nombre de programmes ont porté sur les infrastructures et systèmes visant à accroître l'accessibilité transfrontalière, avec pour résultat des gains de temps, une amélioration de l'accessibilité des territoires périphériques et le renforcement de la sécurité. Les projets de CT ont également contribué à améliorer l'accès aux soins de santé et à améliorer les infrastructures d'enseignement. Ils ont moins contribué à des objectifs tels que l'amélioration de l'accès aux marchés et le développement du commerce transfrontalier ou l'intégration des marchés de l'emploi transfrontaliers.

Les programmes de CTN (1,766 milliards d'euros, budget « alloué ») étaient également conformes à la stratégie de Lisbonne. Ils ont été utilisés dans un large éventail de secteurs pour soutenir les activités communes à l'échelle transnationale. Les programmes de CTN ont financé 1 134 projets, principalement dans le domaine de l'environnement et du changement climatique. Ils ont également abordé le développement économique et l'accessibilité, même si, dans ce dernier cas, qui constituait l'une des principales priorités, le nombre d'initiatives transnationales a été moindre (140 projets dans 13 programmes de CTN). Les projets de CTN étaient principalement destinés à la mise en œuvre d'une gestion commune ou coordonnée des ressources naturelles et de la protection de l'environnement et au renforcement des réseaux ou des partenariats entre les PME et les centres technologiques ou de recherche au niveau transnational.

Dans l'ensemble, la spécificité des programmes de CTN était moins claire. La nature des projets était comparable à ceux mis en œuvre au titre des programmes de CT, mais avec une visée territoriale plus vaste. L'évaluation n'a pas trouvé beaucoup d'exemples de projets visant à traiter les questions d'importance stratégique pour la cohésion au niveau transnational.

Dans l'ensemble, le programme interrégional Interreg IV C (0,306 milliard d'euros) a permis d'importants échanges d'expériences et de pratiques. Ces échanges ont généré des effets d'apprentissage et ont conduit au transfert de connaissances entre les partenaires concernés, en particulier dans le cadre de projets de capitalisation. L'initiative de capitalisation thématique a permis d'atteindre un nouveau public, d'élargir la diffusion externe et d'améliorer la visibilité des connaissances utiles. Il est difficile d'évaluer dans quelle mesure cela a donné lieu à une utilisation efficace du transfert des connaissances.

Bon nombre de projets transnationaux et transfrontaliers n'auraient pas vu le jour sans l'existence d'Interreg, qui demeure un instrument unique pour appuyer les initiatives conjointes au-delà des frontières. À cet égard, les ressources financières fournies par Interreg constituent l'exemple le plus marquant de valeur ajoutée de la

politique de cohésion à l'échelle européenne, mais il faut un engagement à long terme pour assurer la pérennité des résultats.

Effets plus généraux

Au-delà de ce qui précède, les programmes ont également contribué à des effets plus larges, notamment concernant l'**atténuation des obstacles spécifiques à la coopération** (essentiellement les barrières culturelles et la distance) et l'**amélioration de l'intégration sociale**.

Un des résultats essentiels des programmes Interreg a été leur contribution au renforcement de la coopération parmi un large éventail de parties prenantes (par exemple les centres de recherche et les universités, les PME, les administrations en charge de l'environnement). Cela englobe les réseaux formels et informels, des liens institutionnalisés et des relations ad hoc (par exemple des partenariats de recherche conjointe et la mise en commun des pratiques).

Ce renforcement de la coopération a entraîné la création ou la consolidation d'une identité régionale, avec une meilleure reconnaissance par les parties prenantes dans une zone donnée de la valeur de la coopération transfrontalière et une amélioration du capital social (y compris la connaissance des partenaires de l'autre côté de la frontière et une meilleure compréhension des possibilités de coopération). Il a aussi contribué, mais dans une moindre mesure, à l'amélioration de la visibilité de la zone comme une entité cohérente.

Les programmes Interreg ont également contribué à lever certains obstacles, en particulier la distance physique et les barrières linguistiques, culturelles et psychologiques. Même si certains obstacles (principalement les barrières administratives et juridiques) continuent d'entraver l'intégration et la coopération territoriale, l'évaluation a révélé que les frontières existantes sont de moins en moins considérées comme un obstacle. Cela concerne essentiellement la distance et les barrières culturelles, et c'est moins le cas pour les barrières juridiques, administratives et économiques.

Enfin, les programmes ont également contribué au développement de l'organisation institutionnelle au-delà des frontières dans les zones de la CT.

Le règlement de l'UE¹⁴ ambitionne aussi une contribution des programmes Interreg à l'**intégration économique** et au **renforcement de la compétitivité** des régions frontalières. À cet égard, l'évaluation a constaté que les projets de CT ont contribué à renforcer les capacités d'innovation, à améliorer l'efficacité de la protection des ressources naturelles et de la prévention des risques et à renforcer l'accessibilité des transports ou l'accès aux services publics. Mais ces contributions sont restées locales, sans générer d'effet précis sur l'ensemble du territoire.

De même, l'évaluation a aussi constaté, dans une moindre mesure, une certaine réduction des barrières technologiques, mais sans trouver d'élément probant de réduction des barrières économiques ou juridiques/institutionnelles. Ceci étant dit, il est raisonnable de considérer que les barrières juridiques (en particulier celles liées à la réglementation du travail, à la fiscalité, aux services de santé, au développement de l'activité économique) et les obstacles liés aux différences de cultures administratives

¹⁴ Règlement (CE) n° 1083/2006 du Conseil.

et de cadres juridiques nationaux ont été difficiles à aborder par les programmes (parce que ces obstacles nécessitent aussi des décisions au niveau national ou régional).

La situation est comparable en ce qui concerne les effets des programmes de CTN. Il existe des exemples d'amélioration de l'intégration en termes de stratégies et de politiques de protection de l'environnement, en lien notamment avec des milieux environnementaux communs (bassins maritimes et zones montagneuses). L'évaluation a aussi constaté des résultats en termes d'amélioration des transports et des réseaux. Mais ces résultats sont restés limités par rapport aux ambitieux défis et aux objectifs de la stratégie de Lisbonne renouvelée.

Facteurs influençant l'effet des programmes Interreg

Les résultats mentionnés ci-dessus doivent être considérés à la lumière des facteurs qui ont influencé la capacité des programmes Interreg à produire des effets.

Tout d'abord, les objectifs initiaux du règlement de l'UE étaient très ambitieux, surtout si l'on tient compte du **poids financier** des programmes. Comme indiqué dans le rapport principal, les dotations par habitant des programmes Interreg, surtout dans les nouveaux États membres, étaient minimales par rapport aux montants par habitant d'autres programmes FESI. Les attentes en termes d'impact au-delà du niveau du projet spécifique doivent tenir compte de ce facteur.

Il est également important de noter que les **règlements et directives de l'UE**¹⁵ ne spécifient pas en détail comment la coopération territoriale européenne doit contribuer à la stratégie de Lisbonne. Ils laissent une marge pour poursuivre la coopération à la fois comme une fin en soi et comme un moyen d'intégration économique et sociale.

Dans cette perspective, les programmes de CT ont souvent été utilisés comme un instrument visant essentiellement à développer la coopération et les liens, sans nécessairement envisager un fort effet de levier de cette coopération dans le cadre d'une intégration économique plus large. Cela apparaît clairement dans les objectifs et les indicateurs définis, et dans ce que les autorités de gestion considèrent comme les principaux résultats de leurs programmes (fréquemment exprimés en termes de renforcement de la coopération). Souvent, les parties prenantes elles-mêmes mentionnent également l'amélioration de la coopération comme objectif principal des programmes. Cette approche n'est pas en contradiction avec les textes de l'UE. En effet, comme indiqué ci-dessus, beaucoup de textes officiels mentionnent la coopération comme objectif, sans nécessairement spécifier s'il s'agit d'un moyen ou d'une fin en soi.

Le fait que les programmes ont produit peu de résultats en termes d'amélioration de la compétitivité et de l'intégration au niveau du territoire peut en outre être lié à **des choix spécifiques de politiques publiques**. En effet, les régions et les acteurs ont pu identifier eux-mêmes les principaux obstacles et les opportunités à traiter par le biais des programmes Interreg. Une telle approche par la demande a été utile en ce qui concerne la promotion des programmes sur mesure, qui ont abordé des défis transfrontaliers spécifiques bien identifiés et les principales barrières et possibilités à

¹⁵ Com (2005) 299, la politique de cohésion pour soutenir la croissance et l'emploi : orientations stratégiques communautaires 2007-2013.

cet égard. Mais cette approche a aussi eu des inconvénients. Tout d'abord, le règlement¹⁶ n'est pas très clair quant aux types de défis à traiter par la CT et la CTN. Dans le concept de « défis communs », les programmes de CT ont regroupé des défis spécifiques relatifs aux zones frontalières et des défis plus génériques qui sont également présents hors des zones frontalières et ne constituent pas des obstacles à l'intégration (tels que la prévention de la toxicomanie, le traitement du diabète, l'efficacité énergétique, les ressources renouvelables, le recyclage, etc.) De même, la notion de « questions d'importance stratégique » dans les programmes de CTN n'a pas toujours été bien comprise. Plus largement, il y a eu une faible compréhension commune entre les autorités de gestion sur le sens exact et la valeur de l'intervention au niveau transnational, en particulier dans les territoires confrontés à une grande diversité et à une faible gouvernance institutionnelle. Cela a conduit à des programmes axés sur des préoccupations communes. Deuxièmement, l'approche ascendante n'est pas propice à la priorisation des objectifs. Les programmes ont rarement été intégrés dans une stratégie globale visant à renforcer la compétitivité de la région frontalière et l'intégration économique. Encore une fois, ce n'est pas en contradiction avec le règlement, mais cela signifie que les projets individuels, même réussis en tant que tels, sont restés isolés des autres activités, ce qui a ainsi réduit leur effet de levier et le potentiel de production d'une masse critique de changement.

L'intervention au niveau de la « **région la plus fonctionnelle** » a également été une question complexe pour les programmes Interreg. Tout d'abord, parce que les zones administratives au niveau NUTS 3 (« petites régions pour des diagnostics spécifiques » dans la nomenclature des unités territoriales à des fins statistiques) ne sont pas pertinentes pour traiter les défis des zones frontalières. En outre, les programmes manquaient souvent d'une analyse de ce que serait la région la plus « fonctionnelle » pour la coopération dans un certain secteur. Ceci a été aggravé par le fait que les programmes sont intervenus dans un large éventail de secteurs : une zone géographique peut être pertinente pour un secteur et pas pour un autre. De même, définir le niveau le plus approprié est encore plus complexe pour les programmes de CTN, car la raison d'être d'une opération à ce niveau intermédiaire (entre le niveau européen, national et régional) n'était pas toujours évidente.

En outre, il y a eu peu de **coordination** entre les programmes Interreg et ceux des autres FESI, et peu de mise en commun des résultats des projets entre les acteurs régionaux et les autorités centrales et régionales, les secondes montrant peu d'intérêt à y participer. En conséquence, l'effet de levier potentiel des programmes Interreg, qu'une telle coordination aurait pu favoriser, n'a pas été pleinement réalisé.

Même si, au sein de chaque programme Interreg, l'**apprentissage** a eu lieu à divers niveaux (principalement en termes de gestion de programme et de coopération individuelle) et même si Interreg IV C a introduit l'initiative de capitalisation thématique (visant à diffuser et transférer des connaissances au-delà des principaux acteurs impliqués), il y a eu peu de mise en commun des connaissances ou de transfert des pratiques, des outils de politique ou des enseignements, outre le premier cercle des acteurs directement impliqués dans les projets. En ce sens, la plupart des projets ont été mis en œuvre de manière isolée.

¹⁶ Règlement (CE) n° 1083/2006 et Règlement (CE) n° 1080/2006.

Enfin, il importe de signaler que dans la **nouvelle période de programmation 2014-2020**, l'orientation sur les résultats est intégrée dans le règlement et la programmation assure une concentration plus élevée des fonds, met davantage l'accent sur la définition d'une logique d'intervention bien articulée dès le départ et sur le renforcement de l'orientation des programmes sur les résultats.

Zusammenfassung

Ziel und Zweck der Evaluierung

Bei diesem Dokument handelt es sich um den Abschlussbericht der *ex-post*-Evaluierung von Programmen zur Förderung der Europäischen Territorialen Zusammenarbeit (European Territorial Cooperation, ETC), allgemein bekannt als Interreg, im Zeitraum 2007 bis 2013.

Diese Evaluierung wurde von der Generaldirektion Regionalpolitik und Stadtentwicklung in Auftrag gegeben und ist Bestandteil eines Paketes von 14 thematischen Evaluierungen, die zu einer übergreifenden *ex-post*-Evaluierung der kohäsionspolitischen Programme 2007 bis 2013 beitragen.

Das Gesamtziel der Evaluierung ist es, die Ergebnisse der Interreg-Programme zu bewerten. Sie konzentriert sich insbesondere auf Kooperationen in den Bereichen Forschung, Technologie und Innovation; Schutz und Verbesserung der Umwelt sowie Kapazitätsaufbau. Sie zielt auch darauf ab, die Ergebnisse des interregionalen Wissenstransfers in Interreg IV C zu bewerten und den Beitrag der Programme zur Beschäftigungs- und Wachstumsstrategie zu beurteilen.

Die Evaluierung deckt Interreg-Programme ab, die während des Zeitraums von 2007 bis 2013 in allen geographischen Kooperationsräumen umgesetzt wurden.

Gegenstand der Evaluierung

Interreg verfügt über eine lange Geschichte vor dem Evaluierungszeitraum. Das erste grenzüberschreitende Programm wurde in den Jahren 1987 und 1988 aufgestellt. Bis 2006 sind drei Generationen von Interreg-Programmen lanciert worden, von denen jedes spezifische Prioritäten und Implementierungsmodalitäten aufwies.

Die Förderperiode 2007-2013 deckt die vierte Generation von Interreg-Programmen ab. Sie umfasst Programme¹⁷ für grenzüberschreitende (56), transnationale (13) oder interregionale (1) Zusammenarbeit, Netzwerkaktivitäten (3: URBACT, ESPON und INTERACT), die Heranführungshilfe (IPA, 8) sowie die Europäische Nachbarschaft und Partnerschaft (ENPI).

Die folgenden Programme werden von dieser Evaluierung abgedeckt¹⁸:

- 53 Programme zur grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit (Cross-border Cooperation, CBC), die darauf abzielen, „die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der Grenzregionen zu stärken“ und zur „wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Integration“ beizutragen (Ausrichtung A);
- 13 transnationale Kooperationsprogramme (transnational cooperation, TNC), die parallel zur grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit konzipiert wurden, um

¹⁷ EC, Regional and Urban Policy, *Territorial Cooperation in Europe. A Historical Perspective*, 2015 (Europäische Kommission, Regionalpolitik und Stadtentwicklung, Die territoriale Zusammenarbeit in Europa - Eine historische Perspektive, 2015).

¹⁸ Wie in den Vergabebedingungen, Abschnitt 3.4 festgelegt.

die Kooperation zwischen den Mitgliedsstaaten auf makroregionaler Ebene zu fördern und so Fragen von strategischer Bedeutung zu behandeln, die nicht wirksam auf Ebene der Mitgliedsstaaten adressiert werden können (Ausrichtung B);

- Ein interregionales Kooperationsprogramm (Interreg IVC), welches Lernen aus interregionalem Austausch und Wissenstransfer fördert (Strang C).

Die 2006 verabschiedeten Verordnungen zu Strukturfonds und insbesondere zu EFRE¹⁹ legen fest, dass diese Programme sich ausdrücklich auf die Prioritäten der erneuerten Lissabon-Strategie (2005), einschließlich ihrer durch das Abkommen des Europäischen Rates in Göteborg (2001) ergänzten „dritten Säule“ (der Umwelt) konzentrieren sollen.

Das „beschlossene“²⁰ Gesamt- Budget der EU für diese Programme betrug 7,67 Mrd. €, davon 5,53 Mrd. € (72 %) für die Ausrichtung grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit, 1,82 Mrd. € (24 %) für die transnationale Zusammenarbeit und 0,32 Mrd. € (4 %) für Interreg IVC.

Die Methodik

Das Team hat die Evaluierung zwischen Januar 2015 und März 2016 in drei Stufen durchgeführt, wie in den Vergabebedingungen gefordert:

- Es begann mit einer Übersicht über die 67 Interreg-Programme. Für jedes Programm hat das Team die Qualität der Zielsetzungen und die Programmresultate auf der Basis von Dokumentenanalysen sowie Interviews mit Verwaltungsbehörden (VB) bewertet und diese Bewertungen anschließend anhand einer gemeinsamen Struktur für alle 67 Interreg-Programme auf jeweils einer Seite zusammengefasst.
- Anschließend führte es in 12 Interreg-Programmen (9 Programme zur grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit, 2 Programme zur transnationalen Zusammenarbeit und Interreg IVC) Fallstudien durch; diese umfassten Feldarbeit, einschließlich 105 Einzel- oder Gruppen-Interviews mit Vertretern von Verwaltungsbehörden, Gemeinsamen Technischen Sekretariaten, Projektmanagern und Akteuren aus lokalen, regionalen und nationalen öffentlichen oder privaten Einrichtungen, fünf Fokusgruppen sowie Umfragen zu den Ausrichtungen B und C. Das Team hat die Ergebnisse in 12 Fallstudienberichten zusammengefasst.
- Im Dezember 2015 veranstaltete das Team ein abschließendes Stakeholder-Seminar, um die Ergebnisse der Evaluierung zu erörtern und die Akteure mit den Sichtweisen von Fachleuten und Praktikern zu konfrontieren.

¹⁹ Ratsverordnung (EG) Nr. 1083/2006 vom 11. Juli 2006 zur Festlegung der allgemeinen Bestimmungen von EFRE, ESF und Kohäsionsfond. VERORDNUNG (EG) Nr. 1080/2006 DES EUROPÄISCHEN PARLAMENTS UND DES RATES vom 5. Juli über den EFRE.

²⁰ Das „beschlossene“ Budget entspricht der Finanzentscheidung für das jeweilige Programm. Wir haben Daten für 2014 verwendet, dem laut folgender Datenquelle letzten verfügbaren Jahr: SFC07_01(g)_Decided_PriorityThemes_Form_Territory_2008-2014 nach Betreiber pro Jahr. Die Finanzentscheidung wird im Finanzmodell des jeweiligen Operationellen Programms verzeichnet. Hierbei handelt es sich um das für die Zuweisung an Projekte vorgesehene verfügbare Budget.

Die Ziele der Interreg-Programme

Bei Interreg handelt es sich um einen Eckstein der Kohäsionspolitik und der europäischen Integration sowie um das einzige umfassende Instrument, das die gemeinsame Gestaltung, Integration und Qualität grenzüberschreitenden Lebens auch auf transnationaler Ebene behandelt.

Die EU-Verordnung 1083 aus dem Jahr 2006 definierte die Europäische Territoriale Zusammenarbeit als gesondertes Ziel der Kohäsionspolitik. Die Hauptziele der im Zeitraum 2007-2013 geförderten Interreg-Programme waren:

- Stärkung der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit über gemeinsame lokale und regionale Initiativen,
- Stärkung der transnationalen Zusammenarbeit durch Maßnahmen zur Förderung der integrierten territorialen Entwicklung in Verbindung mit den Prioritäten der Gemeinschaft und
- Stärkung der interregionalen Zusammenarbeit und des Erfahrungsaustauschs auf geeigneter territorialer Ebene.

Zusätzlich wurden die Interreg-Programme als ergänzendes Hilfsmittel zur Verfolgung der drei Hauptprioritäten der erneuerten Lissabon-Strategie für Wachstum und Beschäftigung aufgefasst und verwendet:

- Verbesserung der Attraktivität von Mitgliedsstaaten, Regionen und Städten;
- Unterstützung von Innovationen, Unternehmertum und Wachstum der Wissensökonomie und
- Schaffung von mehr und besseren Arbeitsplätzen.

Grenzüberschreitende und transnationale Zusammenarbeit wurden zur Verfolgung spezifischer Ziele konzipiert, die zu den übergeordneten Zielen beitragen, nämlich:

- die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit sollte die wirtschaftliche und soziale Integration in durch nationale Grenzen geteilten Gebieten unterstützen, die sich gemeinsamen Problemen gegenübersehen und gemeinsame Lösungen benötigen. Die Konzeption dieser Ausrichtung konzentrierte sich auf die *„Stärkung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der Grenzregionen“* und zum Beitrag zur *„wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Integration, insbesondere in Bereichen großer wirtschaftlicher Disparitäten auf beiden Seiten“*.
- Die transnationale Zusammenarbeit sollte die Zusammenarbeit auf makro-regionaler Ebene in Bereichen steigern, in denen die Notwendigkeit besteht, die ökonomische und soziale Integration und Kohäsion in Fragen von strategischer Bedeutung zu erhöhen.

Wesentliche Erfolge der Interreg-Programme

Leistungen und Ergebnisse

Die Programme zur Förderung der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit (5,574 Mrd. € „bewilligte“ Mittel) haben über 6.800 Projekte in den von der EU-Verordnung von 2006²¹ adressierten Sektoren finanziert – mit besonderem Fokus auf

²¹ Ratsverordnung (EG) Nr. 1083/2006.

Innovation und Unternehmertum, Umwelt, Transport, Tourismus und Kultur. Über die Hälfte davon bezog sich auf Themen der „Lebensqualität“ (Tourismus, Kultur, Sport, Gesundheit, Sicherheit). Etwa 1.600 unterstützten wirtschaftliche Entwicklungen und konzentrierten sich beispielsweise auf Clusterbildung, auf den Aufbau von Kooperationsnetzwerken und auf Wissens- und Technologietransfer. Die 1.292 Umweltprojekte behandelten u.a. Aspekte in Bezug auf die Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen, natürliche Bedrohungen, Klimawandel und Biodiversität.

Diese Projekte haben zu Outputs und Ergebnissen geführt, die den spezifischen Zielen der grenzübergreifenden Kooperation entsprachen und auf die wesentlichen Prioritäten der Lissabon-Strategie für Wachstum und Beschäftigung ausgerichtet waren. Insbesondere haben sie dazu beigetragen, die wissensbasierte Wirtschaft in Grenzregionen zu erweitern (vor allem in Programmen in den EU-12 Mitgliedsstaaten), so beispielsweise durch Steigerung von Forschungs- und Entwicklungskapazitäten sowie Transfers über Grenzen hinweg wie auch durch Stimulierung der Innovationsfähigkeit in KMU in Grenzregionen. Sie trugen auch dazu bei, die Diversifizierung der lokalen Wirtschaft durch Tourismus und Kultur zu fördern. Hinsichtlich der Umwelt waren die grenzübergreifenden Projekte eher auf „weiches“ Faktoren und Politikverbesserung durch Analyse, Forschung und Weitergabe von „best practice“ (vorbildliche Verfahren) ausgerichtet. Dies führte zu stärker integriertem Umweltmanagement und -schutz, selbst wenn die gesetzlichen und administrativen Hindernisse bestehen blieben. Zahlreiche Programme unterstützten harte Infrastrukturen und Verfahren zur Erhöhung der Erreichbarkeit über Grenzen hinweg, was zu einer Verkürzung der Fahrzeiten, besserer Erreichbarkeit entlegenerer Gebiete und mehr Sicherheit führt. Die grenzübergreifenden Projekte haben auch zu einem besseren Zugang zum Gesundheitswesen und besseren Ausbildungseinrichtungen beigetragen. Weniger trugen sie zu Zielen wie Verbesserung des Zugangs zu grenzüberschreitenden Märkten und der Entwicklung des grenzüberschreitenden Handels oder einer Integration der Arbeitsmärkte bei.

Die transnationalen Programme (1,766 Mrd. € „bewilligte“ Mittel) entsprachen ebenfalls der Lissabon-Strategie. Sie wurden in zahlreichen Sektoren verwendet, um gemeinsame Aktivitäten auf transnationaler Ebene zu unterstützen. Die transnationalen Programme finanzierten 1.134 Projekte, im Wesentlichen im Bereich Umwelt und Klimawandel. Sie adressierten auch die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und Erreichbarkeit, selbst wenn bei letzterer -eine der Hauptprioritäten - die Anzahl der transnationalen Initiativen geringer war (140 Projekte in den 13 transnationalen Programmen). Transnationale Projekte waren hauptsächlich auf die Implementierung eines gemeinsamen oder gegliederten Managements natürlicher Ressourcen und des Umweltschutzes gerichtet sowie auf die Verstärkung von Netzwerken oder Partnerschaften, die KMU und Forschungs- oder Technologiezentren auf transnationaler Ebene verbinden.

Insgesamt war die Spezifität der transnationalen Programme weniger klar. Die Art der Projekte war mit denjenigen vergleichbar, die im Rahmen der grenzübergreifenden Programme implementiert wurden, jedoch mit breiterer räumlicher Zielsetzung. Die Evaluierung hat nicht viele Beispiele für Projekte mit Fokus auf Aspekten strategischer Bedeutung für Kohäsion auf transnationaler Ebene vorgefunden.

Insgesamt hat das interregionale Programm Interreg IV C (0,306 Mrd. €) einen umfangreichen Austausch von Erfahrungen und Praktiken ermöglicht. Dieser Austausch hat Lerneffekte geschaffen und zu einem Wissenstransfer zwischen den

beteiligten Partnern geführt, insbesondere innerhalb der Kapitalisierungsprojekte. Die thematische Kapitalisierungsinitiative ermöglichte das Erreichen einer neuen Zielgruppe, die Verstärkung der externen Verbreitung und die verbesserte Sichtbarkeit nützlichen Wissens. Das Ausmaß, in dem dies zu einer wirksamen Nutzung des Wissenstransfers geführt hat, ist nur schwer zu bewerten.

Viele der grenzüberschreitenden und transnationalen Projekte wären ohne Interreg nicht möglich gewesen; Interreg bleibt ein einzigartiges Instrument zur Unterstützung gemeinsamer grenzüberschreitender Initiativen. Diesbezüglich stellen die von Interreg bereitgestellten Ressourcen das herausragendste Beispiel für einen EU-Mehrwert aus der Kohäsionspolitik dar, allerdings benötigen sie unterdessen eine langfristige Verpflichtung zur Sicherstellung der Nachhaltigkeit von Ergebnissen.

Breitere Wirkungen

Jenseits der oben beschriebenen Leistungen und Ergebnisse auf Projektebene haben die Programme auch zu breiteren Wirkungen beigetragen, insbesondere hinsichtlich einer besseren sozialen Integration sowie der **Beseitigung spezifischer Kooperationshindernisse** aufgrund kultureller Gegebenheiten oder großer räumlicher Distanzen.

Eines der wesentlichen Ergebnisse der Interreg-Programme war ihr Beitrag zu einer besseren Kooperation zwischen verschiedenen Akteuren (z.B. Hochschulen und außeruniversitäre Forschungseinrichtungen, kleine und mittlere Unternehmen, Umweltbehörden, etc.). Dies beinhaltete formelle und informelle Netzwerke, institutionalisierte Kollaborationen und ad-hoc-Verbindungen (z.B. Partnerschaften für Forschungsk Kooperationen sowie Austausch von Methoden).

Eine solche verbesserte Zusammenarbeit führte zudem zur Schaffung und Konsolidierung einer regionalen Identität. Dies liegt insbesondere an der gestiegenen Anerkennung und Wertschätzung der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit durch Akteure in einem bestimmten Bereich sowie einem erhöhten Sozialkapital (einschl. vertiefte gegenseitige Kenntnis von den Partnern jenseits der Grenze und einem besseren Verständnis des Potentials von Zusammenarbeit). Dies trug auch – jedoch in geringerem Maße – zu einer besseren Sichtbarkeit und Außendarstellung der Region als kohärente Einheit bei.

Die Interreg-Programme trugen auch zur Überwindung spezieller Hindernisse bei, insbesondere der räumlichen Distanzen. Aber auch kulturelle, mentale und sprachliche Hindernisse wurden beseitigt. Während einige Hindernisse (hauptsächlich administrativer und gesetzlicher Natur) weiterhin die territoriale Zusammenarbeit und Integration erschweren, hat die Evaluierung festgestellt, dass bestehende Grenzen immer weniger als Hindernisse empfunden werden. Dies betraf vor allem die kulturellen und entfernungsbedingte Hindernisse, jedoch weniger die gesetzlichen, administrativen und wirtschaftlichen Hindernisse.

Schließlich haben die Programme auch zur grenzüberschreitenden Entwicklung der institutionellen Organisation in CBC-Gebieten beigetragen.

Die EU-Verordnung²² strebte auch einen Beitrag der Interreg-Programme zur **wirtschaftlichen Integration** und **Stärkung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit** der Grenzregionen an. Diesbezüglich hat die Evaluierung festgestellt, dass CBC-Projekte zur Stärkung der Innovationsfähigkeit, zu besserem Schutz der natürlichen Ressourcen und einer wirksameren Gefahrenprävention wie auch zur leichteren Erreichbarkeit der Verkehrsverbindungen oder der öffentlichen Dienstleistungen beigetragen haben. Diese Befunde wurden vor allem auf lokaler Ebene identifiziert und hatten keine deutlichen Auswirkungen auf das Gebiet als Ganzes.

Die Evaluierung stellte zudem fest, dass die technologischen Hindernisse in geringem Maße reduziert, die wirtschaftlichen oder gesetzlichen/institutionellen Hindernisse jedoch nicht verringert wurden. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist davon auszugehen, dass gesetzliche Hindernisse (insbesondere in Gesundheitsdiensten, im Arbeitsrecht, bei Steuern oder Geschäftsentwicklung) und Hindernisse, die in Verbindung mit Unterschieden in administrativer Kultur und nationalen gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen stehen, durch die Programme nur schwer adressiert werden konnten (da sie auch Entscheidungen auf nationaler oder regionaler Ebene erforderten).

Die Situation ist hinsichtlich der Auswirkungen der TNC-Programme vergleichbar. Es bestehen Beispiele für eine bessere Integration von Umweltschutzstrategien und -politiken, insbesondere hinsichtlich gemeinsamer ökologischer Werte (üblicherweise gemeinsam genutzter Meeresbecken und Bergregionen). Die Evaluierung hat auch einige Ergebnisse bezüglich besserer Verbindungen von Transport- und ITC-Netzwerke identifiziert. Diese jedoch blieben im Vergleich zu den Herausforderungen und ambitionierten Zielen der überarbeiteten Lissabon-Strategie recht beschränkt.

Faktoren, welche Einfluss auf die Wirkung der Interreg-Programme haben

Die oben angeführten Ergebnisse sollten im Lichte der Faktoren betrachtet werden, die die Fähigkeit der Interreg-Programme beeinflusst haben, Auswirkungen zu generieren.

Zunächst waren die zu Beginn von der EU-Verordnung formulierten Ziele sehr ambitioniert, insbesondere, wenn man das **finanzielle Gewicht** der Programme berücksichtigt. Wie im Hauptbericht beschrieben, waren die Pro-Kopf-Beträge, die den Interreg-Programmen ausgestattet wurden, marginal im Vergleich zu den Pro-Kopf-Beträgen in anderen ESIF-Programmen, insbesondere in den neuen Mitgliedsstaaten. Die Erwartungen hinsichtlich der Auswirkungen jenseits der speziellen Projekt-Ebene sollten dies berücksichtigen.

Es ist zudem zu beachten, dass die **EU-Verordnungen und -Richtlinien**²³ nicht im Einzelnen dargelegt haben, wie die europäische territoriale Zusammenarbeit zur Lissabon-Strategie beitragen sollte. Sie haben Raum gelassen, sowohl um die Zusammenarbeit als Selbstzweck zu verfolgen, aber auch als Mittel zu wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Integration.

²² Ratsverordnung (EG) Nr. 1083/2006

²³ COM(2005) 299, Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013

CBC-Programme sind insofern häufig als Instrument genutzt worden, um Zusammenarbeit und Verbindungen zu stärken, ohne jedoch eine starke Förderung dieser Zusammenarbeit hinsichtlich einer breiteren wirtschaftlichen Integration unbedingt in Betracht zu ziehen. Dies ergibt sich deutlich sowohl aus den von ihnen definierten Zielen und Leistungsindikatoren und aus dem, was die Verwaltungsbehörden als die Hauptergebnisse ihrer Programme betrachtet haben (häufig ausgedrückt im Sinne einer verbesserten Zusammenarbeit). Oft haben die Akteure selbst ebenfalls die bessere Zusammenarbeit als das wesentliche Ziel der Programme definiert. Diese Herangehensweise widersprach nicht dem, was die EU-Texte vorschreiben. Tatsächlich heben viele dieser offiziellen Texte, wie bereits erwähnt, die Zusammenarbeit als Ziel hervor, ohne sie unbedingt als Selbstzweck zu betrachten.

Die Tatsache, dass die Programme hinsichtlich verbesserter Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und Integration auf regionaler Ebene wenig Ergebnisse zeigten, kann auch mit **spezifischen Politikentscheidungen** in Verbindung gebracht werden. Tatsächlich konnten Regionen und Akteure selbst die prioritären Hindernisse und Gelegenheiten feststellen, die von den Interreg-Programmen adressiert werden müssen. Eine solche bedarfsorientierte Herangehensweise war nützlich für die Förderung maßgeschneiderter Programme, die sich auf bestimmte, gut identifizierte grenzüberschreitende Herausforderungen fokussieren sowie die wesentlichen Hindernisse und Gelegenheiten in dieser Hinsicht behandelten. Diese Herangehensweise jedoch hatte auch einige Nachteile. Erstens waren die Verordnungen²⁴ nicht deutlich genug hinsichtlich der Arten von Herausforderungen, die CBC und TNC adressieren müssen. Innerhalb des Konzeptes „gemeinsamer Herausforderungen“ enthalten die CBC-Programme gruppenspezifische Herausforderungen in Bezug auf Grenzgebiete mit eher eigenen Herausforderungen, die auch außerhalb der Grenzgebiete gelten und keine Hindernisse für die Integration darstellen (z.B. Drogenprävention, Diabetesbehandlung, Energieeffizienz, nachwachsende Rohstoffe, Recycling usw.). Auch war die Bedeutung von „Angelegenheiten von strategischer Bedeutung“ in TNC-Programmen nicht immer klar verstanden worden. Darüber hinaus kein gemeinsames Verständnis unter den Verwaltungsbehörden der genauen Bedeutung und dem Wert von Arbeiten auf transnationaler Ebene, besonders in Gebieten, die durch eine breite Diversität und einer schwachen institutionellen Steuerung geprägt sind. Dies führte zu Programmen, die eher von gemeinsamen Anliegen gesteuert wurden. Zweitens hat die bottom-up-Herangehensweise die Priorisierung der Ziele nicht begünstigt. Die Programme wurden nur selten in eine globale Strategie eingebunden, die auf die Stärkung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der Grenzregion und auf die wirtschaftliche Integration ausgerichtet ist. Auch dies widersprach nicht der Verordnung, bedeutete jedoch, dass einzelne Projekte, obwohl sie für sich erfolgreich waren, von anderen Aktivitäten isoliert blieben – somit wurden ihre Unterstützung und ihr Potential für die Schaffung einer kritischen Masse zur Veränderung verringert.

Die Intervention auf Ebene der „Region mit höchster Funktionalität“ war für die Interreg-Programme ebenfalls ein komplexes Thema. Zunächst sind die Verwaltungsbereiche auf NUTS3-Ebene („Kleine Regionen für besondere Diagnosen“ in der Nomenklatur territorialer Einheiten für Statistiken) nicht gänzlich für den Umgang

²⁴ Ratsverordnung (EG) Nr. 1083/2006 und Verordnung (EG) Nr. 1080/2006

mit grenzüberschreitenden Herausforderungen relevant. Darüber hinaus fehlte es den Programmen häufig an einer Analyse dessen, was die „funktionalste“ Region für Zusammenarbeit in einem bestimmten Sektor wäre. Dies wurde durch die Tatsache ergänzt, dass die Programme in einer Vielzahl von Sektoren ansetzten. Ein geographischer Bereich kann tatsächlich für einen bestimmten Sektor relevant sein, jedoch nicht für einen anderen. Die Festlegung der geeigneten Ebene ist noch komplexer, wenn es um TNC-Programme geht, da die Überlegungen für den Betrieb auf dieser Zwischenebene (zwischen EU, nationaler und regionaler Ebene) nicht immer klar war.

Darüber hinaus bestand nur eine geringe **Koordination** zwischen Interreg und anderen ESIF-Programmen. Zudem kam es auch nur in geringem Maße zu einer Weitergabe von Projektergebnissen zwischen den regionalen Akteuren und den zentralen/regionalen Behörden, wobei letztere auch nur wenig Interesse zeigten, überhaupt einbezogen zu werden. Die potentielle Hebelwirkung der Interreg-Programme, die eine solche Koordination begünstigt haben könnte, wurde somit nicht erreicht.

Wenngleich innerhalb der einzelnen Interreg-Programme ein Lerneffekt über mehrere Ebenen hinweg stattgefunden hat (vor allem hinsichtlich der individuellen Zusammenarbeit und dem Programmmanagement) und auch wenn Interreg IV C die thematische Kapitalisierungsinitiative (mit dem Ziel, Wissen über die involvierten Hauptakteure hinweg zu verbreiten und zu transferieren) eingeführt hat, hat letztlich nur ein geringfügiger Wissenstransfer bzw. ein schwacher Transfer von Praktiken, Politik-instrumenten oder Lerneffekten über den ersten Kreis der direkt in die Projekte involvierten Akteure hinweg stattgefunden. Die meisten Projekte wurden in dieser Hinsicht isoliert umgesetzt.

Schließlich muss darauf hingewiesen werden, dass während des neuen Programm-Zeitraums 2014-2020 die in die Verordnungen und Programmgestaltung eingebettete Ergebnisorientierung eine höhere Konzentration der Geldmittel, ein stärkerer Fokus auf die Definition einer gut artikulierten Interventionslogik zu Programmbeginn und eine Stärkung der Ergebnisorientierung der Programme sicherstellt.

1. Introduction

This document is the final report from the *ex-post* evaluation of programmes aimed at promoting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), widely known as Interreg, during the period 2007-2013. The evaluation is Work Package 11 of the *ex-post* evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF).

The work extended over the period January 2015 – March 2016, and was carried out by an international team of experts led by ADE, Belgium.

In addition to this introduction, the report is structured in five more chapters:

- Chapter 2 presents the scope of the evaluation ;
- Chapter 3 presents the methodology used, starting with the key evaluation topics;
- Chapter 4 presents the brief overview and context;
- Chapter 5 is devoted to the findings from the analyses of programmes, covering all Evaluation Questions;
- Chapter 6 draws the general Conclusions from the evaluation, pointing to the possible implications for the future of Interreg programmes.

The report also has the following annexes:

- Annex 1 provides the list of programmes covered by the evaluation;
- Annex 2 includes the details on the stakeholder event organised in Brussels in December 2015;
- Annex 3 presents 67 one-page structured summaries assessing the quality of objective setting and the achievements of ETC programmes, organized by Strand and by Type of programme.

Case studies are available as separate reports.

2. Scope of the evaluation

Work Package 11 of the *ex-post* evaluation of Cohesion Policy programme 2007-2013 covers 67 programmes supporting the European territorial cooperation objective. This objective includes three priorities²⁵ which correspond to three strands of the fourth-generation Interreg Operational Programmes:

1. **Cross-border cooperation (CBC), Strand A.** Under this priority, 56 Operational Programmes were supported by the ERDF 2007-2013, of which 53 are covered by this evaluation²⁶.
2. **Transnational cooperation (TNC), Strand B.** All 13 transnational cooperation programmes co-funded by the ERDF are included in the scope of the study.
3. **Inter-regional cooperation, Strand C.** Four programmes were supported under this priority of which only the inter-regional cooperation programme Interreg IVC is analysed under Strand C²⁷.

The scope of the study thus includes 67 of the 73 Interreg programmes. The full list of programmes within the scope of the evaluation is presented in [Annex 1](#).

²⁵ REG 1080/2006, Article 6.

²⁶ The ToRs do not include four programmes within the scope as they address specific issues or involve Croatia which has recently joined the EU. This concerns: OP 2008CB163PO001: Spain - external borders 2008-2013; OP 2013CB163PO002: Hungary-Croatia and OP 2013CB163PO001: Slovenia - Croatia 2007-2013.

²⁷ URBACT, INTERACT and ESPON 2013 are outside the study's scope.

3. Methodology of the evaluation

The aim of this *ex-post* evaluation of the Interreg programmes 2007-2014 is, according to the Terms of Reference:

- To establish what results have been achieved via cooperation programmes across Europe, with particular focus on cooperation in the field of research, technology and innovation, environmental protection and enhancement, and capacity building.
- To assess the results of knowledge transfer across regions from the Interreg IV C Programme: investigate the capacity and structures established to make knowledge and concepts gained in their projects available to other regions ("capitalising on knowledge") and look for evidence on the use of this knowledge by other regions.
- To analyse to what extent ETC programmes contributed to the Jobs and Growth agenda.

To fulfil this task, the evaluation work was carried out in three steps, further detailed below:

1. Overview of 67 Interreg programmes: for each programme, the quality of objective setting and the extent of the programme's achievements were assessed by the evaluation team.
2. Case studies on 12 Interreg programmes, covering the three Strands and deepening the initial analysis carried out during the first step.
3. Final stakeholder event: to discuss the findings of the previous two steps and confront them with the views of experts and practitioners.

3.1 Overview of 67 Interreg programmes

An overview of all programmes was performed to assess the quality of objective-setting and the extent to which the objectives have been achieved by the programmes.

During the months of March and April 2015, experts with appropriate country expertise analysed the information reported in key programme documents (Operational Programme, Annual Implementation Reports, evaluation reports, etc.) and interviewed representatives of the 67 of the Managing Authorities (MAs)) and/or Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS), either face-to-face or by phone, in order to complement this information (67 interviews).

On the above basis, one-page structured summaries have been prepared for each of the 67 Interreg programmes (see [Annex 3](#)).

Interviews with MAs proved necessary – but insufficient - to complement the documented information base: the information provided in programme documents is not adequate for assessing whether objectives have been achieved, due to the lack of focus both of the objectives and of the record of achievements. While conversations with MAs were often informative, they did not mitigate the above problems: they can only partially replace missing robust information on the main Evaluation Question, i.e. whether the objectives set for programmes have been achieved in practice. This is an important limitation on the present evaluation.

The evaluation team used an on-line tool with which programmes experts contributed to the consolidation of emerging transverse findings from the analysis of Interreg programmes.

3.2 Case studies on 12 Interreg programmes

Case studies were conducted by the core evaluation team between June and September 2015 on a sample of 9 CBC programmes, 2 TNC programmes (defined in the terms of reference: Baltic Sea and Atlantic Area) and Interreg IVC. The purpose of the case studies was to deepen the analysis of the contribution of Interreg programmes to cooperation and to economic and social integration between European regions. This work was performed through a field analysis of one week, involving interviews and focus groups with Managing Authorities, stakeholders and people and organisations involved in projects in each programme area. For the transnational cases, two online surveys addressed to project stakeholders were carried out in addition to face-to-face interviews. The reports for each of these case studies are available as separate reports.

In total, 105 individual or grouped interviews were conducted with representatives of Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats, Project Managers and stakeholders from local, regional and national public or private bodies. Five Focus Groups were organised during the implementation of case studies.

For Strand B, the fieldwork looked for evidence of programme achievements and assessed whether the programmes contribute to strengthened territorial development linked to EU priorities. For the Baltic Sea region, the field work investigated to what extent objectives and achievements are in line with the strategic objectives defined in the relevant macro-regional strategy, while for the Atlantic Area the aim was to assess to what extent the programme has contributed to supporting the concept and design of a possible new territorial-sea-basin strategy.

For Strand A, the case studies cover 9 CBC programmes within three themes: research, technological development, innovation and entrepreneurship (RDTI); environment protection (ENV) and capacity-building (CAP). The field work looked at resources spent, types of activities, results and impacts achieved under the three themes; the extent to which the cooperation saw enhanced, barriers to cooperation removed and learning generated; and evidence for the contribution of the programmes. The field work also assessed the future for learning mechanisms and cooperation and the sustainability of achievements; the quality of the monitoring systems and the added value of the INTERACT programme. Finally, the case studies looked at the coordination and synergies between Interreg programmes and national and regional programmes.

The case studies were chosen to reflect the diversity of programmes and according to the budgetary priority placed on the three themes in their OP. The selection according to the three themes was carried out as follows: the programmes chosen belong to the "top 10" programmes which give priority to these themes, in either absolute or relative terms (or both) (Tables 3.1 to 3.3). The choice amongst these programmes has also taken into consideration other parameters: a good balance between areas in North, South, East and West of Europe, and the results from the analyses undertaken in the previous step.

Table 3. 1 Top 10 Programmes that allocate the highest amount or share of budget on Research and Technological development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

TOP10	Programme title	EURO million	Programme title	% in total allocated budget
1	España-Portugal	86,9	Nord	53,2%
2	Deutschland-Niederlande	64,0	Ireland Wales	52,9%
3	Hungary-Romania	59,5	Deutschland-Niederlande	46,9%
4	Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak	50,9	Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak	44,5%
5	Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland	49,8	Euregio Maas Rijn	43,4%
6	France (Manche) – Angleterre	46,7	"Fehmarnbeltregion" (Sjælland-Ostholstein-Lüt	40,4%
7	España-Francia	40,7	Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N	34,0%
8	Hungary-Slovakia	35,9	Botnia-Atlantica	32,8%
9	France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen	34,7	Rhin supérieur	32,6%
10	Italia-Francia Alpi	32,6	España-Portugal	31,8%
Average budget 53 OP Strand A		19	Average share in budget 53 OP Strand A	18,7%

Source: DG Regio database (SFC), allocated amounts 2013; data processing ADE

Table 3. 2 Top 10 Programmes that allocate the highest amount or share of budget on Environment protection and enhancement

TOP10	Programme title	EURO million	Programme title	% in total allocated budget
1	France (Manche) – Angleterre	58,0	Italia-Malta	58,4%
2	Italia-Francia Alpi (ALCOTRA)	53,3	Italia-Francia Alpi (ALCOTRA)	37,0%
3	Programme des 2 mers	43,5	France (Manche) – Angleterre	34,1%
4	España-Portugal	38,4	Austria – Hungary	32,0%
5	Hungary-Romania	34,6	Central Baltic	30,3%
6	Sachsen – Tschechien	33,4	Romania–Bulgaria	30,2%
7	Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland	33,0	Grensregio Vlaanderen - Nederland	28,9%
8	Česká republika – Polsko	32,7	Italia-Slovenia	28,2%
9	Italia-Slovenia	32,6	Slovenia-Hungary	28,2%
10	Central Baltic	31,4	South Baltic	26,6%
Average budget 53 OP Strand A		18,8	Average share in budget 53 OP Strand A	18,6%

Source: DG Regio database (SFC), allocated amounts 2013; data processing ADE

Table 3. 3 Top 10 programmes that allocate the highest amount and share of budget on Capacity building

TOP10	Programme title	EURO million	Programme title	% in total allocated budget
1	Sachsen - Tschechien	18,9	Deutschland/Bayern – Österreich	12,6%
2	España-Portugal	17,6	Sachsen - Tschechien	9,5%
3	Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland	12,9	Sachsen - Polen	8,5%
4	Sachsen - Polen	8,6	Grande Région	7,6%
5	Grande Région	8,1	Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein	7,1%
6	Deutschland/Bayern – Österreich	6,1	Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland	7,1%
7	Rhin supérieur	4,8	Rhin supérieur	6,8%
8	France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen	3,8	España-Portugal	6,4%
9	Italia-Francia frontiera marittima	3,5	Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N	4,5%
10	Hungary-Slovakia	3,3	Slovakia-Austria	4,5%
Average budget 53 OP Strand A		3,9	Average share in budget 53 OP Strand A	2,2%

Source: DG Regio database (SFC), allocated amounts 2013; data processing ADE

With these considerations in mind, Table 3.4 presents the choice of case studies in Strand A.

Table 3. 4 Strand A programmes selected as case studies

Types	RDTI	Environment	Capacity building
<i>Old borders</i>	Germany-Netherlands Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland North	France (Channel) - England	Spain-Portugal
<i>New borders</i>		Romania-Bulgaria South Baltic	Saxony-Czech Republic Hungary-Slovakia

3.3 Final stakeholder event

The final phase of the evaluation included a stakeholder event which was organized on 11 December 2015 in Brussels, with 54 participants. The findings emerging from the above two steps of the evaluation were diffused in the form of a synthesis paper and formed the basis for the seminar. The seminar was interactive, providing ample space for discussion. It was structured in two types of session: 1) one plenary session devoted to discussion of general findings; 2) three parallel sessions on specific findings by type of cooperation (cross-border, trans-national and inter-regional). Open discussions and feedback by a multidisciplinary audience took place and enabled the evaluation team to:

- Complement preliminary conclusions with insights, taking into account additional information or perspectives
- Test findings against relevant experience by practitioners and knowledge of experts in the area of territorial cooperation and/or in relation with thematic dimensions such as R&D, innovation and entrepreneurship, Environment and Capacity building
- Deepen the analysis of the main issues as well as the policy implications for territorial cooperation

The agenda, list of participants, minutes and results of the satisfaction enquiry are appended in [Annex 2](#).

4. Brief overview and context

4.1 ETC objectives and priorities under the 2007-2013 programming period

The history of Interreg is already lengthy. The 2007-2013 Interreg programmes are the fourth generation of cross-border interventions. The first cross-border programme with financial support from European authorities was set up in 1987 and 1988 as a pilot programme. Interreg ran from 1991 to 2006, covering three generations of Interreg programmes (Interreg I 1991-1993, Interreg II 1994-1999, and Interreg III 2000-2006). They were designed and implemented as a Community initiative, and characterised by specific features within the EU policy framework, e.g.:

- Focusing on innovative approach;
- Oriented to common responses to common problems encountered by border regions;
- Promoting local involvement of a wide range of stakeholders previously not participating directly in EC interventions.

For the 2007-2013 programming period, the former Community initiative was mainstreamed into the Cohesion Policy which explicitly introduced the "territorial" dimension of cohesion. Interreg became one of the three main funding objectives. Territorial cooperation complemented the "convergence" and "regional competitiveness and employment" objectives. Interreg became part of the revised policy framework for Cohesion policy and therefore subject to the new orientations, mainly strengthening the linkages between ERDF, the Lisbon Agenda and the achievement of its objectives targeted on the knowledge-based economy; on sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs; and on promotion of more strategic operational programmes "focused more strongly than in the past at the priority level"²⁸.

EU Regulation 1083 of 2006 defined the following goals for European Territorial Cooperation programmes funded in 2007-2013 programming period:

- Strengthen cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives;
- Strengthen transnational cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Community priorities, and;
- Strengthen interregional cooperation and exchange of experience at the appropriate territorial level.

The Commission's Communication of July 2005²⁹ has highlighted the main goals and reasons for undertaking and supporting territorial cooperation during the programming period 2007-2013: "*The aim of the new cooperation objective is to promote stronger*

²⁸ EC, The New programming period 2007-2013, Indicative guidelines on Evaluation methods : Ex ante evaluation.

²⁹ Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013 , Brussels, 5.7.2005 COM(2005) 299 final

integration of the territory of the Union in all its dimensions. In so doing, cohesion policy supports the balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the Union at the level of its macro-regions and reduces the "barrier effects" through cross-border cooperation and the exchange of best practices. These actions are based on shared development strategies of the territories concerned (national, regional, local) and on the networking of the key stakeholders. As such, they have an obvious European value added which increases even more in the enlarged and more diversified Union"³⁰.

The overall vision that supported the interventions of the EC and the decision to use part of the EU budget to promote territorial cooperation was the following:

1. Cross border, transnational and interregional cooperation is a complementary tool under the Cohesion policy with the aim of pursuing the three main priorities of the EU agenda established under the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, namely :
 - a. *"Improving the **attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities** by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving their environmental potential;*
 - b. *Encouraging **innovation, entrepreneurship** and the growth of the **knowledge economy** by research and innovation capacities, including new information and communication technologies; and*
 - c. *Creating **more and better jobs** by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises and increasing investment in human capital"³¹.*
2. Territorial cooperation is mainly seen as a means of relieving constraints and obstacles due to national boundaries (the "barrier effects") which were perceived as restricting the potential of the European Territory as a whole for full competitiveness.
3. According to the guidelines, the sharing of experience, best practice and development strategies along with the networking of key stakeholders are all considered as added value *per se*, thereby implying that it may be pursued as an end in itself.
4. Within that framework **cross-border cooperation** aims at integrating areas divided by national borders that face common problems requiring common solutions. The communication specifies that *"cross-border cooperation should focus on strengthening the competitiveness of the border regions. In addition, it should contribute to economic and social integration, especially where there are wide economic disparities on either side."*
5. **Transnational cooperation** has been conceived in parallel as a means of increasing cooperation between Member States at a macro-regional level where there is a need to increase economic and social integration and cohesion on matters of strategic importance (as physical interconnection of territories {e.g. investments in sustainable transport} and intangible connections {networks, exchanges between regions and between the parties involved}).
6. **Interregional cooperation** completes the picture in terms of promoting exchange of experiences and best practice between regions with a focus on the Growth and Jobs Agenda: strengthening innovation, SMEs and entrepreneurship, the environment and risk prevention.

³⁰ Com (2005) 299 final p10

³¹ COM (2005) 299 final, p12

More specifically, the priorities to be followed by the ERDF under the ETC objective³² for the 2007-2013 programming period have been specified for both CBC and TNC programs. They were clearly stated and focused on the priorities of the renewed Lisbon agenda (including the Göteborg agreement) for both CBC and TNC, promoting cooperation as a means of contributing to the overall results of the Lisbon strategy.

In addition, Interreg programmes have been perceived and used as a complementary tool aimed at pursuing the three main priorities of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs:

- Improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities;
- Encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy; and
- Creating more and better jobs.

CBC specificities

Since the first Interreg programme, the role of cross-border cooperation has been reinforced within the Cohesion policy. The principle of geographical proximity has been consolidated, stronger linkages with Community priorities were progressively established, and the broadening of the Union has led to a considerable extension of its territorial coverage and of the variety of situations to be addressed:

- Interreg I introduced the decentralised territorial policy framework in Europe.
- Interreg II included for the first time all regions along the internal and external EU borders, putting specific emphasis on maritime areas and taking into account the entry of Finland, Sweden and Austria into the Community (EU 15).
- Like the other Community Initiatives, Interreg III was marked by the major enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 Member states in 2004. During this period Interreg III A was enshrined in the Lisbon strategy in respect of economic development as well as in the Göteborg strategy on sustainable development.
- The fourth generation of Interreg 2007-2013, including Interreg IVA, was geared to the priorities of the Growth and Jobs agenda.

Under the 2007-2013 programming period the CBC policy was oriented towards the priorities of the Growth and Jobs agenda and to a strengthening of the competitiveness of border regions. The following priorities were set for CBC and expressed as follows in the Regulation of July 2006³³.

1. *“Encouraging entrepreneurship, in particular the development of SMEs, tourism, culture, and cross-border trade;*
2. *Encouraging and improving the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources, as well as the prevention of natural and technological risks;*
3. *Supporting links between urban and rural areas;*
4. *Reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services, and cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities;*
5. *Developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures, in particular in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education”.*

³² Specified in the Regulation of July 2006 (Regulation (EC) n°1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the ERDF

³³ Regulation n°1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund

Other additional areas have been included, such as legal and administrative cooperation, cross-border labour market integration, local employment initiatives, gender equality and equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources and facilities for R&TD³⁴.

The strategic guidelines on cohesion³⁵, put a particular emphasis on the priority *“that an effort be made to concentrate the assistance on the main priorities in support of growth and jobs”* even if they recognise that *“cooperation programmes should be tailored according to the particular situation faced by each border region”*.

TNC specificities

Transnational cooperation is more recent than CBC (strand A) and has been set up to address specific challenges different from those targeted by CBC, notably with a view to addressing issues with greater strategic relevance.

One can distinguish between three periods in terms of development of transnational cooperation programmes:

- The Community Initiative Interreg IIC was launched in 1997 with the aim of complementing the existing Interreg initiative on cross-border cooperation by introducing EU funding for transnational cooperation across large contiguous areas. The idea was to address transnational issues defined as “issues that have effects across national and regional borders that cannot be addressed adequately at the local, regional or national level alone and need cooperation across administrative borders for effective responses”³⁶ (rescaling).
- During the Interreg IIIB (2000-2006) programming period, the TNC has pursued the same objectives and encouraged the development of “transnational spatial visions” within the framework of the “European Spatial Development Perspective” (ESDP) finalised in 1999. More concretely, as described in a recent study, it considered that “truly transnational issues may arise from tasks that by definition cross national borders such as water management of transnational river basins. They may also be related to issues where sources and effect are physically separated, such as in the case of air pollution, or where public policies of one country will have externality effects in other countries, such as changes in the capacity of seaports”³⁷. Several EU policies also require cooperation across national borders for their implementation and “supranational” management and transnational cooperation, such as the EU water policy (EU Water framework Directive), the EU transport infrastructures policy (EU Trans-European Transport Network), the EU energy infrastructure policy, and the EU ICT infrastructure policy.

³⁴ Specific provision for PEACE programme are also presented, PEACE Programme between Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland aimed at contributing to promote social and economic stability in the regions concerned.

³⁵ COM (2005) 299 final, p31

³⁶ Baltic Sea, Danube and Macro-Regional Strategies : A model for Transnational Cooperation in the EU ?, Dr Stéphanie Dürh, 2011

³⁷ Are There arguments for a Central Europe Macro regional strategy ? Dr Stephanie Dürh, Final Report, November 2014

- With Interreg IV B (2007-2013), rather than being guided by the spatial planning perspectives of the ESDP as were the previous programmes, it was oriented towards achieving the EU's jobs and growth objectives as set out in the Lisbon-Goteborg strategies. Matters of strategic relevance are still considered as priorities but issues of common concern were also implicitly integrated. Issues of common concern may be defined as "experienced in different places in the transnational region... and be suitably addressed within nation-states, but transnational cooperation might bring more innovative and effective solutions by combining experiences from different places"³⁸. They are more related to shared problems or potential, i.e. demographic changes, migration flows, education, innovation in regions and transnational research clusters, shortage of skilled labour, and in terms of priority should be tackled through CBC cooperation and strand A programmes.

In contrast with CBC, the 2006 regulation did not specifically require joint strategies for TNC programme. The development of transnational cooperation should be achieved «*through the financing of networks and of actions conducive to integrated territorial development*»³⁹, requiring a clear transnational dimension or impact and concentrating primarily on the following priority areas:

1. *"Innovation: the creation and development of scientific and technological networks, and the enhancement of regional R&TD and innovation capacities, where these make a direct contribution to the balanced economic development of transnational areas";*
2. *"Environment: water management, energy efficiency, risk prevention and environmental protection activities with a clear transnational dimension";*
3. *"Accessibility: activities to improve access to and quality of transport and telecommunications services where these have a clear transnational dimension";*
4. *"Sustainable urban development: strengthening polycentric development at transnational, national and regional level, with a clear transnational impact"⁴⁰.*

The guidelines highlighted the need to re-examine the map of the existing zone for transnational cooperation in order to ensure conditions for *"implementing basic structural actions"*⁴¹. It insisted for drawing up the future macro-regions to take account of *"territorial coherence and functional criteria of geographical nature"*⁴².

³⁸ Idem.

³⁹ Regulation n°1080/2006

⁴⁰ Regulation n°1080/2006

⁴¹ COM (2005) 299 final, p32

⁴² Idem

4.2 Specific features for the 2007-2013 programming period

4.2.1 More autonomous strategic approach

From the programming period 2007-2013 cooperation became a separate structural fund objective⁴³ – the European territorial objective – which also means that it requires a more autonomous strategic approach. The integration of cooperation as an objective resulted in: (i) a focus on obtaining specific results; (ii) recognition of the territorial dimension of cohesion and the particular needs and characteristics of border areas; (iii) better visibility of INTERREG in relation to mainstreaming programmes at regional and national levels; (iv) establishment of clearer links with sector specific or thematic strategies.

4.2.2 Territorial specificities, integrated approach and differentiation

The approach followed by the EU under the Cohesion policy stresses the need to adapt each programme or set of territorial objectives to the specific characteristics of territories. The Communication⁴⁴ states: *“Naturally, not all of these more detailed guidelines will be relevant to all regions. The most appropriate mix of investments ultimately depends on the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each Member State and region”*.

Taking account of the specific characteristics of territories under the ETC objective is also crucial as expressed by the Communication: *“One of the determining features of cohesion policy - by contrast with sectoral policies - is its capacity to adapt to the particular needs and characteristics of specific geographical challenges and opportunities... the Improving territorial cohesion is a matter both of method – i.e. determining whether a multi-disciplinary or integrated approach is needed – and of recognising the particular problems presented by different geographical circumstances. Success in the area of territorial cohesion therefore depends on a comprehensive strategy which sets the framework within which specific objectives and actions are pursued”*.

The official documents are not very explicit on how to handle specific characteristics, strategies and differentiation. The regulation⁴⁵ did not highlight the need for more strategic interventions for Interreg. Neither the guidelines⁴⁶ nor the regulations⁴⁷ mentioned the need to elaborate macro-regional strategies for TNC regions.

⁴³ Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of 5 July 2006 on the ERDF and Council Regulation (EC); No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions of the ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion fund.

⁴⁴ COM(2005) 299, Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013.

⁴⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006.

⁴⁶ COM(2005) 299.

⁴⁷ Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 and Council Regulation (EC); No 1083/2006.

For CBC programmes, the guidelines⁴⁸ provided some guidance to help introduce a sequencing according to the level of cooperation development, but it still remains vague:

- Generally applicable recommendations for future cross-border cooperation are not always relevant owing to the wide diversity of situations. At the same time, given the obstacles created by borders, a useful starting point is the improvement of existing transport and communication infrastructure and the development, where necessary, of new links. These are pre-conditions for establishing or developing cross-border contacts.
- Where the basic conditions for cross-border cooperation are already in place, cohesion policy should focus assistance on actions that bring added value to cross-border activities, for example increasing cross-border competitiveness through innovation and research and development; connecting intangible networks (services) or physical networks (transport) to strengthen cross-border identity as a feature of European citizenship; promotion of cross-border labour market integration; and cross-border water management and flood control.

But the policy framework of CBC has provided neither a specific typology of territories nor detailed and clear criteria as to whether a territory could be considered as having met all the basic conditions.

Some other specificities are addressed in the official framework (Council decision, regulation and guidelines) such as:

- Particular attention needs to be paid to the challenges and opportunities presented by the changing external borders of the Union following enlargement. Here there is a need to promote coherent cross-border actions that encourage economic activity on both sides" (Council Decision of 6 October 2006).
- Bilateral cooperation between maritime regions may address priorities of TNC programmes as well as priorities given to CBC.

4.3 Governance arrangements for implementing Interreg programmes

Chapter III of the regulation (EC) n° 1080/2006 on the ERDF contains specific provisions, including those on management, on the "European territorial objective", and on Interreg.

According to this regulation, the Managing Authorities responsible for the preparation of each Interreg programme are designated by the Member States involved in the cooperation. The designated single Managing Authority⁴⁹ (MA) in charge of the management and implementation of the Operational programme, can be a national, regional or local public authority (or public or private body) located in one of the involved Member states. Thus, each programme is negotiated by all participating Member States and the Commission.

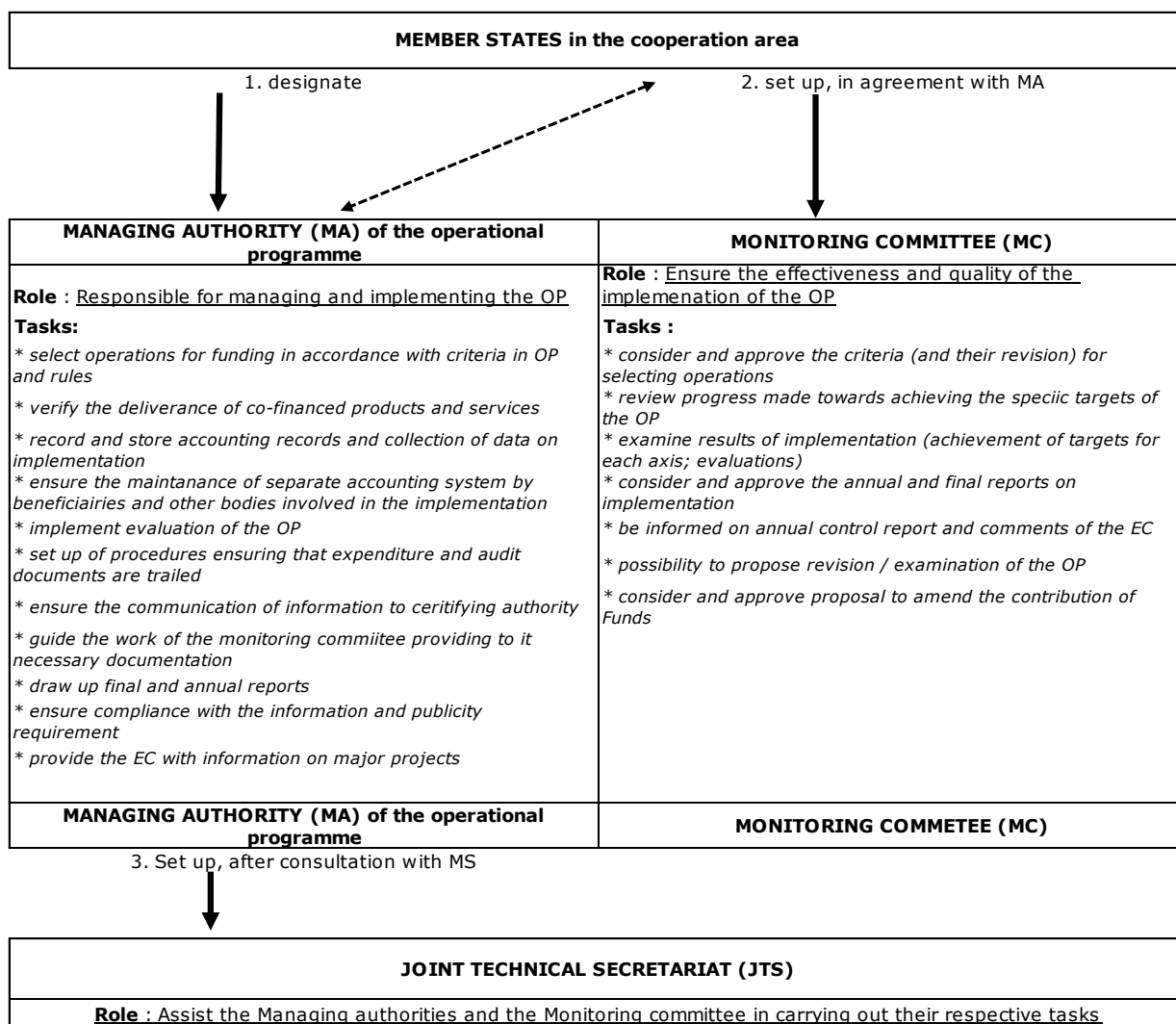
⁴⁸ COM(2005) 299.

⁴⁹ Member states also designate a certifying authority in charge of the expenditure and applications for payment and an independent audit authority responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control systems.

Member States in the cooperation area, in agreement with the Managing Authority they have designated, set up the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the Interreg programme. Its role is to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the OP's implementation.

This Monitoring committee and the Managing Authority are assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS), established by the Managing Authority after consultation with Member States represented in the cooperation area.

The respective roles and tasks associated with the above-mentioned structures are presented in the figure below.



The establishment of the institutional set-up determining the decision-making structure of a common Interreg programme is under the responsibility of the cooperating MS. In consequence the design of joint management structures is often influenced by the heterogeneity of existing legal and administrative conditions at the common border. Key factors identified are:

- Assets of and experience from pre-existing partnerships
- The scale of the partnership in the constitution of decision-making structures (e.g. the Monitoring committee), taking into account the existence of formalised and institutionalised cooperation structures;
- The level of the involved partners' influence in the decision-making process.

For example the Ireland-Northern Ireland programme has a long history and is based on a strong participative approach mobilizing public authorities, cross-border structures, and socio-economic and sector-specific bodies. These are directly involved in the decision-making process and have been given voting rights in the Monitoring committee. On the other hand there are examples (especially among the EU-15 MS) of stakeholders having been recently involved in European cooperation on internal borders. According to the level of their administrative and legal capacities, these MS have more centralized management of EU funds, including ERDF. In consequence, partnership within decision-making structures is more limited, respecting the basic conditions of the partnership principle of the regulations.

4.4 EU Budget dedicated to Interreg programmes 2007-2013

The Regulation 1083/2006 has foreseen EUR 7 750 million for the ETC objective. This represents 2.52% of the global resources available for commitment (EUR 308 041 millions) from the Funds⁵⁰ during the programming period 2007-2013.

Up to 2013/2014, the budget allocated to the 67 Operational programmes covered by this study, was distributed as follows:

- The 53 CBC programmes account for EUR 5 574 million, the average programme size being of EUR 105 million⁵¹;
- The 13 TNC programmes account for EUR 1 766 million, with an average programme size of EUR 136 million;
- The Interreg IVC has allocated to projects EUR 306 million⁵².

⁵⁰ ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion fund.

⁵¹ The information is based on the database from WP13, which is available only for CBC programmes. The information on the allocation to projects comes from the AIR 2014. For the TNC allocations the information is based on AIR 2013.

⁵² According to AIR 2014.

5. Findings

5.1 Relevance of Interreg programmes

The first set of findings addresses the extent to which the Interreg programmes have correctly comprehended the EU strategic framework for cooperation and have reflected it in the programmes they have put in place.

It approaches this question in four steps, which examine:

- The extent to which the programmes have clearly identified the cross-border and transnational challenges their regions were facing;
- The manner in which the programmes have mirrored those needs in the objectives to be pursued;
- The extent to which the programmes were demand-driven and focused on cooperation;
- The implications of the above in terms of coverage of the programmes.

These different steps are applied first to the cross-border programmes, and then to the transnational cooperation programmes.

5.1.1 The design of CBC Programmes

The design of CBC Programmes rests generally on a sound identification of cross-border challenges, obstacles and opportunities.

When designing programmes, the **Managing Authorities have used different types of information source**, with a specific emphasis on the SWOT analyses, systematically undertaken for all programmes. Other sources were:

- Ex-ante evaluations, which existed for all the programmes and which in a number of cases were used in one way or another to inform programme design;
- Good mobilisation of stakeholders;
- Lessons learned from previous cooperation experience; and
- Other studies and data.

These tools have generally **helped in a sound manner to identify the needs, challenges, and opportunities presented by the cross-border regions concerned**; more specifically:

- With respect to the **SWOT analyses**:
 - In about two-thirds of the programmes the evaluation team explicitly underlined the good quality of these SWOTs⁵³ which were comprehensive, well informed and detailed, integrating sector specific and/or thematic dimensions;
 - In nearly 90% of cases the SWOTs quite explicitly concerned issues related to cross-border/common needs or potential;

⁵³ The experts were asked to identify whether there was a SWOT, not to assess its quality. Nevertheless in 36 of the 53 SWOTs the experts explicitly provided a quality judgement, underlining the quality in 34 cases, and highlighting poor quality in two cases.

- According to the team, in about four-fifths of cases it was quite clear that they helped identify specific types of cross-border or trans-national value-added.
- The team deemed **ex-ante evaluations** to be of uneven quality. The Managing Authorities explained that they accompanied the OP design processes, notably by providing recommendations on the diagnoses and the design of the programmes. Even if there was no obligation on the Managing Authorities in that regard, and even if the Programmes did not demonstrate systematically the integration of any such recommendations, in several cases it was clear that the ex-ante evaluation had influenced the quality of the programming.
- From interviews with MAs it appeared that most (90%) considered that they had drawn **lessons from previous programmes**. Lessons used were more at the operational level than with a strategic character. They did not however receive any external support for doing so. They also drew on other studies and data.

Overall the programmes relied on an extended analysis of cross-border obstacles, opportunities and matters of common concern.

In about three-quarters of the programmes, cross-border institutions have facilitated the identification of cross-border value-added, and have helped develop cross-border projects. This was reported in discussions with MAs during programme analyses or case studies. This relates, for instance, to:

- Cross-border working groups in the Northern Ireland-border region of Ireland-Western Scotland (3);
- Institutions of the tri-national state in Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein (12);
- In the Baltic Sea region, the VASAB is an intergovernmental, multilateral institution aiming at fostering co-operation between the 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region in spatial planning and development. It has prepared policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region and has provided a forum for exchange of know-how on these issues.

However there was no automatic link between the presence of cross-border institutions or platforms and the quality of identification of objectives for cross-border cooperation as there are examples of programmes which benefitted from this presence but in which the objectives have been found too broad by the evaluation (e.g. the Grande Région (19) institutions have not played such a role, Type 2). Also the various structures in the Atlantic Area space (59) did not seem to have overcome the high diversity and complexity of the area definition which impeded the establishment of a shared vision and the adoption of targeted objectives for cooperation.

It was not fully clear first what constitutes a real cross-border challenge or an obstacle rather than an issue of common concern, and second, how the most functional zone for addressing each main CB challenge needed to be defined.

A question remained as to the nature of border challenges addressed by CBC programmes. The definition of what constitute border or common challenges is unclear. Issues addressed through CBC were not always real cross-border challenges but problems that were not specific to the area, even if they occurred in the two zones concerned (such as drug prevention, diabetes treatment, energy efficiency, renewable

resources, recycling, etc.). In those cases it was unclear whether cooperation across borders at local level was the most efficient way of intervening. Proximity may have mattered in some areas (such as innovation and pollution management) but was not specifically requested or justified in a range of sectors where CBC programmes operated.

This is analysed in more detail below for the three main sectors.

R&D and innovation

The three case studies carried out in the field of innovation and R&D show that the **programme rationales were based on a good understanding of the rationale for collaborating across borders as well as on an analysis of the economic and geographical context, notably in terms of barriers to cooperation and challenges to innovation.** Table 5.1 below summarizes the barriers and challenges identified.

Programmes have well understood the rationale for developing CBC in R&D and innovation and the key features of collaborating across borders as well summarized by a recent OECD study on *Regions and Innovation*⁵⁴, viz.:

- Innovation is an interactive process that does not stop at borders; it involves collaboration and partnerships between firms, and between firms and educational and research organisations or technical centres;
- This interaction needs to take place both at a distance and close at hand, that is also across borders;
- It is essential to increase visibility and competitiveness to overcome the peripheral nature of the area and be “part of the game”, which means that interaction and cooperation should variously seek to attain critical mass; to extend local markets; to promote complementarities in sectors where the zone has comparative advantages or specific assets; and to facilitate access to specialised infrastructures.

⁵⁴ OECD Reviews of Regional Innovation, *Regions and Innovation, Collaborating across borders*, 2013

Table 5. 1 Barriers for cooperation and challenges in R&D and Innovation

Region	Barriers for cooperation	Challenges for innovation
Northern Ireland – Ireland – Western Scotland (3)	Lack of knowledge Lack of trust Reluctance towards cooperation Different working practices	Problems linked to the peripheral nature of the area exacerbated by conflict Isolation Sparse economic network
Programme North (14)	Lack of resources and reluctance to cooperate by SMEs Difficulty to find relevant partners Language barriers Physical distance barriers	Sparse economic structures Lack of critical mass Too small domestic markets Share need to re-invent the traditional base industry
Germany-The Netherlands (2)	Different legal or governance related aspects, rules and norms such as laws and regulations, mentalities, cultural aspects or tradition Technological barriers Cooperation potential in various sectors	Limited innovative capacities of SMEs Insufficient presence of knowledge-providing and technology-transfer institutions Suboptimal research - industry cooperation, SME network and cross-border exchange

But the programmes experienced **problems in terms of targeting of the optimal “functional” region for CBC in the field of innovation:**

- The programmes did not provide a comprehensive analysis of the main actors involved in the innovation systems in the regions covered and their surroundings, nor of their interactions, although this could have enabled a better targeting of the “functional” region for CBC in the field of innovation
- In two of the three regions reviewed this was confirmed by interviewees who explicitly raised the issue of the relevance of the zone covered:
 - In **Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3)**, the case study concluded that the area chosen was not the most relevant for cooperation for several reasons: the limited eligible number of SMEs in Western Scotland; the marginality of Scotland in the partnerships; and the lack of geographical proximity between the zones;

- In the **Germany-The Netherlands** (2) programme, stakeholders often explained that "they experienced the geographical definition of the CB area as a *limitation as suitable partners were to be found outside the eligible area*"⁵⁵.

Environment

In general programmes captured well the need for an integrated environmental approach and management, notably:

- In geographical terms, when regions share a common natural resource which could be considered from a conservationist point of view or from the perspective of ensuring resilience against common risks.
- In terms of specific components of the environment to be considered within a holistic approach (mutual influence, e.g. in the field of water quality).
- In taking into account the potential for mainstreaming of the environment in other sectors as an opportunity for development of new products or services (e.g. innovation, tourism and in some extent health).

⁵⁵ See case study Germany-The Netherlands

Table 5.2 Barriers for cooperation and challenges in the field of Environment

Region	Barriers for cooperation	Challenges in the field of Environment
France-Channel-England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of incentives for cooperation due to lack of funding opportunities • Language barriers • Communication barriers in terms of how complex ideas are conveyed between different professional stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of maritime and coastal sustainable management • Improvement of water management and quality and watershed management • Regulations and procedures interpretation and/or implementation • Lack of common tools and process for applied responses • Limited awareness of the general public on key environmental issues in the area
South Baltic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Institutional capacities • Staff competencies • Accessibility/proximity • Differences in socio-economic development level • Differences in degrees of experience of similar actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of the collaboration to inland areas • Integration of prevention and control of pollution • Protection of rich biodiversity • Mitigating climate-change-related challenges - renewable energy, energy efficiency
Romania - Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult partner identification (absence of previous cross-border co-operation) • Financial constraints of project development and dominance of centre over periphery in terms of geographical targeting of regional development support • Cultural and language differences • Legislative and administrative differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated water management (Danube) • Joint risk protection and monitoring during emergencies in the border area • Reinforcement of preparedness for earthquakes in line with the specific characteristics of the area

Environmental specific features and challenges in the area were identified through SWOT analyses and specific SEA (strategic environmental assessments) for each programme (as an obligation). Barriers to cooperation have been clearly identified in several programmes (e.g. Romania-Bulgaria (41); South Baltic (50)). The main barriers included disincentives to cooperate owing to lack of funding, proximity and communication barriers, cultural and language differences, institutional capacities, differences in socio-economic development level, the degree of experience of similar activities, and the lack of identifiable partners on the other side of the border. The influence of administrative-political structures for the success of projects was not

sufficiently taken into account (e.g. France-Channel-England (18)). This is a hampering factor for the implementation and success of projects.

Capacity Building

The identification of cross border challenges was less explicit and precise in terms of capacity building. Important barriers to cross-border cooperation have been identified such as the lack of interest and knowledge of the neighbour as well as in some cases, the language barriers on which capacity building may have a positive effect. The link between barriers to be removed and capacity building activities has not been clearly established in the OPs.

One of the main challenges highlighted for capacity building was the need for reinforcing and building up the capacities of local stakeholders (public, non-governmental, private) to initiate cross-border activities and more directly to involve themselves in the CBC programmes. This included the need to improve the quality of projects submitted for funding. This was specifically the case in new border programmes. An example is the Hungary-Slovakia programme, which has fixed clear objectives for capacity building in the OP : "1) institution development aiming to build up integrated organizational structures and joint sustainable thematic cooperation networks for joint regional development activities; 2) development of joint project planning and management capacities, project preparation".

Related to that challenge, a capacity building strategy has been also identified by the Saxony-Czech Republic programme with the funding to the Small Projects Funds of the Euroregions in order to create this capacity to build cooperation projects, on a small scale and focusing on citizens and local bodies.

Some more specific issues related to capacity building and the elaboration of joint development plan and joint strategies were identified in the OPs especially in the field of nature protection and biodiversity and for further develop joint municipal planning and services which were still limited.

5.1.2 Objectives pursued by the CBC programmes

Objectives pursued by the CBC programmes were in line with EU objectives and more specifically with the Lisbon Strategy. As 2007-2013 programmes were meant to operate in these wide ranging priority area (see chapter 4), they covered a variety of sectors and remained broad, without clear prioritization and without being results-oriented.

The priorities defined under each OP covered mostly the whole range of actions and priorities defined in the EU regulations (see chapter 4). Most of the programmes intended to contribute to the five main priority areas:

- Innovation/RDTI/entrepreneurship;
- Joint protection and management of natural resources;
- Links between urban and rural areas;
- Reducing isolation;
- Developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures.

The **strategies remained wide** with little prioritization between objectives. The “priorities” of the programme were often the aggregation of a large number of interventions under broad multi-faceted headings.

The objectives were for at least 40% of the programmes **specified in a generic way**. The following are examples of such objectives, allowing for a wide range of interventions: “improving the quality of life of the population”⁵⁶, “mutual initiatives linking territories, populations and cultures”⁵⁷, “build an attractive region for living and visiting”⁵⁸, “better exploit the main common assets of the region”⁵⁹, “integration of resources and services”⁶⁰.

The programmes did **not establish a clear hierarchy of priorities**. Budget allocations were most often spread among priorities without a clear strategic framework.

Some of the case studies underlined in this respect that there was a will to maintain an open strategy to ensure absorption of funds and given the uncertainty as to whether there would be enough demand or projects if priorities would be too strictly defined.

Programmes did generally **not provide a clear indication of expected results** to be achieved at the end of the programming period. In addition, indicators used were mainly measuring outputs which meant that during implementation, a monitoring based on results was not possible.

This finding also applies to specific thematic components, such as **R&D and innovation**.

The CBC strategies in the field of innovation and R&D **followed the Lisbon Strategy** and recommended priority themes. They targeted objectives similar to those pursued by the mainstream programmes, while however adding the cross-border dimension:

- The programmes have indeed sought to promote innovation in a traditional manner, by encouraging networking, joint applied research, advisory services and technology platforms, but in all cases across borders. In this sense they were similar to the mainstream programmes (and indeed also to regional or national policies), but again with a particular focus on the benefits of cross-border cooperation;
- This is highlighted for instance in the Northern Ireland – Ireland – Western Scotland (3) case study as well as in the Germany-The Netherlands OP (2), where it is stated that “the programme led to the broadening of the horizons of all partners with a specific focus on cross-border aspects and opportunities, while the

⁵⁶ Spain-France (16)

⁵⁷ 2 Seas (17)

⁵⁸ France - (Channel)-England (18)

⁵⁹ Grande Région (19)

⁶⁰ Italy-France Maritime (21)

thematic priorities as such do not show significant variations from mainstream programmes”⁶¹.

That said, the programmes generally formulated objectives in a generic way and did not always refer to the cross-border dimension, as illustrated by the objectives mentioned in the two programmes below:

- Improve the capacity for innovation; foster economic cooperation and networking; improve the qualifications of employees (Germany-The Netherlands OP (2));
- Diversify and develop the economy by encouraging innovation and competitiveness in enterprises and business development, and promoting tourism (Northern Ireland - Ireland - Western Scotland (2)).

Generally the programmes were not clear on their expected contributions to the Lisbon Agenda.

5.1.3 Demand driven approach and focus on cooperation

Besides being wide and open, the CBC Programmes during the 2007-2013 programming period were characterised by two main additional features:

1. A demand-driven and bottom-up approach
2. A strong focus on cooperation as an end

Those combined characteristics have led to the development of programmes without a clear strategic⁶² dimension. As a result, a majority of programmes (86% according to the survey of experts having analysed the 53 programmes) have followed a project-led approach.

Many stakeholders (from MA to the local actors participating in projects) explained that they followed a **demand-driven approach**. Many stakeholders considered such a bottom-up approach as a strength of ETC programmes. It allowed indeed that new players, often at a more local level, participated to the programmes, and that fewer institutional stakeholders were involved. This allowed for more innovative projects and for non-anticipated needs to be taken into consideration. It had also drawbacks, notably in terms of a greater dispersion of projects, and limited results and influence on regional dynamics.

At a more sectoral level, the evaluation notes a lack of an integrated and more focused approach.

With respect to innovation/R&D/entrepreneurship, the programmes were generally very open, allowing interventions across a wide range of fields. The Managing Authorities explained that such an open framework was adopted to facilitate involvement of different types of projects and flexible implementation as regards content, as well as to allow a demand-driven approach and innovative pilot activities.

⁶¹ Case Study Germany – The Netherlands

⁶² Strategic dimension meaning a clear framework with well identified results in line with the objectives fixed, and a clear cut intervention logic linking inputs/outputs/ Results and impact.

A more strategic dimension was introduced under Interreg IV A, notably by targeting specific sectors or stakeholders and by increasing the size of projects. Case studies have shown that introducing a more top-down approach and searching for a greater critical mass at project level did not lead automatically to satisfactory results, first because of the risk of losing the "proximity" dimension which has clear added value, and second because of the costs of managing projects covering thousands of actors, as compared with the actual benefits.

There are examples of both more strategically-driven and more demand-driven projects with mixed results:

- The Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland OP (3) has given more priority to projects with critical mass and high spill-over effects in order to ensure impacts on a wider scale, creating economies of scale. But the expected trend has not fully materialised. As fostering cross-border cooperation practices was the "ultimate goal" of the programme, projects "far from the border", which were most often larger and region-wide, demonstrated less clear added value. The case study report points out that "for projects that do not have such a focus on the border area and the border problems, the proximity element is missing to justify the value added of cross-border cooperation: enhancement of cooperation is not achieved so clearly in such cases".
- The Germany-The Netherlands (2) programme is a good example of a mix of demand-driven and more top-down approaches, viz.:
 - The project selection process was based on regional demand rather than the initial planning, and therefore projects funded largely reflected the specific demand of regional actors;
 - In the 2007-2013 period "major structuring projects" were introduced and conceived as projects with strongly anticipated effects across the whole programme area. 11 major structuring projects were carried out, six of which were in the field of R&D/innovation/entrepreneurship. The largest (Mechatronics for SMEs with a total budget of €18.4 million with an EU contribution of €7.3 million) encompassed a total of 257 companies and funded 106 development and innovation projects. The programme achieved most of its objectives in terms of developing cooperation and conducting joint projects. But those projects were considered over-ambitious, especially as regards the considerable efforts on initiation and preparation as well as the large scale of the programme area. This concept is not further pursued in Interreg V but is replaced by "strategic initiatives" within priority axes.

There are intermediate situations between a full open strategy and "major structuring projects", notably by focusing innovation and RDTI interventions on specific sectors in which the zone has clear comparative advantages. Some programmes have defined

priority development areas but often this selection remained indicative and did not lead to concentration of resources or more articulated action in the sectors chosen.⁶³

⁶³ In programme North (14) for instance seven strategic development areas have been defined (base industry, ICT industry, creative industry and tourism, renewable energy and clean tech, car test industry, sustainable energy systems, service sector).

Cooperation was often seen as the main goal

Fostering cooperation was at the heart of the ETC programmes. Programmes often aimed at an increased degree of cooperation as a (or even *the*) key output or result. Most of the programmes remained rather unclear on the extent to which they saw cooperation as a means to an end and/or as a final objective in its own right. Examination of key programme documents and discussions with Managing Authorities by evaluation experts revealed that close to 90% of programmes pursued cross-border cooperation as a goal in itself.

This should be seen in the light of the policy framework for the programming period 2007-2013 (see Chapter 4), which left room for both pursuing cooperation as an end in itself and as a means to economic and social integration. Regulation No 1083/2006, with general provisions on ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund, indeed defined the Interreg objective as "*aimed at strengthening cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives*⁶⁴" (Strand A programmes). Regulation No 1080/2006 on the ERDF on the other hand stated that assistance should focus on "*the development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development*⁶⁵" for CBC programmes. On the other hand, guidelines on cohesion established the aim of CBC as to "*integrate areas divided by national border that face common problems requiring common solutions [...] as result of the fragmentation*" of markets, networks and institutions.

In this context CBC programmes have often been used as an instrument aiming primarily at developing cooperation and linkages, without necessarily envisaging a strong leverage of this cooperation to a wider economic integration.

Qualitative analysis confirms that programmes consider enhanced cross-border cooperation as their ultimate goal and main result to achieve, whether this concerns cooperation among universities, research centres, businesses, technology transfer institutions, public agencies, or local authorities:

- As outlined in the case study report on Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3), "fostering cross-border cooperation practices and removing barriers to cooperation is the ultimate goal of the programme".
- The MA of the Germany – The Netherlands (2) programme mentioned that "cooperation is perceived both as the basis and pre-condition for all projects conducted in the Interreg IVA programme framework, and its enhancement also as a result of the cross-border projects. The CBC is perceived as providing unique possibilities of cooperation".

As cooperation constitutes a specificity offered by Interreg programmes within the Cohesion policy, programmes were designed to focus more on joint process criteria than on results-oriented strategies. This is confirmed by an overall analysis of the 53 OPs: for 86% of them (46) there was a strong emphasis on joint process indicators.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Art. 3 (c)

⁶⁵ Art 6.1 (a) to (e), including detailed priority areas.

⁶⁶ This is also in line with the criteria for the selection of operations as mentioned in Regulation (EC) N° 1080/2006, which specifies that « *Operations selected for operational programmes aimed at developing cross-border activities (...) and developing transnational cooperation (...)*

More generally, many programmes not only used indicators related to cooperation development to measure output but also in some cases to assess results and even impacts of the programme.

For example, indicators used to assess outputs by the programmes in the field of **innovation, RDTI and entrepreneurship** were mainly related to the development of networks, joint programmes, exchanges of experience or the number of actors involved (as shown in the table below). In parallel, results indicators used by the North programme also include "*number of new cross-border business relations*", "*implementation of joint education programme*" and projects that stimulate "*cross-border contact of youths through education cooperation*". In the Germany-The Netherlands OP (2), the number of newly created/extended networks and clusters is considered as a result.

shall include beneficiaries from at least two countries (...) which shall cooperate in at least two of the following ways (...): joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing."

Table 5. 3 Output indicators for the three OPs analysed through case studies on RDTI

Indicators	Target	Value 2014
Programme North (14)		
<i>Priority 1: Business development</i>		
Business directed actions to enhance competence development	500	4502
Cross-border networks for service and product development	10	58
Cross-border exchanges of experience and knowledge connected to regional business development	500	7951
<i>Priority 2: Research and development and education</i>		
Development of joint education programmes	10	6
Development of joint research environments within applied research	30	21
Exchange of experience and knowledge connected to innovation activities, entrepreneurship and/or innovation environments	300	3168
Programme Germany-The Netherlands (2)⁶⁷		
<i>Action field 1: Supporting technology and knowledge transfer between research and business</i>		
No of cross-border cooperation between R&D organisations (higher education and other research organisation), associations, Chambers of Trade and Commerce, enterprises	620	785
Number of participating SMEs	1100	3510
No of advisory services and development projects between R&D organisations and enterprises	615	1203
<i>Action field 2: Supporting economic networks and CB business cooperation</i>		
No of supported cross-border networks and clusters	66	632
Number of participating SMEs	2230	12747
Number of activities in SMEs	490	2904
<i>Action field 3: Supporting qualification in enterprises to improve innovation potential</i>		
No of training operations in companies	33	41
No of participating companies	180	967
No of participants in the enterprise training operations	610	1042
Programme Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3)		
Number of business assisted	200	1879
Number of incubation units developed	3	2
Number of networking projects supported	15	21

Sources: AIR OPs 2014

This also applies to **environment** as illustrated in the flowing table (even if there monitoring system did not focus exclusively on the number of joint projects) and to **capacity building**.

⁶⁷ Reliability of data is not guaranteed as the definition of indicators was not precise, leaving considerable room for the interpretation of stakeholders while targets value have clearly been underestimated.

Table 5. 4 Output indicators for the three OPs analysed through case studies on Environment

Output Indicators	Target	Value 2014
Romania – Bulgaria (41)		
<i>Priority 2: Environment</i>		
Number of projects developing joint management systems for environmental protection	30	18
Number of projects raising awareness on environmental protection and management	50	44
Number of projects contributing to risk prevention in the cross-border area	10	24
Number of projects contributing to joint early warning and emergency response to risk	10	22
France –Channel – England (18)		
<i>Priority 4: Ensure a sustainable environmental development of the common space</i>		
Number of projects encouraging and improving shared protection and management of the environment	20	23
Cooperation activities for the promotion of sustainable energies	10	6
Cooperation activities for the promotion of energy efficiency	3	0
Cooperation agreements between environment agencies regarding crisis management	5	0
Number of cooperation tools jointly developed for a balanced management of the environment and biodiversity	15	27
Number of cooperation tools jointly developed as part of the programme	5	8

5.1.4 CBC budget

The analysis of budget allocations and decisions confirms that CBC activities were implemented in many different sectors, reflecting the wide and demand-driven approach. More precisely:

- As shown in table 5.2 below, **budget allocations were spread across 11 sectors**, reflecting a willingness to encourage CBC in all sectors where it may be relevant, without pushing for prioritising one sector over another one.
- **Three quarters of the ERDF budget in 2014 was nevertheless allocated to five sectors, with a relative financial weight that was rather similar for the different types of programme**, that is RDTI, Environment, Transport, Tourism and Culture (listed here in decreasing order of financial weight) as shown in figure 5.1 below. Most often these sectors represented between 10% and 23% of the funding, environment, RDTI and transport being the larger sectors and tourism and culture the smaller (around 10%).

Table 5. 5 Strand A Operational Programmes: distribution by sectors/theme, according to budget decided (2008) and allocated (2014)

Priority themes	Decided budget 2008			Allocated budget 2014		
	Old borders	New borders	Total EUR million	Old borders	New borders	Total EUR million
RDTI	26%	13%	19%	27%	11%	19%
Environment	19%	18%	18%	19%	19%	19%
Capacity building	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%
Information society	8%	6%	7%	5%	3%	4%
Transport	9%	19%	14%	6%	22%	15%
Tourism	9%	10%	10%	10%	12%	11%
Culture	6%	8%	7%	10%	10%	10%
Urban regeneration	3%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%
Employment	7%	5%	6%	3%	3%	3%
Social infrastructure	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%	6%
Mobilisation for reforms	1%	6%	4%	1%	7%	4%
TA	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%	4%
Other	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%
Total	2553,5	2755,2	5308,7	2626,5	2740,9	5367,4

Source: DG Regio database (SFC and WP13); data processing ADE

Differences between agreed and allocated budgets were not as significant at an aggregate level (they are more visible when considering individual OPs). It is worthwhile mentioning that tourism and to a lesser extent culture have overall received more funding than expected while employment issues and information society did not benefit of the amounts expected. Information society and employment received around one-half of their initially-envisaged budget while culture, and to a lesser extent tourism and social infrastructures, significantly increased their shares in all types of zone.

Table 5. 6 Sectoral allocations – Average distribution and standard deviation.

	RDTI	Environment	Capacity building	Information society	Transport	Tourism	Culture	Urban regeneration	Employment	Social infrastructure	Mobilisation for reforms
All programmes											
Average	19%	19%	2%	4%	15%	11%	10%	1%	3%	6%	4%
Standard deviation	14%	10%	3%	6%	11%	7%	7%	3%	3%	14%	6%
Old programmes											
Average	27%	19%	3%	5%	6%	10%	10%	2%	3%	5%	1%
Standard deviation	14%	9%	3%	7%	5%	9%	8%	3%	3%	17%	5%
New programs											
Average	11%	19%	1%	3%	22%	12%	10%	0%	3%	7%	7%
Standard deviation	8%	10%	3%	5%	11%	5%	6%	1%	3%	7%	6%

Source: ADE own calculations

The analysis of budget allocation shows that programmes were rather specific: inter-sectoral allocations reveal a wide variety of situations even if some similarities are observed between all programmes or by the main types of programme, *viz.* :

- There is no “one-size-fits-all” programme structure: when measuring the standard deviation⁶⁸ of inter-sectoral allocations, significant dispersion is observed among programmes, especially for RDTI, transport and smaller sectors;
- Overall “old” borders and “new” borders OPs show rather similar patterns in terms of sectoral financial distribution, except that transport was by far the main field of CBC in “new” OPs while RDTI was the main CBC field in “old” OPs; again, within the two groups inter-sectoral distribution varies widely;
- Tourism and culture received similar attention and absorbed together a significant part of the funds (20%); there are differences between OPs but, based on the analysis of standard deviation compared to the average weight of those sectors in budget allocations, a wide range of OPs - especially the new ones - have stimulated CBC in those sectors to a similar extent;
- Environment is clearly a sector where demand for CBC was high in all regions while, in contrast, employment and social infrastructures receive less, and more irregular, attention.

⁶⁸ Standard deviation is a measure of how widely values are dispersed from the average value (the mean).

Figure 5. 1 Strand A Operational Programmes: distribution by domain of the decided (2008) and of the allocated (2014) budgets



Source: DG Regio database (SFC and WP13); data processing ADE

At sector level, budget allocations were also spread across several types of intervention covering many different projects. Table 5.7 below shows that some programmes focused resources to a certain extent on specific themes. But then again, when looking more closely at the topics, the activities funded were diversified, as noted in the Germany-The Netherlands case study: *“The economic development topic comprises a variety of activities, both in different technologies and subjects – such as for instance energy, materials, micro and nano technologies, food, maritime technologies, creative industries, mechatronics, medical technologies, health and care, mechanical engineering, agri-and horticulture, sensorics/robotics, horse sector – but also transversal aspects like networking or internationalisation of the cross-border labour market.”*⁶⁹

Table 5. 7 Share in Budget for R&D, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Intervention codes	North	Germany- The Netherlands	Nothern Ireland – Ireland - W.Scotland
01: R&TD activities in research centres	21.8%	3.3%	0.0%
03: Technology transfer and improvement of cooperation networks	13.6%	60.8%	38.9%
04: Assistance to R&TD, particularly in SMEs (including access to R&TD services in research centres)	20.3%	6.4%	0.0%
05: Advanced support services for firms and groups of firms	27.8%	0.0%	13.7%
06: Assistance to SMEs for the promotion of environmentally-friendly products and production processes	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
09: Other measures to stimulate research and innovation and entrepreneurship in SMEs	13.6%	28.0%	47.4%
62: Development of life long learning systems and strategies in firms	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
72: Design, introduction and implementation of reforms in education and training systems	2.8%	0.4%	0.0%
<i>% R&DT, innovation & entrepreneurship in OP</i>	<i>53.2%</i>	<i>48.3%</i>	<i>25.1%</i>

Sources: WP13 based on OPs Annual Implementation Reports, 2014

In the sector of environment, activities were also widespread. The environment was treated from a conservationist perspective (natural heritage) and from a resilience-building perspective (risk prevention, climate change mitigation or adaptation). The following table 5.4 shows that programmes articulated both perspectives, including several intervention themes. An eco-systemic approach is often required to protect the environment and ensure the connectivity between protected areas and resources which “do not stop at the border”. But when we deepen the analysis on activities funded, we discover a large diversity of themes, some of them being not specifically targeted to common natural assets. As reported by the case study France-Channel-England “(...) projects covered (i) “a more sustainable management of the Channel

⁶⁹ Case Study : Interreg IVA Deutschland-Netherlands, ADE February 2016

area's natural heritage"; (ii) "eco-friendly construction, energy efficiency in buildings and sustainable transport"; (iii) "innovative solutions and services leading to a more environmentally sustainable economy"; (iv) "transversal awareness-raising component targeted at specific stakeholders (including the public) to incorporate sustainable development in behaviours and decision-making".

Table 5. 8 share in Budget for Environment

Intervention codes		France (Channel) – England (18)	Romania – Bulgaria (41)	South Baltic (50)
Renewable energy	39: Renewable energy: wind	4%	0%	22%
	41: Renewable energy: biomass	4%	0%	0%
	42: Renewable energy: hydroelectric, geothermal and other	4%	0%	0%
	43: Energy efficiency, co-generation, energy management	16%	0%	15%
Environmental protection and risk protection	44: Management of household and industrial waste	3%	0%	9%
	45: Management and distribution of water (drinking water)	1%	0%	0%
	46: Water treatment (waste water)	0%	0%	15%
	47: Air quality	0%	0%	14%
	48: Integrated prevention and pollution control	5%	36%	0%
	49: Mitigation and adaptation to climate change	10%	0%	0%
	51: Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)	37%	7%	5%
	53: Risk prevention (including prevention plans)	2%	33%	0%
	54: Other measures to preserve the environment and prevent risks	15%	23%	19%
<i>Renewable energy</i>		<i>27%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>37%</i>
<i>Environmental & risk protection</i>		<i>73%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>63%</i>
<i>% Environment in OP</i>		<i>33%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>21%</i>

Sources: WP13 based on OPs Annual Implementation Reports, 2014

5.1.5 TNC programmes

The strategies and priorities of the 2007-2013 transnational OPs were in line with the EU orientations for the period and were driven mainly by common concerns. The meaning of the concept of “transnationality” and what was relevant and significant under this umbrella was unclear.

Figure 5.2 overleaf summarizes the key priorities and related objectives of the 13 TNC programmes. They can be grouped under the four main objectives identified by the EU:

- Facilitating innovation, research, entrepreneurship, and increasing competitiveness and SMEs capacities
- Promoting sustainable development and protection of natural resources
- Improving accessibility and connectivity
- Promoting balanced and integrated economic development rooted in stronger communities, cities and regional centres.

8 of the 13 TNC programmes focused on the four main thematic priorities fixed by the European Commission and 12 of the 13 on three of the four: innovation, RTD, enterprises; environment; accessibility, transport, ITC networks, sustainable development. These are all clearly in line with the objectives of the Lisbon and Goteborg strategies. The only exception is the Northern Periphery (58) programme which focuses on two main objectives, namely demographic challenges and better use of natural resources.

Figure 5. 2 Key priorities of the TNC programmes

Key priorities and related objectives in the TNC programmes		Nber of TNC OP concerned	Transnational issues
Innovation	Promotion of research, technological development, innovation and information society, sustainable cooperation technological networks, innovative capacities of SMEs	13	
Environment	Strengthening environmental management, protection and conservation; sustainable development of natural and community resources; risk prevention	12	Promote integrated water management and flood prevention (South East Europe) Respond to the large number of environmental pressures threatening the biodiversity, maritime habitat, water resources (Med) Sustainable management and protection of the resources of marine spaces (Atlantic Area)
	Management of the Baltic Sea as a common resource	1	Management of the Baltic Sea (Baltic)
Accessibility	Improving accessibility (external and internal) and connectivity	8	Transportation networks (South East Europe) Increase interconnectivity and interoperability (Central Europe) Transnational transport corridors (North Sea) Incorporate transport and logistic network according to a transnational strategy (South-Western Europe) Transnational solutions in the field of transport and ICT (Baltic)
Sustainable urban development	Promote sustainable urban development (transnational synergies), attractive cities and regions, links between urban and rural areas, promotion of a polycentric and integrated development	7	
	Promote human development and international solidarity in favour of a harmonious regional integration; Strengthen social cohesion and integration; strong and prosperous communities at transnational level; sustainable and competitive communities	4	
	Harmonize spatial planning and improve accessibility to information networks	1	
	Cooperation with third countries and application of the wider neighbourhood principle (common space for growth and integration)	1	

The related objectives were mainly focused on issues of “common concern”, defined as challenges experienced in different locations in the transnational region to which TNC may bring effective solutions by combining experiences from different locations (see chapter 4). This may concern for instance fostering of cooperation to promote innovation and research; development of synergies in rural and urban areas and strengthening of urban-rural partnerships; improvements to coastal management; and so forth. As such there are no truly transnational issues requiring cooperation across national borders for a policy response (for instance air pollution, water policy, energy, ITC or transport infrastructures).

Potential transnational issues of more strategic relevance to transnational regions were not always clearly identified in the key documents (mainly OPs) and were often included in a list of numerous issues of common concern. There are, however, exceptions. Several TNC programmes, notably those with a common geographical feature (maritime OPs), and the South East Europe Programme, have included in their scope transnational issues in the field of water and flood management and common public good management as well as in the field of transport networks (corridor development).

There are indications that **there is no common understanding among programmes on the exact meaning and value of working on a transnational level**. Indeed, as illustrated in table 5.9 below the rationale and value of transnational working is mentioned in all programmes. Although in many different ways. Some

partners see transnational cooperation as “jointly defining and implementing projects”, others as “addressing challenges common to all regions”, having “a potential to complement national and regional policies”, and so on.

Table 5. 9 How programmes have approached transnationality

North West Europe (62)	Transnationality achieved when partners jointly define and jointly implement projects
Baltic Sea Programme (57)	Transnationality achieved by projects which demonstrate an innovative approach to solving transnational problems and avoid duplication of work and/or methodology
Northern periphery (58)	Addressing challenges that are common to all the regions within the programme area: accessibility, outmigration, ageing, low population density
South West Europe (55)	Cooperation on economic, social and environmental measures
Alpine Space (56)	Cooperation for strengthening innovation, enhancing connectivity, stimulating SMEs development, environmental protection
Atlantic Area (59)	Potential to contribute to complement national and regional policies
Mediterranean programme (63)	Joint efforts, joint initiatives and projects approved need to have a transnational character
North Sea (64)	Cooperation for promoting sustainable management of environment and improving accessibility in the Region
Indian Ocean (60)	Construct a Reunion model for competitiveness and contribute to the integration of the island
Caribbean programme (61)	To get a leverage effects on specific sectors where there are interactions
Macaronesia programme (54)	Added value in terms of better management of resources in the ICT and in the environmental sectors, tackling common challenges in the cooperation zone

Strategies formulated by TNC programmes are broad, embracing a large number of issues, allowing interventions in many different areas, and are not clearly results-oriented. Programmes gathering regions facing economic and geographical similarities are those with the most well-defined objectives in the various sectors covered. This can be expected in a context where programmes aim primarily to address common challenges and concerns.

As shown in the previous section, nearly all the 13 programmes pursue the four main key objectives identified, with no clear priorities. Formulation is generally vague, allowing a very broad range of interventions relating to each objective.

As already mentioned, the main issues driving the programmes are related to common concerns or common challenges and not to true transnational issues (except for a few). In that context the quality of objective-setting looks better in programmes in which geographical areas face similarities in terms of economic and social situations as well as in terms of geographical constraints.

Programmes with economic and geographical coherence have rather clearly-defined objectives: they aim at tackling transnational territorial issues specific to the context of the territory, as illustrated by the examples below:

- The Baltic Sea programme (57) showed the value of transnational working and its potential in terms of overcoming territorial and socio-economic challenges. It focused on the development of transnational physical or functional links and on transferable practical solutions (“blueprints”) around the management of the Baltic Sea, fostering innovation and accessibility and design of regional and local development strategies. A detailed intervention logic was outlined that links the SWOT, objectives, results and impacts.
- Similarly, the Alpine Space programme (56) had well-defined objectives around the issues of environment and risk prevention, along with accessibility, connectivity and strengthening of competitiveness. These were based on a sound approach, and also on former experience, a detailed SWOT analysis and strong mobilisation of stakeholders. The programme had a convincing “logical structure” which ensured overall coherence.
- The North-West Europe programme (62) focused on issues not tackled efficiently in domestic contexts; this was well demonstrated for priorities linked to shared natural resources and risk management and to sustainable transport solutions and ICT; it was less clear for priorities linked to knowledge-based economy and innovation, support to communities for economic and social performance, or issues of demographic changes and migration.
- The Madeira-Azores-Canary programme (54) was another example of a maritime programme built on an already territorially and historically integrated region in which the nature of the cooperation area and the similarity of the territories have certainly helped identify common priorities or needs.

On the other hand the objectives of the **programmes that brought together regions with less economic or geographical coherence were rather generic, and not as specific to the territory**, as shown below:

- The South East Europe programme (66) included a range of 16 countries (including non-EU Member States), with a total population of 200 million. Not surprisingly in such a large and diverse area, the OP identified transnational challenges that encompassed integration, competitiveness and innovation, protection and improvement of the environment, accessibility, and more balanced territorial structures in a very broad way. The priorities echoed those listed in the Regulations, but left their content very open. MAs deemed this unavoidable given the huge differences in level of development and in administrative structures and needs.
- The Atlantic Area programme (59) acknowledged the difficulty of defining specific objectives in an area that is extremely diverse, with considerable economic disparities and including a wide range of types of territory (large urban conurbations as well as peripheral and rural regions), which face very different development challenges. In this context the four priorities were close to the four priorities listed for TNC programmes in the regulations but left the precise objectives for each of them relatively open, so as to cater for the diversity of the area.

Programmes where a **macro vision** has been developed did not automatically demonstrate a more accurate spatial vision. Four programmes (Atlantic Area (59), North-West Europe (62), North Sea Region (64) and South East Europe (66) had a macro-regional vision mainly developed in the first decade of the 21st century while

one (Baltic Sea programme (57)) was a precursor of the formulation of a macro-regional strategy approved in 2009 (but already existing when the TNC OP was formulated).

The Baltic Sea programme (57) clearly identified the main challenges faced by individual countries with a transboundary character: the need to protect the ecosystem, transport, accessibility, energy supply and issues relating to climate change. It also identified the common challenges faced by the Baltic countries, for instance, demographic development, economic growth, unemployment and rural development. Thus the programme addressed a mix of transboundary challenges and common challenges through four key priorities: 1) fostering innovations across the Baltic Sea regions; 2) improving internal and external accessibility; 3) management of the Baltic Sea as a common resource; and 4) promoting attractive and competitive cities and regions. Those priorities were in line with the four pillars of the EUSBSR, namely 1) making the Baltic Sea environmentally sustainable; 2) making the Baltic Sea Region prosperous; 3) making the BSR accessible and attractive; 4) making the BSR safe and secure). But the EUSBSR has itself been criticised as being "too broad, complex and not sufficiently focused"⁷⁰ and listing "numerous issues that are of common concern, besides those that will clearly require transnational cooperation as individual countries alone will not be able to address the challenges successfully"⁷¹.

Regarding the four other programmes, the role of the spatial visions in providing a coherent framework for cooperation has been limited, the Lisbon Agenda becoming the priority, viz.:

- The driving force of the North-West-Europe (62) has evolved from "integrated territorial planning" towards the "economic development" goal. The wide range of objectives was the product of a compromise between the views of eight MS. The transnational dimension was clearer for priorities 2 (sustainable management of natural resources and risk management) and 3 (improving connectivity by promoting sustainable transport and ICT solutions) than for 1 (knowledge-based economy and innovation) or 4 (strong and prosperous communities at transnational level). For the latter two, value added relates to exchange of experience rather than joint solutions.
- The Atlantic Area programme (59) has presented a clear rationale for the value of transnational working and the potential for contributing to complementarity of national and regional policies in the Atlantic Area. Good links were made to strategic EU priorities, particularly Lisbon targets and the need to enhance the knowledge economy in the area.

⁷⁰ Schymik and Krumrey, cited by Dr Dürh, 2011

⁷¹ Baltic Sea, Danube and Macro-Regional strategies : A Model for Transnational Cooperation in the EU ? ,Dr Dürh, 2011.

Budget allocations reflect the breadth of the strategy and show a dispersion of activities in many different (sub-) sectors

Budget was spread across a wide range of objectives in various sectors, even if some sectors such as environment and RDTI have received the bulk of the available funds, viz.:

- All programmes have allocated funds to the four main priorities with predominance for the environment, which is ranked first (35% across all programmes), followed by RDTI (23%), Transport (13%) and Information Society (8%);
- All programmes have also spent part of their budget on tourism (except for the Indian Ocean (60)) and on culture (except for the Alpine Space (56));
- Some programmes have also included capacity-building activities (up to 23% of the budget in the South-East Europe programme (66)) as well as interventions in urban development (12% in the Central Europe programme (65)).

Table 5. 10 Strand B Operational Programmes: distribution of 2013 allocated ERDF funds by domain

OP	Environment	RDTI	Transport	Information society	Capacity building	Urban development	Tourism	Culture	Employment	Social Infrastructure	Mobilisation reforms	TA	Other	Total EUR million	Total %
ENO	48%	16%	17%	8%	0.4%	7%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%		343.4	100%
Central Europe	33%	20%	16%	4%	2%	12%	3%	6%	4%			0%		227.2	100%
South East Europe (SEE)	16%	17%	17%	5%	23%	5%	3%	4%	3%			6%		208.2	100%
MED	38%	23%	13%	4%	5%	1%	5%	3%				6%		202.0	100%
Baltic Sea Region	41%	18%	13%	6%	8%	2%	5%	2%	4%	0.5%		0%	1%	193.4	100%
North Sea Region	43%	16%	18%	6%	3%	9%	3%	1%	2%			0%	0.2%	133.8	100%
Atlantic area	25%	38%	10%	5%	1%	1%	6%	3%	4%	0.1%	1%	6%	0%	104.9	100%
Alpine Space	33%	27%	10%	20%			4%					6%		96.9	100%
South West Europe	31%	48%	5%	9%		2%	3%	1%				0%		94.2	100%
Madeira-Azores-Canarias	37%	32%	1%	18%	4%		1%	4%	4%			0%		52.8	100%
Caribbean	27%	42%	1%	2%	3%		2%	8%	1%	8%		6%		46.4	100%
Northern Periphery	35%	17%	6%	27%		0.04%	5%	4%			0.1%	6%		35.0	100%
Indian Ocean	25%	18%		17%		0.4%		12%	15%	10%		2%		32.7	100%
Total Strand B	35%	23%	13%	8%	5%	5%	3%	3%	2%	1%	0.2%	2%	0.2%	1766.2	100%

Source: DG Regio database (SFC); data processing ADE

The degree of prioritization is rather low, viz.:

- Priorities echo those listed in the regulations, but leave their content very open so as to cater for different stakeholders and a diversity of situations
- The programme budget was in several cases initially distributed evenly, or nearly so, between the priorities (Baltic Sea Region (57), Madeira-Azores-Canary (54), South Western Europe (55), Alpine Space (56)) and with the allocation between the axes modified in the process (Caribbean programme (61))

Despite some specificities (notably an emphasis in TNC programmes on the environment sector and the information society), the field of intervention of Strands A and B were quite similar, viz.:

- The three main sectors were the same: RDTI, Environment, Transport
- On average the same proportion of the budget was allocated to transport and RDTI

- Tourism and culture have received more attention in CBC (20% of the budget), whereas TNC programmes allocated 6% of the funds to those sectors

5.2. Results: Contribution to EU objectives, barriers removed

This section analyses the main results achieved by the Interreg programmes during the 2007-2013 programming period. These results are examined against the objectives set out at the EU level at the beginning of the period. It is subdivided in the following parts: the outputs and results of the CBC programmes (respectively sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), of the TNC programmes (section 5.2.3); and of Interreg IVC (section 5.2.4); an overview of overall results (section 5.2.5); and a description of the main barriers alleviated (section 5.2.6).

The main outputs and results achieved are presented in a schematic way for CBC programmes, on one hand, and TNC programmes, on the other. As expected, the programmes have produced a wide range of outputs in various sectors, with a specific focus on innovation/RTDI/entrepreneurship, environmental protection and risk prevention, accessibility (mainly in transport and ICT), territorial integration (less clear) and capacity building.

These outputs and the related activities have contributed to progressively removing and alleviating existing barriers, even if many barriers remain. Removing barriers is in itself already a significant result that contributed to EU integration and to the improvement of the quality of CBC outputs.

As far as EU priorities are concerned, ETC programmes have contributed to a certain extent to improving the factors of growth, environmental protection, risk prevention and accessibility in the different areas. They have also achieved a more implicit goal, namely increased regional identity, political power and institutional governance in the area, often based on local actors. If the picture seems promising at first sight, however, some limits should nevertheless be underlined; as further detailed in section 5.3:

- The scale of results was often small and the leverage effects on the economy or on the social well-being of the population as a whole were rather limited. This should however been seen in the light of the budgets allocated
- The sustainability of results was not ensured (see also section 5.3)
- The absence of horizontal and vertical mainstreaming of the practices developed and results gained hampered the leverage effects
- The lack of commitment from central authorities (and even regional authorities) also limited the effectiveness of the programmes

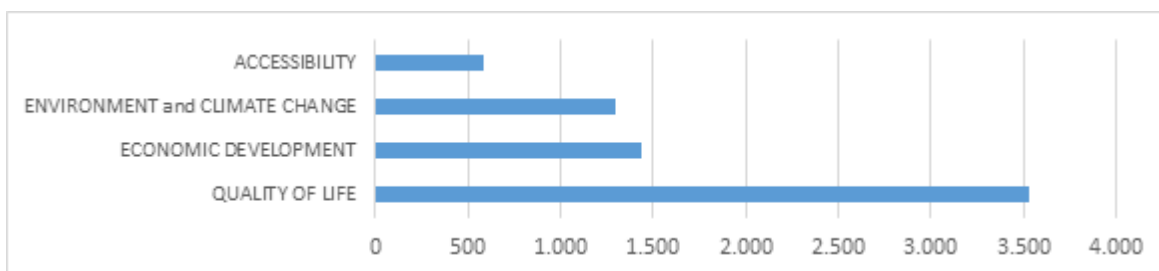
5.2.1 Main outputs of CBC programmes

The next figure presents a reconstruction of the *ex-post* intervention logic of CBC programmes, starting from objectives, outputs implemented and main results achieved. Expected impacts are also mentioned.

Outputs and results achieved are presented by main priority fields and discussed in the following sections. A specific column addressing barriers removed has been added in order to capture more intangible results that are at the heart of CBC programmes.

More than 6800 CBC projects have been implemented through Interreg 2007-2013 programmes. More than half of them were related to the theme "Quality of life"⁷² encompassing CBC in tourism, culture, sport, health, safety addressing the fifth priority of the 2006 regulation "developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures, in particular in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education".

Figure 5. 3 Number of CBC projects by themes



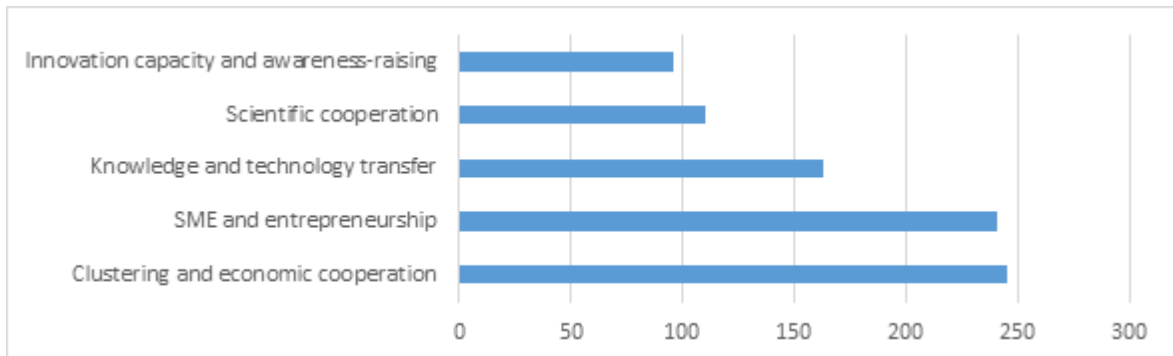
Source: KEEP database

Around 1500 projects were funded in the field of economic development. This included innovation, RDT, entrepreneurship of which 250 aimed to develop clustering and economic cooperation and another 250 focused on SME and entrepreneurship. Knowledge and technology transfer and scientific cooperation were also carried out at cross border level but less frequently.

⁷² Projects were classified according to four themes:

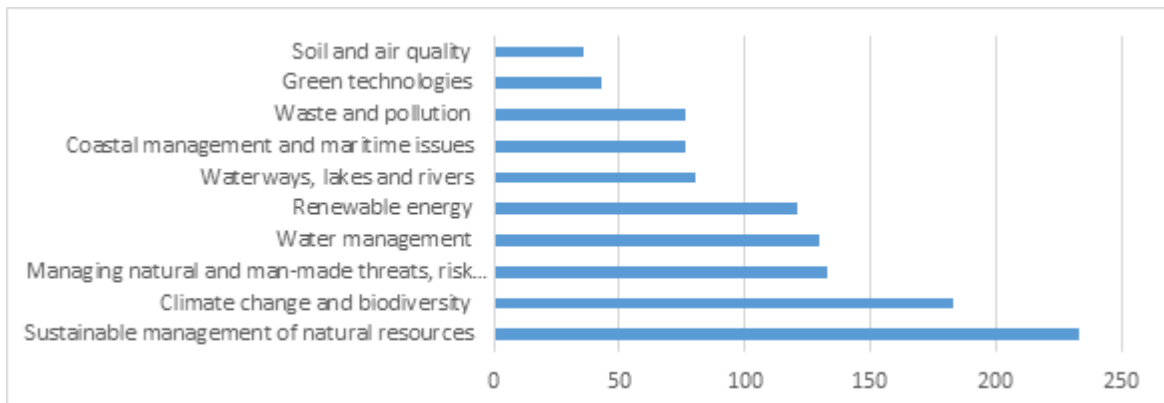
- Economic development: projects focusing on business and policy support, innovation and technological development, clustering, innovation capacity, new products/services, etc.
- Environment and climate change: projects focusing on environmental issues, such as energy, water management, waste and pollution, soil and air quality, risk management, sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, etc.
- Accessibility: projects focusing on transport and mobility, logistics, etc.
- Quality of life: projects focusing on tourism, culture, sport, safety, health etc.

Figure 5. 4 Number of CBC projects in R&DT, Innovation and entrepreneurship



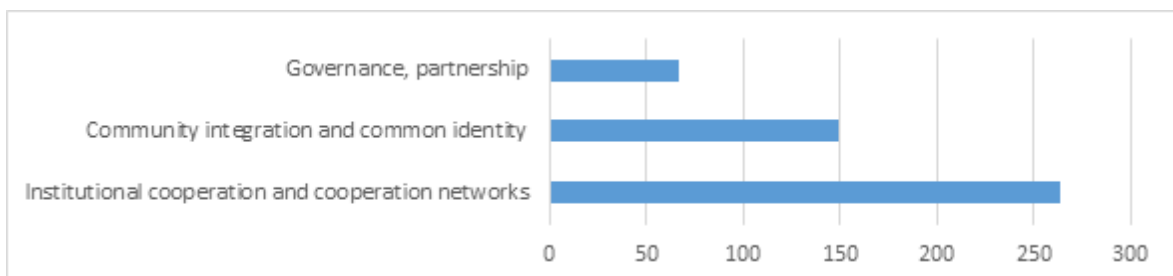
Environmental projects focused on issues related to the management of natural resources, of natural threats, and on issues related to climate change and biodiversity. They addressed also other dimensions of environment protection such as water and sea management.

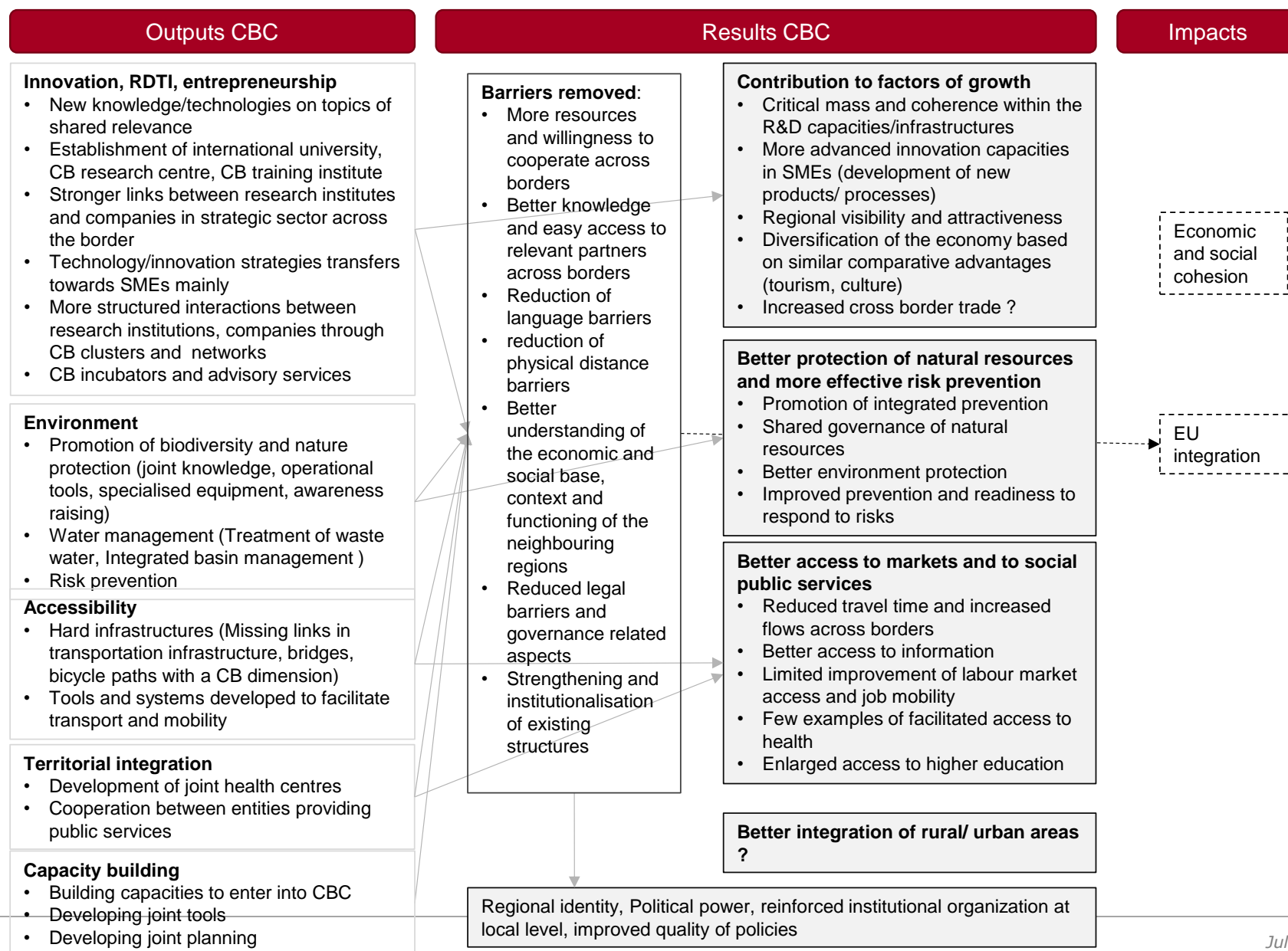
Figure 5. 5 Number of CBC projects in environment



CBC was also undertaken for building cross border capacity and cooperation. More than 250 projects were oriented on institutional cooperation and cooperation networks.

Figure 5. 6 Number of project in capacity building



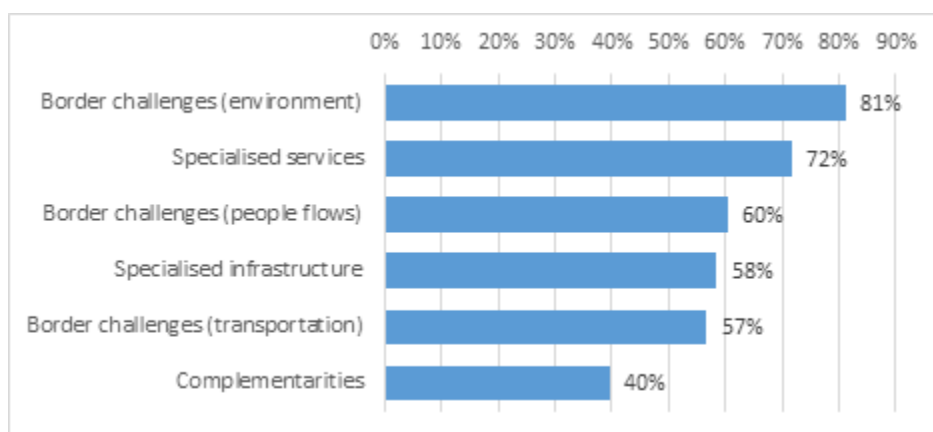


5.2.1.1 Outputs addressing common challenges

Figure 5.7, below, summarizes the team's assessment of the types of output achieved by all those CBC projects (the details can be found in the 53 fiches of Annex 3).

- It shows that most of the outputs have addressed **border challenges** (with respect to environment, people flow and transportation), the **reinforcement of joint services and the sharing of more specialised infrastructures**.
- Both the general review of all programmes and the case studies show that nearly all programmes have delivered specific outputs related to the management of the environment and more specifically to the **protection of common natural assets** such as seas, rivers and natural areas as well as the risk management and the promotion of sustainable energy.
- More than half of the CBC programmes have produced outputs addressing **challenges related to people flows and transportation**.
- The **development of joint specialised services** was one of the main outputs produced: this reflected the prevalence of projects **addressing discontinuities in public services due to the existence of borders**. Concretely, it concerned the delivery of services to support SMEs and cross-border innovation; the development of cross-border specialised health services or easy access to existing centres; the creation of joint rescue teams or emergency services across the border; joint education programmes and even a bilingual cross-border crèche (Upper Rhine (15)).
- **The development of a joint specialised infrastructure was less frequent** and mainly observed in the field of R&D and innovation (for example, incubators) and in that of environment, where high qualifications and critical mass may be required.

Figure 5. 7 Experts' assessment of the types of outputs (CBC programmes)



Source: ADE; Task 1 analysis. Share of the programme where the output is present to a significant degree.

The CBC programmes were primarily focused on addressing common challenges and less on creating new opportunities linked to the exploitation of complementary⁷³ assets over the borders.

5.2.1.2 Outputs in the field of innovation, R&D and entrepreneurship

Our analysis of the CBC programmes shows that in the field of **innovation/R&D**, outputs were in line with the Lisbon Agenda, with a clear cross-border dimension. Outputs had a strong business orientation as they concentrated on fostering innovativeness in SMEs, as well as on developing new technologies in domains of relevance to the cross-border area. The main outputs were:

- **The establishment of contacts across the border and stronger links** between research institutes and companies in priority sectors, as well as the transfer of technologies and innovation, mainly towards SMEs (for instance, Ireland 3-creation of a “virtual centre of excellence” for the key engineering and manufacturing sectors within the area, or the establishment of a Tri-Regional Innovation Network). Firms and knowledge actors got to know each other and regional stakeholders gained knowledge about available competences on the other side of the border.
- **More structured interactions between research institutions** and companies through the creation or reinforcement of cross-border clusters and company networks (examples: Germany-The Netherlands OP (2); Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3)).
- **New or improved products or processes in companies** (in the Germany-The Netherlands OP (2), for instance, 551 new or improved products or processes have been recorded while the number of companies with improved processes amounted to 1186, exceeding the initial target).
- **Improved access to local markets**
- **Cross-border incubators and advisory services**

Outputs related to **public research and higher education** were mainly:

- **New and more advanced knowledge/technologies related to topics of shared relevance for the area** (for example, in Grande Région (19) R&D networks were created in electro-chemicals, biotechnology and natural product)
- **The establishment of higher education centres: an international university, a cross-border research centre**, a cross-border training institute and joint education programmes by universities on both sides of the border

Overall, CBC programmes have contributed to better linkages between regional innovation systems. Externalities linked to R&D and innovation capacities have been progressively better addressed. Innovation capacities have been enhanced within some sectors while in a few cases the opportunity to better exploit comparative

⁷³ In the on-line tool for findings’ consolidation “Complementarities” mean that a programme has established supply chain linkages among regions and complementarities in business functions among regions.

advantages existing in the area has been explored, leading to a progressive diversification of the economy. Some factors enhanced the effectiveness. The areas where regional innovation systems were already well structured with a high concentration of SMEs were more successful. The degree of openness of universities and research organisations to businesses and their responsiveness to businesses' needs also favoured the programmes' effectiveness.

R&D externalities across borders are better taken into account, enlarging the knowledge-based economy. This has been realised by:

- **Developing critical mass and coherence within the R&D capacities and infrastructures:** more than 50% of the OPs mentioned a positive effect of the CBC programmes on reaching critical mass. This was particularly true in the field of R&D capacities and innovation. Several concrete examples illustrate this:
 - One of the major results of the **North Programme** (14) is the creation of knowledge thanks to the exploitation of complementarities in knowledge bases and skills. The new partnerships built through Interreg-funded projects also helped the institutions make steps towards wider international cooperation.
 - In the **Upper Rhine** (15), a tri-national research space (in the field of neuro-science, nutrition, nanomedicine, synthetic biology, and organic photovoltaics) has been developed which has fostered research capacities, the area's international visibility and its attractiveness.
 - The Iberian International Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL), established in Braga, Portugal under the **Spain-Portugal OP** (1) is the first, and so far the only, fully international research organisation in Europe in the field of nanoscience and nanotechnology.
- **Developing research on (new) topics of shared relevance:**
 - PHYTOBIO (France-Wallonia-Flanders (7)), concerning the environment and sustainable agricultural development.
 - Botnia Atlantica (13): A competence centre for elderly care between Sweden and Finland.
- **Broadening the coverage of higher education programmes:**
 - Enhanced cooperation and integration of higher education institutions in the Grande Région (19), have shown increased value added in terms of generating a broader choice of domains of study, and probably higher levels of specialisation, a stronger international dimension and greater visibility.

More advanced innovation capacities in SMEs and capacities to develop new products/ processes have been fostered.

As described above, the development of innovation networks and cooperation between research centres, technology transfer organisations and companies has been a major output of the CBC programmes. It remains very hard to assess the consequences in terms of **the longer term impact on the innovation capacities on the economy**, but two of the three case studies carried out in this field display good results.

- The case study on the Germany-The Netherlands OP (2) finds that:
 - More than 1000 companies (mainly SMEs) have developed improved production processes thanks to CBC projects
 - More than 500 new or improved products or processes were developed in companies

- This in turn has led to more than 3500 jobs being created or sustained, far higher than what was expected (1780)⁷⁴
 - The network GMA (*"Machinery and plant engineering without borders: Towards flexible manufacturing"*) is one of the projects that has contributed to enhancing the innovative capacities and innovation processes of about 500 businesses
- The benefits for companies involved in North programme (14) were, for more than 80%, new contact networks, followed by new collaborative partners and, for 70%, new knowledge/skills. The programme and the cross-border cooperation activities that it has instigated have permitted the creation of new products and new services as well as nearly 100 new enterprises.

The results in terms of enhanced innovation capacities were nevertheless limited as shown in some case studies. The reasons found were inadequate programme design or delimitation of intervention zones.

- The analysis of the Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland OP (3) underlines that "more businesses than expected have taken part in projects, but the results in terms of innovation (share of companies developing new products – 4% against 40% expected – and new processes 11% against 40% expected) are lower than anticipated. This is linked to the nature of the projects, which were not directly targeted at promoting innovation but rather at raising awareness on more basic issues for business development, amongst which innovation came only as one element".
- Another limitation mentioned was related to the marginality of Scotland in the partnerships, both within joint research projects with no clear cross-border dimension and mutual interest and those dealing with innovation and awareness raising (such as the Innovation for Competitive Enterprises (ICE)), where "the small eligible population of SMEs in Western Scotland limited the benefits reached in this region".

Regional visibility and attractiveness have been improved.

45% of Programmes have developed or consolidated some form of "regional branding" (see figure 5.4). Joint activities in the tourism sector and related to cultural resources have been one of the main sources of increased visibility and attractiveness. In more than 16 Programmes the role of tourism has been mentioned as fostering regional visibility and attractiveness. The case study on the Deutschland/Netherlands OP mentions for instance that "*further qualitative impacts in the programme area refer to branding and regional attractiveness. Examples are "Das andere Holland" in tourism or the label of "green shipping" in maritime industries*".

Improved quality of infrastructures appeared also as a factor of better attractiveness, as mentioned for example in the Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland OP (3) with fast telecoms connection for the whole area with connection to USA).

⁷⁴ According to the case study, comparison between targets and achievements must be done carefully as targets have been recognised as underestimated and achievements could have been overestimated to a certain extent.

The programmes have stimulated the diversification of the economy and the exploitation of similar comparative advantages in some specific sectors (tourism, rural economies).

The CBC programmes have devoted a lot of attention to the tourism sector through a number of very diverse interventions, including increased transport facilities, new cycle paths, the valorisation of natural and cultural heritage, the establishment of a green ecotourism route, etc.

Few programmes have included indicators linked to this sector. But in some cases there are indications that the activity related to tourism is intensifying and may contribute to the attractiveness of the areas (even if it is difficult to attribute such effects to the CBC), for example:

- The Italy-France Alps OP (6) has contributed to enhancing the area's attractiveness through the diversification of tourism and improvements in service provision in the alpine and rural areas.
- Tourism has been one of the main focuses of the Germany/Bayern-Austria (9) OP with visible effects on the local economy and employment (overnight visitors increased by 6% in 2012 and 11% in 2013).
- In the Spain-France OP (16), a green ecotourism route between Navarra and the Atlantic Pyrenees has been established, along with other tourism routes.

Cross-border cooperation related to tourism has been nevertheless limited by the competition existing between regions to attract more people.

The programmes' success in increasing access to cross-border markets and developing cross-border trade has remained limited

A few programmes have mentioned increased cross border trade and access to markets as a significant achievement of their programme. The result of CBC in terms of market integration was rather limited.

"Enlarging the home market of companies, i.e. the opening of new markets in one country to companies in the other countries in the programme area thanks to the delivery innovative products" was singled out by most of the interviewees as a main benefit of the North CBC programme (14).

5.2.1.3 Outputs in the field of environment

The CBC Programmes have produced a wide range of outputs in the field of environment and climate change, as reflected both by the number of projects⁷⁵ and by the budget. 80% of the ERDF budget allocated to the Environment (EUR 1023 million; 19% of the overall ERDF budget dedicated to the 67 programmes within the scope of the study was distributed across 10 environmental sub-themes.

The five most important themes- accounting together for 54% of the budget- were: (i) Sustainable management of natural resources (15%); Water management (10%);

⁷⁵ According to Keep.eu database, there are 1278 projects in Environment and Climate change for all 53 CBC programmes (data from March 2016).

Risk management (10%); Climate change and biodiversity (10%) and Renewable energy (9%).⁷⁶

One can distinguish between “hard” and “soft” outputs: (i) “hard” outputs included, for example, the use of joint equipment for the management of shared natural areas, while (ii) “soft” outputs included “lightweight actions” such as exchanges of experience and transfer of policy knowledge and approaches.

Typical outputs related to the **sustainable management of natural resources** (including Natura 2000) were of a “soft” character:

- Joint knowledge (analysis, research and best practice sharing), protocols, operational tools, procedures and strategies:
 - The 2 Seas programme (17) for instance provided the CBC area with functional tools for integrated management of coastal zones;
 - Most environment related projects in the France-Channel-England (18) programme focused on research activities implemented by Universities and specialised institutes that collaborated in the programme;
- Specialised equipment for data collection & monitoring, such as in the France-Channel-England (18) programme that purchased equipment for the observation of the seabed (cameras, sonars), with a view to monitor the evolution of invasive species.

In the field of **water management**, typical outputs were both “hard” (infrastructure) and “soft”:

- Treatment of waste water, largely through the upgrading and modernisation of infrastructure with the aim of contributing to better water quality and meeting the requirements of the Water Quality Directive (e.g. Italy – Austria (22); Saxony – Czech Republic (40)).
- Integrated basin management (in sea or river basins), articulated by a holistic / eco-systemic approach (e.g. Germany-The Netherlands (2); Upper Rhine (15); Grande Région (19); 2 Seas (17), France-Channel-England (18), Greece-Cyprus (53)).

Risk prevention and management, aimed at increasing resilience, focused on preparedness, early prevention and management of risks. Outputs were typically the establishment of common management and monitoring structures and the building of capacity for the involved personnel (notably in the following programmes: Romania-Bulgaria (41), 2 Seas (17), Latvia-Lithuania (38) and Spain-Portugal (1)).

Projects dealing with **climate change** and **energy efficiency** questions were of smaller budgetary size, with more of a pilot character and concentrated on research activities or on raising awareness among institutional and professional stakeholders or citizens.

Overall, conditions for more integrated management and protection of the environment were improved in several CBC areas. There are indications of

⁷⁶ Source: Keep.eu

improved status of environmental components, e.g. in the specific field of water quality and, in some extent, for biodiversity. On the contrary, cross-border added value of some intervention themes (such as waste management and energy efficiency) was not clear. Many initiatives have been targeted towards the improvement of the necessary conditions for the environmental enhancement and protection at cross-border level. But their contribution in improving the shared governance of the environment has faced important legal and administrative barriers, as well as a low level of regional/national commitment and ownership.

Programmes contributed to improving the **integrated environmental management, prevention and pollution control**, through several means:

- **By producing shared academic and policy oriented knowledge on common environmental related issues.** Several programmes made sure that environmental issues that were addressed separately by different national authorities were now tackled jointly. The France-Channel-England (18) case study describes how the programme facilitated a better understanding of the complexity of specific environmental problems (through research studies, mutualisation of data, etc.). Furthermore, comparative analysis of legal and administrative national or regional frameworks (e.g. dragging, natural area protection, etc.), including the state of play in the field of environmental protection, have clarified the policy context which was of particular importance for the success of the shared management.
- **By establishing shared facilities for joint pollution prevention and control.** Common tools concerned water resources and areas management, improving the monitoring of sea basins (Botnia Atlantica (13), France-Channel-England (18), 2 Seas (17), Italy-France Maritime (21)) or river basins (Romania-Bulgaria, Hungary-Slovakia), as well as of their protected marine areas (Italy-Malta (35), France-Channel-England (18)) or specific infrastructures (e.g. ports in Greece-Italy (25)).

The programmes also took initiatives to prevent the pollution of water resources. This concerned several cooperation areas involving both MS12 and MS15 and contributed to the improvement of water supply and wastewater treatment networks. Such improvements were mentioned for several programmes, such as in Poland-Slovakia, where an extended water supply network and wastewater treatment was installed (Poland-Slovakia (39)) or in the South-Baltic (50) programme, where a river basin was managed through the involvement of local stakeholders.

Other specific contributions were made in the field of air quality (e.g. management of CO₂ neutral solutions with pilot character Flanders-The Netherlands (20)) and soil and land management (e.g. through elimination of pollution sources and objects, Lithuania – Poland (51)).

There are examples of programmes having **enhanced the capacity of local stakeholders** to cope with environmental challenges:

- Bayern-Czech Republic (33) launched the cooperation between administrations in charge of the national parks along the border;
- Municipalities were involved in a coordinated joint protection and management of the environment assets, e.g. in Slovakia-Austria (34), Italia-Slovenia (47), and Slovenia-Hungary (52) programmes.

Several programmes contributed to the **shared governance of natural resources**. They did this by:

- Designing common methodologies and guidance, so as to favour converging approaches to deal with water resources issues, such as the:
 - Adoption of common methodologies and guidance for port monitoring (Greece-Italy (25)).
 - Establishment of shared protocols and equipment for seabed monitoring in the Channel area (France-Channel-England (18)).
 - Design of common territorial and water management models (Italy-Switzerland (26)).

- Creating joint frameworks and approaches, giving rise to joint guiding documents (plans, strategies, frameworks) targeted to specific environmental resources:
 - Especially in the field of joint water management, fostering the harmonisation of policies and activities for achieving better quality of the water (Grande Région (19), Upper Rhine (15), Italy-Austria (22), Latvia - Lithuania (38); North (14).
 - Also in the field of biodiversity or towards the protection of specific species (Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3) ; Germany-The Netherlands (2), France-Channel-England (18); Ireland-Wales (24)).

CBC interventions have also led to the definition of general approaches and frameworks for the environmental management, in mountainous areas (e.g. Italy-France Alps (6)) as well as in coastal zones (e.g. strategic planning for coastal integrated management, 2 Seas (17)).

Renewable energy and energy efficiency were promoted, but mainly through pilot initiatives with limited cross-border added value.

Initiatives in the field of sustainable energy and energy efficiency had more a pilot character with awareness raising dimensions (users oriented approach in Germany-Netherlands; regional resilience perspective for Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N. (10); municipalities equipped with solar panels in Italy-Switzerland (26); biofuel production in Sweden-Norway (11); Botnia Atlantica (13) and Hungary-Slovakia (44)).

The prevention and readiness to respond to environment related or technological risks were improved by:

- Developing capacity in terms of infrastructure, equipment and training. There are several examples of CBC contributing to the improvement of specialised civil and environment protection services preventing or preparing for dealing with natural, technological and social caused emergencies. These services with general scope (Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak (5), Bayern-Czech Republic (33), Latvia - Lithuania (38) and Lithuania - Poland (51)), linked specifically to the flood prevention (Germany-The Netherlands (2), Italy-Switzerland (26); Hungary-Romania (43) or to the forest protection (Italy-France Alps (6)) were upgraded and modernised.
- Establishing joint procedures or funding mechanisms. CBC cooperation contributed to the harmonisation of activities in the field of flood prevention and protection at river basin level (Hungary-Slovakia (44), Austria -Czech Republic (30). On the other hand, an important contribution to maritime incidence and risk management was made in a context of important transport traffic (e.g. marine brigades' integration 2 Seas (17); Italy-Malta (35). Civil protection services were

mutualised through common Civil protection plans (Italy-Switzerland (26), Latvia - Lithuania (38)) or joint funding mechanisms for risk prevention (Italy-France Alps (6)).

Awareness of environmental related issues was raised as a specific or crosscutting aspect of several Interreg interventions.

Several CBC activities contributed to raise awareness for environmental protection and nature-friendly behaviours through conferences, workshops, education campaigns (e.g. Spain-Portugal (1); Italy-France Maritime (21); Saxony-Czech Republic (40), Lithuania – Poland (51), France-Channel-England (18), Romania-Bulgaria (41)), which were taken as an objective of funded projects or as transversal dimension of research related activities. This awareness raising has a positive effect whether the environment as a whole or one of its components became a support for common identification (regional identity, e.g. France-Channel-England (18)).

5.2.1.4 Outputs in the field of capacity building

Most of the CBC projects dedicated to capacity building were carried out under code 81 « Strengthening institutional capacity at national, regional and local levels : mechanisms for improving good policy and programme design, monitoring and evaluation at national, regional and local levels, capacity-building in the delivery of policies and programmes ».

Three main types of outputs have been produced:

- enhanced capacities to undertake cross border cooperation activities and to participate in CBC programmes.
- tools to strengthen policy/programme management on both sides of the border;
- The development of joint planning, joint strategies, and effective joint management in various sectors.

The capacity building for CBC has been mainly developed through the creation or extension of partnerships across borders, by providing information and methodological tools on CBC programmes, and by reinforcing cross-border structures such as Euregios and EGTC with a mission to stimulate projects. The main activities carried out were the exchange of information on cross border opportunities and obstacles, awareness raising on CBC challenges, development of networks and platforms, and a number of other outputs, such as databases, trainings/e-learning on project preparation, methodological guides, etc.

The second type of outputs (joint tools) has been mainly developed in relation to policy/programme management in sectors where cooperation was under development and justified by common interests. This has been notably the case in the field of nature and biodiversity protection. An examples is the Slovakia-Hungary CBC programme, where a number of cooperation projects have been initiated in the field of river and groundwater protection as well as in flood prevention.

The next step in terms of capacity building is the development of joint planning, joint strategies, joint development plans, and joint services. Joint planning and management capacities have been enhanced at local levels, notably at municipal levels, which has permitted to municipalities to deliver joint services such as fire rescue or public security services.

5.2.1.4 Outputs related to infrastructure and the facilitation of access to public services

Outputs were a **mix of hard infrastructures** (mainly roads, bridges and cycle paths with a cross-border dimension) **and of tools and systems developed to facilitate transport and mobility across the borders.**

Among the **hard infrastructures**, the following are worthy of mention:

- Missing links in transportation infrastructure, e.g. cross-border railway networks interrupted at the border (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Brandenburg-Poland (29),);
- New road connections across borders (many new borders programmes)
- Navigation and port infrastructures (Spain-Portugal (1), 2 Seas (17), Italy-France Maritime (21), South Baltic (50)), investment in harbours (Botnia Atlantica (13)).
- New cycle or pedestrian paths across borders (many programmes)
- The Peace Bridge (PEACE III (4), symbolic bridges between separated communities (Czech Republic-Slovakia (32),); several bridges over border rivers (Hungary-Slovakia)

Several initiatives have led to the **development of systems or services** in order to facilitate accessibility, such as joint systems and common tickets for cross-border public transport (Saxony-Poland (46)); Cross-border car sharing systems (France-Switzerland (27)); Services for cross-border workers (South Denmark-Schleswig-KERN (10),); Cross-border student placements (Netherlands-Germany (2), Upper Rhine (15), South Baltic (50), Poland-Lithuania (51));etc.

Travel time reduction, augmentation of peripheral territories accessibility and improvement of the security, have been observed. But there are little indications of any influence on trade (goods and services markets).

There are few indications that interventions on port and harbours infrastructure have led to the increase of trade relations. Isolated examples are Italy France Maritime (21) and South Baltic (50), the latter contributed to improve oversize freight across the cooperation zone.

5.2.1.5 Outputs in healthcare and education

CBC programmes produced significant outputs in healthcare and education; projects on employment and job mobility were more difficult to implement than initially expected in the programmes.

Interreg contributed in fostering cooperation between healthcare related organisations, but there are few examples of programmes that facilitated direct access to health services for citizens.

Outputs in the field of **health** concerned mainly organisational issues and knowledge production such as the exchange of data and the creation of joint medical records (MV/BB -Poland (29); Italy-Slovenia (47); the transfer of good practice (2 Seas (17), Slovenia-Hungary (52)), elaboration of integrated guiding policies on public health related issues (e.g. diabetes, drug prevention, Grande Région (19)); capacity building (Lithuania-Poland (51), shared facilities for joint management of emergencies (ambulance services KERN (10), Austria-Czech Republic (30), Estonia- Latvia (37). This also concerned common research activities, notably through the collaboration

between hospitals and specialized institutes (Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak (5); on cancer related questions (Fehmarnbeltregion (23)) or through the establishment of a joint research centre (Italy-Austria (22)). Some outputs were very tangible. As interventions in the health sector mainly had an organisational character or a knowledge production perspective, they did not contribute much in terms of the direct access to health services (few examples of achievements in this field are for instance Botnia-Atlantica (13), Nord (14), Spain-France (16), Hungary-Romania (43)).

Interventions in the **field of higher education** cooperation contributed to enlarge the access of students to higher education in territories which are distant from the main academic and economic centres. There were clear examples in terms of the creation of joint institutes or specialised schools, such as the Euro-institute for transboundary studies of Catalonia (Spain-France (16)); a film production school and network (Fehmarnbeltregion (23); and the Multidisciplinary school of Management and commerce (Amazonia (28)). Also the establishment of common study courses was an output in several cases (e.g. in high-tech domains for the programme France, Wallonia, Flanders (F7); or in the automotive field, in Slovakia-Austria (34)).

Programmes that targeted the improvement of the **labour market** and job mobility have generally not yielded the expected results:

- Many of them did not reach their targets in terms of number of projects (e.g. Germany-The Netherlands (2); Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak (5); Deutschland/Bayern - Austria (9); KERN (10); Grande Région (19); Fehmarnbeltregion (23); Estonia- Latvia (37); Lithuania - Poland (51). There are some exceptions such as in Flanders-Netherlands (20); and Italy - Switzerland (26))
- Several projects organised one-off activities with little impact in terms of development of joint services (notably seminars, workshops and information campaigns)

Overall, programmes did not mobilise the financial resources they had allocated for employment and related sub-themes: the ERDF budget allocated to employment in 2014 was only the half of what had been agreed in the 2008 ERDF budget. The main reasons are:

- The existence of important legal and administrative barriers impeding integration of the employment markets
- The political sensitivity of the topic at regional and national levels, limiting effective cooperation

5.2.1.6 Contribution to the institutional organisation of the region

As already mentioned, a striking result is that 80% of the programmes have significantly contributed to the creation or the rise of a regional identity. Regional identity⁷⁷ may be explained and developed through various dimensions (cultural, historical, institutional, and political).

⁷⁷ As explained below, this should be understood as understood as the increased acknowledgment by stakeholders in a certain area of the value of cooperating across borders and of an improved social capital.

One of these has been more directly addressed by the CBC programmes: the **enhancement of institutional linkages and the development of joint management approaches to tackle common challenges**. This was partly the result of the capacity building component of the programmes.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the consolidation and extension of institutional linkages has contributed to:

- A much **greater understanding and knowledge of the governance structures on either side of the border**
- An **increased administrative capacity and collaboration amongst stakeholders from either side of the border**, particularly in dealing with common issues such as those related to managing the environment or to delivering public services on either side of the border. Planning and management capacities were also enhanced at local levels (notably in small or medium size municipalities such as in the Hungary/Slovakia OP)
- In several cases, the institutional organisation at cross-border level has been **consolidated through the establishment of or by supporting cross-border institutions**

There are examples of an emerging and/or consolidating process of CBC institutionalisation, through:

- The **enlargement of the multi-level governance** by involving local stakeholders in the management of the CBC area:
 - Fehmarnbelt committee of 24 municipalities representing their common interests (Fehmarnbelt-region, (23)); involvement of 126 municipalities towards better governance resulting in common management of wide CBC areas (Slovakia-Austria, (34)); increased funding for municipalities (Slovak Republic-Czech Republic, (32)).
- The **enhancement of the "social capital"** (more working contacts in Estonia – Latvia (37)) and capacity of local stakeholders to compete for financing from mainstream programmes (Latvia – Lithuania (38)).
- The establishment of pilot initiatives for **direct institutional cooperation** through "Interreg Councils" (Italy-Austria, (22)).
- The **reinforcement of the CBC sector specific or integrated governance systems** (tourism, mobility, economic and academic (Austria – Hungary (31), Germany-The Netherlands, (2)) and maritime governance system (Channel Arc Manche Integrated strategy (France-Channel-UK (18)).
- The greater **involvement** of local stakeholders **in the management of the Interreg programme** as members of its monitoring committee (Ireland – Wales, (24)).

5.2.2 Overall results achieved through the CBC programmes

Overall, the **results** achieved through the CBC programmes were:

- (i) Very diverse, contributing to the enhancement of factors of growth, which may have improved enterprises competitiveness, improved tools for better protection of the environment and prevention of risk, as well as to facilitating access to markets and public services; *but*

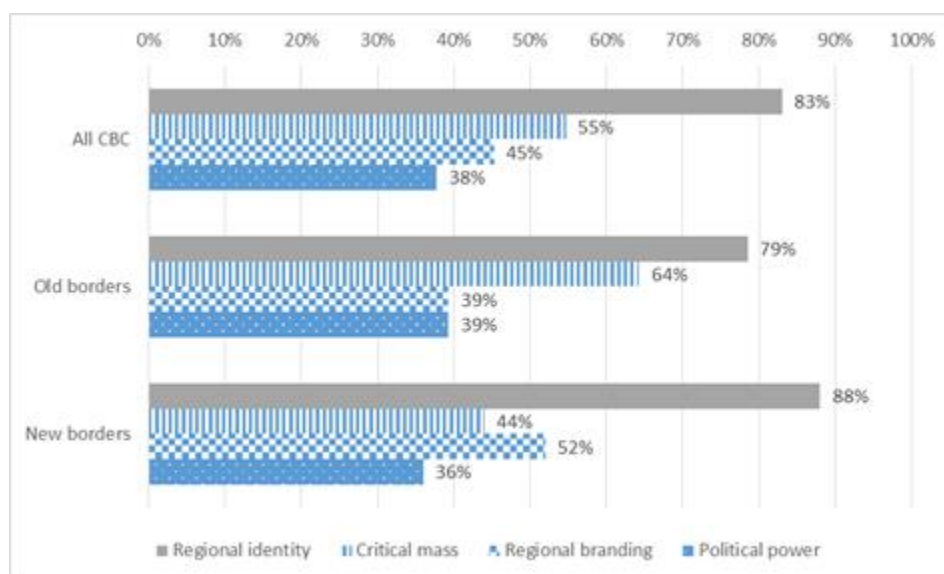
- (ii) Fragmented within the area covered as well as at overall EU level, with no clear contribution to significantly higher economic and social integration of the areas.

Results were not measurable on an aggregate basis as indicators did not permit a quantitative assessment of the main effects of the CBC outputs. The analysis is therefore based primarily on a qualitative approach and findings of task 1 (an overview of the 53 Programmes) and task 2 (9 case studies covering the fields of innovation, environment and capacity building) (see chapter 3).

The main result achieved is the creation or consolidation of a regional identity. This should be understood as the increased acknowledgment by stakeholders in a certain area of the value of cooperating across borders and of an improved social capital (including knowledge of the partners on the other side of the border and a better understanding of the potential for cooperation):

- This finding stems from our team's analysis of the results across the 53 CBC programmes, which shows that this is the main result in 83% of cases (see figure 5.4 below);
- It is also confirmed by the case studies: most MAs and stakeholders met during interviews emphasized this as the primary goal of the programme, beyond achievements of a more concrete nature (such as an increased rate of SME innovation or a decrease in water pollution).

Figure 5. 8 Transversal results of CBC programmes (by types of OP)



Source: Task 1 expert analyses. The figure shows the share of programmes where a specific result is present to a significant degree

As shown by the same figure, other key results were the gathering of **critical mass**⁷⁸, **regional branding**⁷⁹ and to a lesser extent **political power**. The critical mass effect

⁷⁸ "Critical mass" should be understood here by the capacity of the programme to generate sufficient activity to trigger effects that were not only punctual or local. The critical mass effect has in this sense been examined by asking the following question to the experts: "Has

seems stronger in the EU 12 MS (old borders) which have a longer history of cooperation and have already put in place , from previous cooperation periods, pre-conditions of a tangible and intangible nature (such as infrastructure and communication links, mutual trust and knowledge).

New borders programmes achieved more in terms of regional branding, as they have put a particular emphasis on tangible/visible outputs, promoting the attractiveness of the cooperation area.

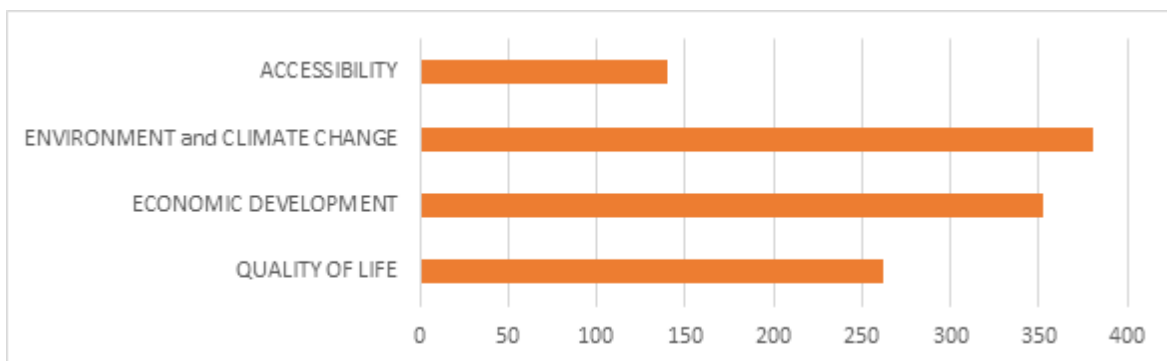
5.2.3 Main outputs and results of TNC programmes

The transnational co-operation (TNC) programmes aimed at strengthening transnational cooperation through actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to EU priorities. A core element in relation to the results of all TNC programmes was therefore the contribution to capacity-building, sharing of best practices, knowledge transfer and creation of networks in key sectors.

Assessment of the outputs and results of the TNC programmes has often been difficult owing to the lack of well-defined priority interventions and to the lack of robustness of indicators and monitoring systems.

Compared to CBC programmes, the TNC programmes were much smaller in terms of budget allocated and in terms of number of projects implemented. 1134 projects were funded through TNC programmes of which the main part in the field of environment and climate change. Economic development and accessibility were also addressed through many different projects even if for the latest which was one of the main priorities, the number of transnational initiatives was much smaller (140 projects under the 13 TNC programmes).

Figure 5. 9 Number of projects in TNC programmes

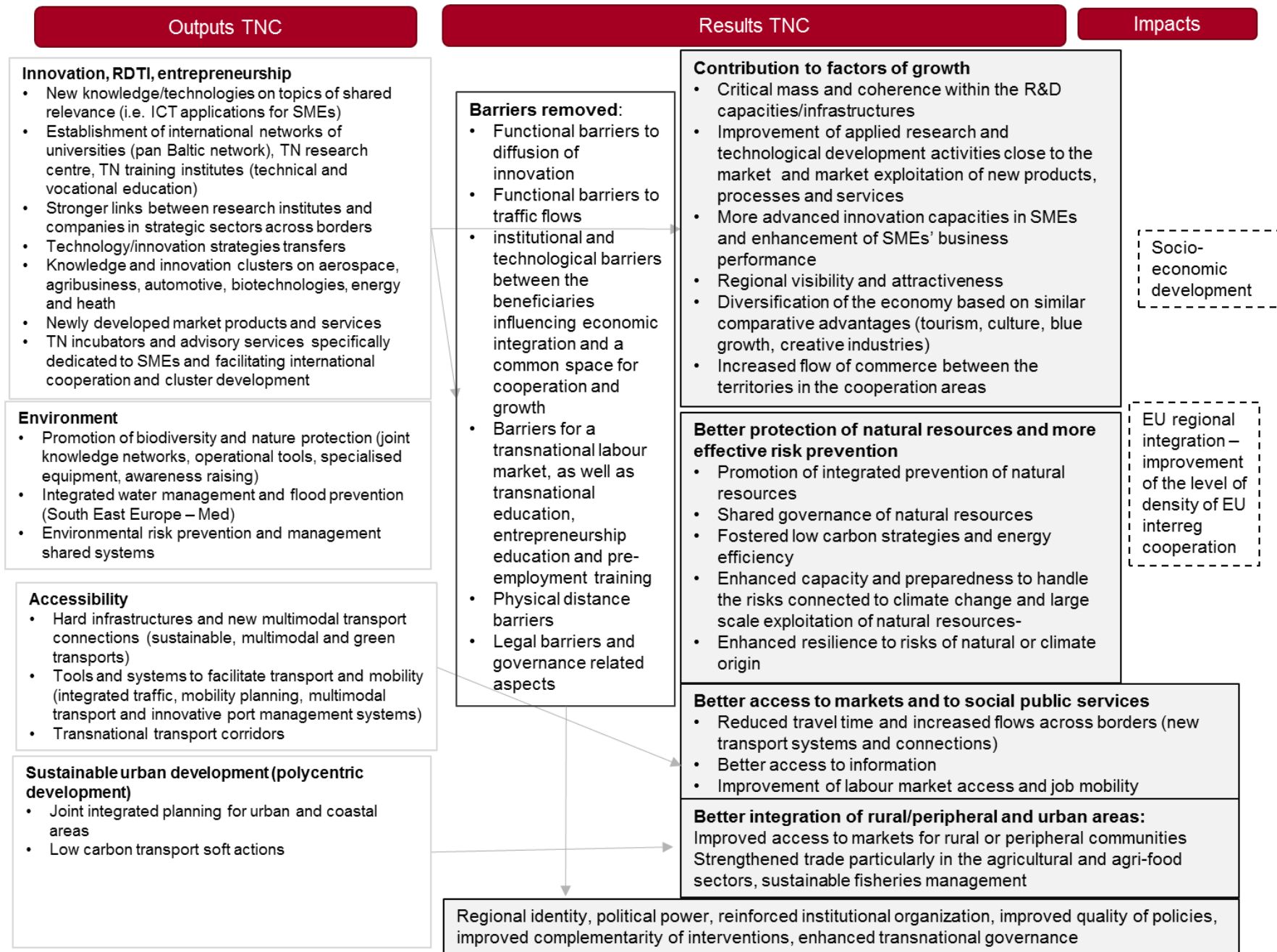


Source: KEEP database

the programme been able to generate critical mass to activities to create larger labour market or access to wider business and knowledge networks?"

⁷⁹ "Regional identity": the programme has increased internal recognition of the area for greater integration and social capital (including knowledge of the partners on the other side of the border); "Regional branding": programme has increased the attractiveness and recognition of the area to firms and skilled labour both within the cross-border area and beyond.

Renewable energy, coastal management and water management were the three most frequent issues addressed through TNC projects in the environmental field. In the area of economic development, transnational cooperation projects were primarily oriented towards clustering and economic cooperation, similarly to CBC projects.



5.2.3.1 Outputs of TNC programmes

Outputs were produced in many different sectors and sub-sectors with a clear cross-border or transnational dimension mainly addressing common concerns.

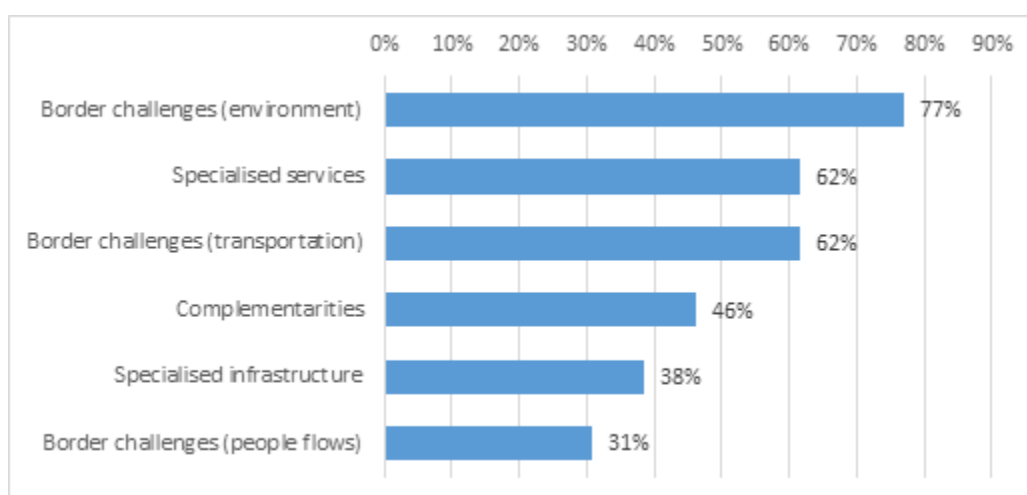
Outputs were numerous and quite difficult to present in an aggregate manner. As shown in the previous figure, they were of different types and covered the main four areas where transnationality was promoted, with a **strong focus on innovation and R&D, and on environmental protection and management.**

TNC programmes have generally produced specific outputs aiming at increasing dialogue, improving access to markets and to scientific knowledge and technology transfer.

Outputs delivered had a clear transnational dimension and provided tools, services and infrastructures in order to:

- Reinforce the management of common assets/resources;
- Facilitate people and goods mobility and access to markets;
- Better exploit externalities and economies of scale and scope (especially in the field of R&D/innovation).

Figure 5. 10 Experts' assessment of outputs of TNC programmes



Source: ADE; Task 1 analysis. Share of the programme where the output is present to a significant degree.

An analysis of the main outputs by main types and fields of intervention shows that:

- **Outputs produced were not so different from those produced by CBC programmes except that they were implemented on a larger scale.**
- Most of the outputs **related to common concerns and addressed border challenges through soft cooperation** (developing partnerships, collaborative projects, joint research, exchanges of experience).
- Several tackled the theme of **accessibility**, providing more grounds for real transnational outputs related to spatial development planning, an example being the corridor development around major transport infrastructures axes (see Central Europe (65)).

In the different sectors, it appeared that the most popular outputs of TNC programmes were (i) the setting-up or reinforcement of networks or partnerships linking SMEs and research or technological centres at transnational level in a wide

range of sectors; and (ii) the implementation of joint or articulated management of natural resources and environmental protection.

Main outputs in innovation, RDTI, entrepreneurship

- New knowledge/technologies on topics of shared relevance (i.e. ICT applications for SMEs)
- Establishment of international networks of universities (pan Baltic network), TN research centre, TN training institutes (technical and vocational education)
- Stronger links between research institutes and companies in strategic sectors across borders
- Technology/innovation strategies transfers
- Knowledge and innovation clusters on aerospace, agribusiness, automotive, biotechnologies, energy and health
- Newly developed market products and services
- TN incubators and advisory services specifically dedicated to SMEs and facilitating international cooperation and cluster development

Innovation has been an increasingly important aspect of the TNC cooperation. One of the most significant outputs having enhanced competitiveness was the creation of clusters. They have interconnected companies and institutions such as research institutes, business associations as well as local authorities, and allowed the development of common strategies, and the sharing of technologies and skills. Cluster projects have been developed to respond to a very wide range of regional challenges and opportunities.

Outputs in RDTI and entrepreneurship had a strong business orientation, as they concentrated on fostering innovativeness of SMEs, and on the development of new technologies in domains relevant for the cross-border area.

Main outputs in environment

- Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (joint knowledge networks, operational tools, specialised equipment, awareness raising)
- Integrated water management and flood prevention (South East Europe – Med)
- Environmental risk prevention and management shared systems

Implementing joint or articulated management of natural resources and environmental protection has been one of the main fields of intervention leading to the development of new management tools; specialised infrastructure (in the field of risk prevention); sharing of knowledge and practices; and research programmes exploring common challenges related to air, soil and water. Few outputs have been produced to develop and manage environmental solutions and policies, whether for the zone as a whole, at an intermediate level between the regional and national levels, or at EU level. Outputs in terms of environmental protection have covered both intangible dimensions such as new approaches and tools contributing to improved capacity, and more tangible ones in the form of joint investments for environment protection.

Main outputs related to transport and accessibility

- Hard infrastructures and new multimodal transport connections (sustainable, multimodal and green transports)
- Tools and systems to facilitate transport and mobility (integrated traffic, mobility planning, multimodal transport and innovative port management systems)
- Transnational transport corridors
- Low carbon transport soft actions

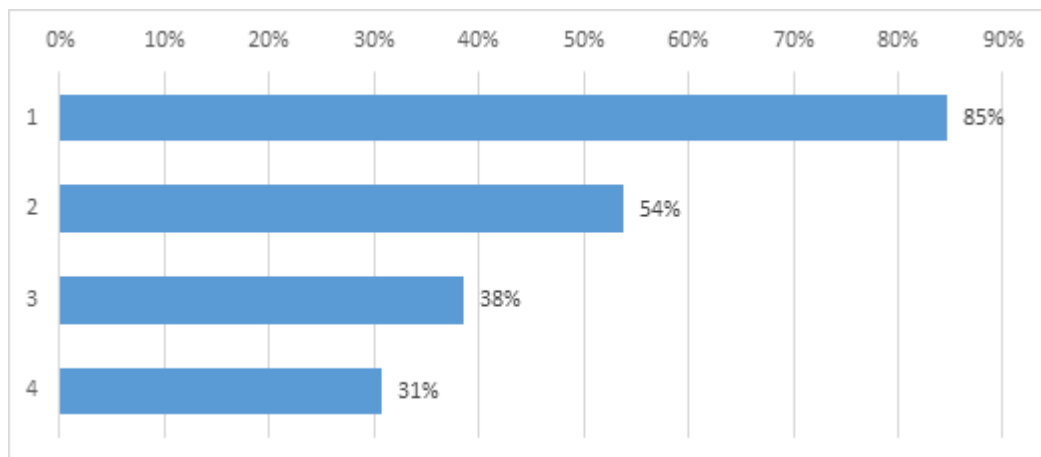
Main outputs in capacity building

The majority of the TNC programs have developed common approaches and mechanisms supporting an EU-wide governance such as: joint transnational, macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, knowledge exchange networks supporting decision-makers and practitioners etc.

5.2.3.2 Main results of TNC

As illustrated in Figure 5.6, the analysis of all TNC programmes and case studies has revealed that reaching critical mass was one of the most important results achieved (85%). The transnational programmes focused mainly on encouraging transnational cooperation amongst local, regional and national partners via the creation, among other things, of networks, platforms, joint studies, and joint management systems that tackled common challenges in the cooperation zone and fostered integration.

Figure 5. 11 Experts' assessment of general results for Transnational programmes



The priority area in which critical mass was developed was broadly in line with that fixed at the beginning of the period (see section 4).

The economies of scale and scope were particularly clear in the field of R&D. Results in RDTI and entrepreneurship had a strong business orientation, as they concentrated on fostering innovativeness of SMEs as well as developing new technologies in domains of relevance to the transnational areas. The main results related to building critical mass in knowledge-based resources of various types: joint applied research, business advisory services capitalizing the resources of research, trainings, and new partnerships over the cooperation areas. More sustainable results consisted in the partnership established and pooling of resources through TNC projects.

In the field of **environment**, improved risk prevention (flood risks for example) and better protection and exploitation of maritime resources have been clearly observed (examples in the Baltic Sea Region or North Sea Programme). They were mainly due to the reinforcement of institutional capacities at transnational level. The multi-level governance in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea programme is a good example of how a TNC project has contributed to the creation of a common potential in the cooperation area, enhancing a participative transnational model of governance in the field of maritime spatial planning.

Transnational programmes (like many cross-border programmes) have generated significant outputs in relation to the development of joint strategies and solutions towards shared environmental problems, typically related to shared sea basins (Baltic Sea, Mediterranean sea, Atlantic sea) but also around the production of renewable energy or the management of natural areas such as mountainous spaces (i.e. Alpine Space). Joint strategies refer to the adoption of aligned approaches or policies deployed in the field of environment protection; joint solutions relate to concrete tools, such as common databases or monitoring systems, shared intervention devices such as sea vessels, and others.

Reduced travel time and increased flows across borders (new transport systems and connections), as well as better access to information, have also been achieved (example of the North West Region). As regards **transport and inter-modality**, the TNC programmes have certainly improved internal and external accessibility focusing on handling imbalances in transport to reduce barriers to the transportation of goods and passengers. Results related to the topic of inter-modality consisted in:

- Improvement of the interoperability between different transport and ICT networks;
- Integration of peripheral territories with difficult or low accessibility (*Northern Periphery, Madeira-Azores-Canary*);
- Influencing policies and regulation through a transnational participative approach;
- Increasing green and sustainable transport modes.

For TNC, institutional capacities and the structure of transnational governance were critical for ensuring that issues identified in programmes had a clear transnational component and were capable of achieving the expected results in terms of improved quality of policies regarding the identified challenges.

In that context the diversity of the cooperation zone can be an impediment to creating a macro-regional strategy and related structures. This was the case in the Atlantic Area which is territorially, politically, socio-economically and culturally diverse. Whilst cooperation in this area has a long-standing history, the development of a new basin strategy is an emerging issue presenting a certain political complexity. Conversely, the Baltic Sea Region OP has delivered interesting results in terms of institutional cooperation through contributing to implementation of the EUSBSR as a result of the engagement of stakeholders in the region, creation of a platform for long-term actions and provision of analysis and evidence for use in policy-making. The cooperation implemented between the BSR programme and the EUSBSR coordinators has furtherly enhanced the added value of the programme for the overall region.

5.2.4 Interreg IV C

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.

The assessment of the effectiveness of those two initiatives shows that dissemination and learning have taken place, notably for “Capitalisation projects”. Learning in the case of “Regional Initiative projects” has mainly occurred at an individual level, while group learning, which is of particular importance for the exchange of practices and for leading to policy action, has been 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.

Capitalisation projects have shown better results in terms of learning and transfers. 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 in leading on to concrete policy action, 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 address those difficulties, 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.

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 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.

5.2.5 Wider effects of Interreg

Cooperation is a major product of the CBC and the TNC programmes implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period. There is limited evidence on the depth of cross-border cooperation actually achieved through programme implementation but case studies point towards improvements in the culture and quality of cooperation. For many programmes, a striking fact was the surprisingly high degree of cooperation reached as measured via the four cooperation criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing. In at least ten programmes⁸⁰ more than 75% of the projects met all four criteria, which was more than the expectations.

Indicators computed by the programmes have revealed a high number of initiatives undertaken to set up networks, joint programmes, joint research, joint management systems, and cooperation activities (see tables 5.3 and 5.4). Case study reports also highlight significant achievements regarding cooperation enhancement:

- An enquiry into project beneficiaries carried out for the mid-term evaluation of the Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3) states that “the cross-border element of the programme was described as being a key benefit of the programme as it developed networking opportunities for organisations north and south of the border”.
- Interviews carried out during the 2012 external evaluation of the North Programme (Kontigo 2012), revealed that “an (intangible) result of the programme has continued to bring together the northern regions, and further accentuates cross-border cooperation. The programme helps to create connections between actors working in isolation but sharing similar needs and possessing complementary expertise to develop joint solutions”⁸¹.
- The Germany-The Netherlands (2) programme case study emphasised the importance given to more cooperation: “the programme philosophy of joint activities across the border was clearly communicated by the programme management and perceived as a core aspect of the conducted projects”.

⁸⁰ Italy – Malta (35), Ireland –Wales (24), Austria-Hungary (31), Slovakia-Austria (34), Hungary-Slovakia (44), Italy-Slovenia (47), Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein (12), Italy-Austria (22), Romania-Bulgaria (41) and Lithuania-Poland (51).

⁸¹ Case study report, North Programme

In new OPs, the statement was also positive and focused on the conclusion that enhancing cooperation was a first step towards developing joint solutions or joint management:

- The Romania-Bulgaria Case Study report points out that “in a number of instances, project participants indicated that there was either very little or no history of co-operation between stakeholders in their regions and that the programme acted as a catalyst to facilitate co-operation through project activity (...). Although difficult to precisely calibrate the extent to which cooperation has been enhanced in all project cases, it seems clear that, for a great many of these projects, that has happened to a significant degree as indicated by joint project outputs and associated processes”⁸².
- According to the Managing Authority of the Saxony-Czech Republic OP, the most important achievements of the programme are of a cultural or even psychological nature. Indeed the programme contributed strongly to bringing people from both sides of the border some steps closer: “The border is simply much more open than before”.

But it remains difficult to assess if the cooperation developed was satisfactory as expectations were not clearly formulated at the start in the Programmes: Which types of cooperation should be looked for? Which kind of actors should be targeted first? At what level? In a more informal or formal way?

Capacity building has played an important role in the development of current but also future cooperation. CBC programmes have invested strongly in capacity building. The expectation was that capacities would develop over time in the context of CBC from getting to know one another, to developing joint projects, building long term networks and, at a higher level of cooperation, managing common resources and challenges together.

In “new” borders Programmes, the programmes focused on building “early stage” capacities:

- Of cross-border structures to initiate and manage projects at regional or cross-border levels (e.g. EUREGIOS or EGTC)
- Of public and private institutions to initiate cross-border projects, to participate in cross-border EU programmes and implement CBC projects
- To create new partnerships and to extend the range of participants in projects

The case of the Hungary-Slovakia OP (44) provided a good illustration of the impacts on cooperation of capacity building undertaken under the CBC programme:

- The quality of the projects submitted in the CBC programme has significantly improved during the implementation period, especially in the second half of the programme: projects are more strategic and more relevant, addressing better the cross border challenges and cooperation opportunities.
- The CBC projects partners are better organized; the budget planning is more adequate and more structured.

⁸² Case study report Romania-Bulgaria OP

- Stronger strategic approach for cross border cooperation has been developed mainly at local levels.
- New partnerships have come to existence, which have generated projects during the 2007-2013 period and will generate several cross border projects in the future.
- Durable formal and informal networks have been set up at local level, some with thematic grounds, offering opportunities for cooperation outside the CBC programme.
- Planning and management capacities have been enhanced at local levels, notably at municipal levels.

As recalled in section 4, territorial cooperation was mainly seen as a mean to relieve constraints/ obstacles due to national boundaries (the "barrier effects") which were perceived as restricting the potential of the European Territory as a whole, for full competitiveness. CBC aimed to integrate areas divided by national borders that face common problems requiring common solutions while TNC was more oriented on integration of regions at a more macro level and on matters of high importance.

In the next sections, the contribution of CBC and TNC to the initial objectives of the ETC policy is assessed.

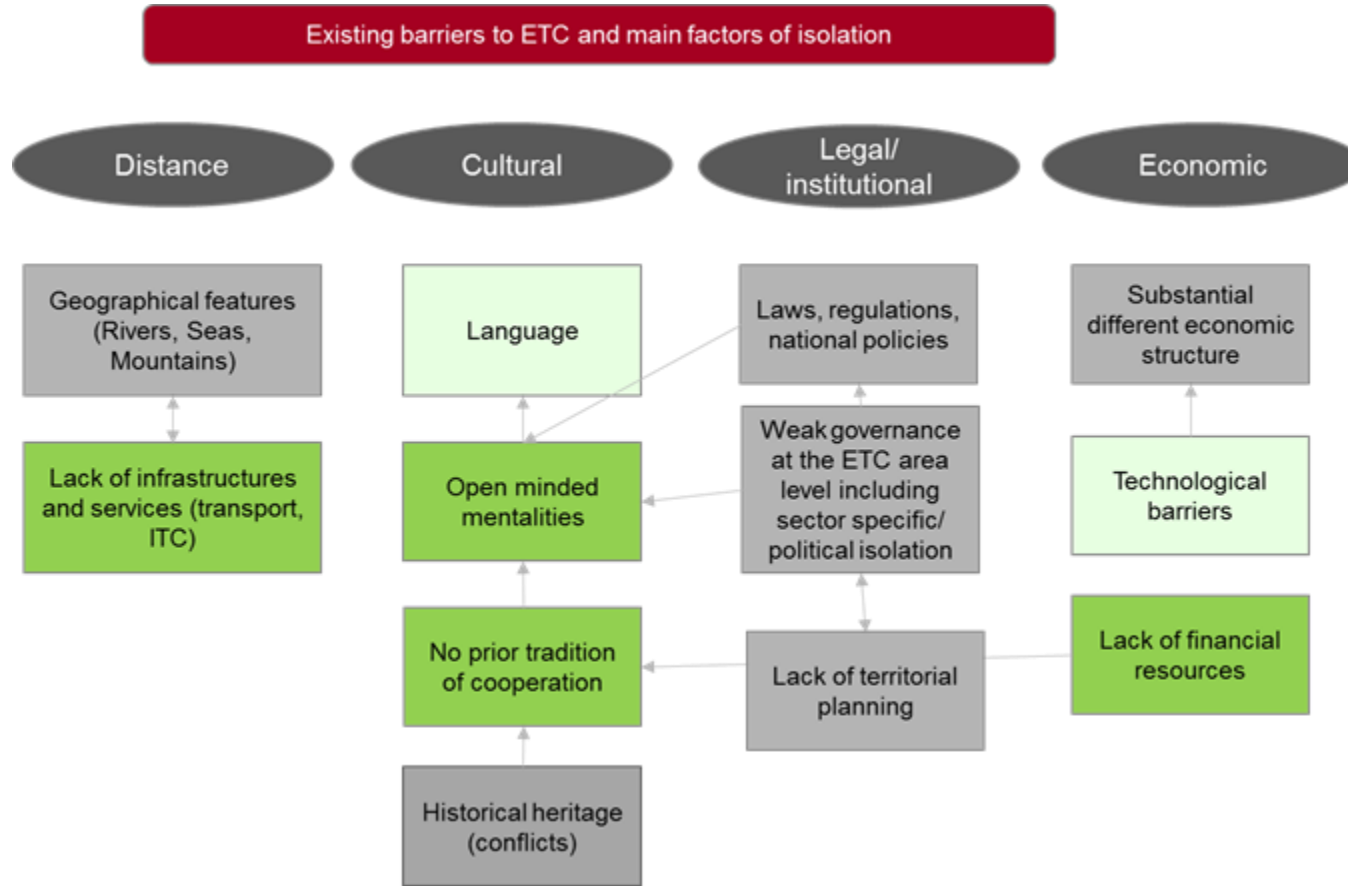
Cross-border and transnational cooperation are hampered by a number of barriers that can be summarized as follows:

- Geographical barriers⁸³: mainly rivers, seas and mountains
- The lack of infrastructure (transport, ICT), which makes it difficult to reach across borders and to access markets
- Cultural, linguistic and political barriers
- Administrative/legal barriers in certain sectors, such as education, healthcare systems, business development, labour market integration and public procurement
- Technological/ barriers which may arise when neighbouring regions are at different level of economic development
- Lack of technical and financial resources

The following chart presents the main factors of isolation. They are grouped into four types: distance, cultural, legal/political, and economic. Some of them are interrelated, worsening the situation of isolation.

⁸³ However, it should be also noted that in some cases these particular features may also constitute a specific competitive advantage of an area.

Figure 5. 12 Barriers to European Territorial Cooperation⁸⁴



Source: ADE

⁸⁴ The green boxes represent factors on which the ETC programmes implemented during the 2007-2013 period have had a positive effect. The light green corresponds to a small benefit

Overall, there is a **widespread perception that existing borders are less and less seen as a barrier**. For example, in the Spain-Portugal OP (1), the "border" is no longer viewed as a "barrier", as it was once was, but rather as a way in which common issues and challenges can be tackled. A similar statement has been made by the MA of the Saxony Czech Republic OP (40): *"the most important achievements of the programme are of a cultural or even psychological nature. In fact, the programme contributed strongly to bringing people from both sides of the border some steps closer: the border is simply much more open than before."*

The green boxes in figure 5.7 represent those factors on which the ETC programmes implemented during the 2007-2013 period have had a positive effect, and hence contributed to alleviating barriers to cooperation.

Case study analysis allows highlighting those barriers that have benefited from the effects of the programmes (the light green corresponds to a small benefit):

- A reduction of **physical distance** through new or renovated infrastructures, connections and systems offering inter-connected transport and communication services;
- The lifting of some **cultural barriers**: this is where the ETC programmes have done the most, but mainly at a local level. The ETC programmes have contributed to increasing willingness to cooperate, reducing "mental barriers" and developing mutual trust, notably by fostering a better understanding of the economic and social base, context, people and functioning of the neighbouring regions;
- In parallel, **reducing language barriers** has been also a common feature of many CBC programmes. But the effect has not been measured as such;
- A reduction **of technological barriers** which may have existed between disparate regions but also between similar regions (for example Germany-The Netherlands (2));
- In cases where the **unbalanced economic development on the two sides of the border** acts as an important barrier to cross-border cooperation, the gap remained a constraint. This may be illustrated by the case of Saxony-Czech Republic (40), where *"Expectations from the two sides of the border differ: generally speaking, the Czech partners focus more on infrastructure while the German actors focus more on "soft", immaterial aspects of cooperation. An economic problem that is particularly stringent on the Czech side is the increasingly severe skills shortage, further worsened by outmigration of skilled youth and the persistent low skills level of the population. The focus of the programme was not placed on such issues, which consequently remain as important barriers to cooperation."*⁸⁵
- The availability of **financial resources**: the CBC programmes were the only possibility to fund cross-border cooperation. As pointed out in the case of the Spain-Portugal OP (1), two countries severely hit by the financial crisis, *"the CBC programmes were the only possibility to fund cross-border cooperation. The economic crisis, which started in 2008, was cited by a number of stakeholders as creating a real set of barriers for the implementation of the Spain-Portugal programme. Importantly, the CBC funding was mentioned as being crucial to*

⁸⁵ Case study Saxony/Czech Republic

*ensuring the continuation of funding, in the face of domestic cuts, which for several organisations and institutes meant survival rather than closure*⁸⁶.

On the other hand some cooperation barriers proved difficult to address, such as distinct administrative cultures and legal barriers (especially in the area of health services, labour regulation, taxes, business development) and such barriers may persist despite a long history of cooperation or the number of successful projects in an area (Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland (3)). Legal and administrative barriers that are in some cases (Germany-The Netherlands OP (2)) considered the most important cannot be solely addressed through cross-border programmes *“becoming aware of barriers, making them explicit and exploiting them can be considered as a significant result of the programme. Of course, some barriers to cooperation still exist, mainly in the legal domains, but these barriers cannot solely be addressed by cross-border programmes (mainly administrative procedures).” (Germany-Netherlands case study).*

5.3 Main limits of Interreg programmes under the 2007-2013 programming period

As shown in section 5.2, Interreg programmes have generated a large number of projects under the five thematic priorities: 1) innovation, R&D, entrepreneurship; 2) environment; 3) accessibility; 4) territorial integration covering integration of urban and rural areas and 5) integration of public infrastructures and services. Overall, those projects have delivered outputs in line with the Lisbon Strategy and with a clear cross-border dimension. Case studies provide evidence of a wide range of relevant projects, which have contributed to improving growth conditions, better protecting the environment and easing accessibility across borders.

Results gained *at programme level* are less clear. Evidence gathered did not allow the evaluation to conclude that programmes have triggered, beyond the contributions at project level, a clear strengthening of the competitiveness of border regions and of economic integration and cohesion. This is linked to a number of intrinsic limits of the programmes and of the context in which they operate. Apart from the monitoring systems, five main limits need to be taken into account:

1. The budget size
2. The limited coordination with other ESIF programmes
3. The dispersion of activities
4. The lack of knowledge transfers;
5. The difficulty to guarantee sustainable effects.

⁸⁶ Case Study Spain/Portugal

Monitoring systems were generally not designed to capture results at regional level

As a preliminary remark, it is important to note that it is difficult to gather evidence, as monitoring systems were not adequately designed to capture programme results. A good monitoring system should include output, results, and impact indicators, and translate a causal relation between different levels of objectives. The evaluation found in this respect that:

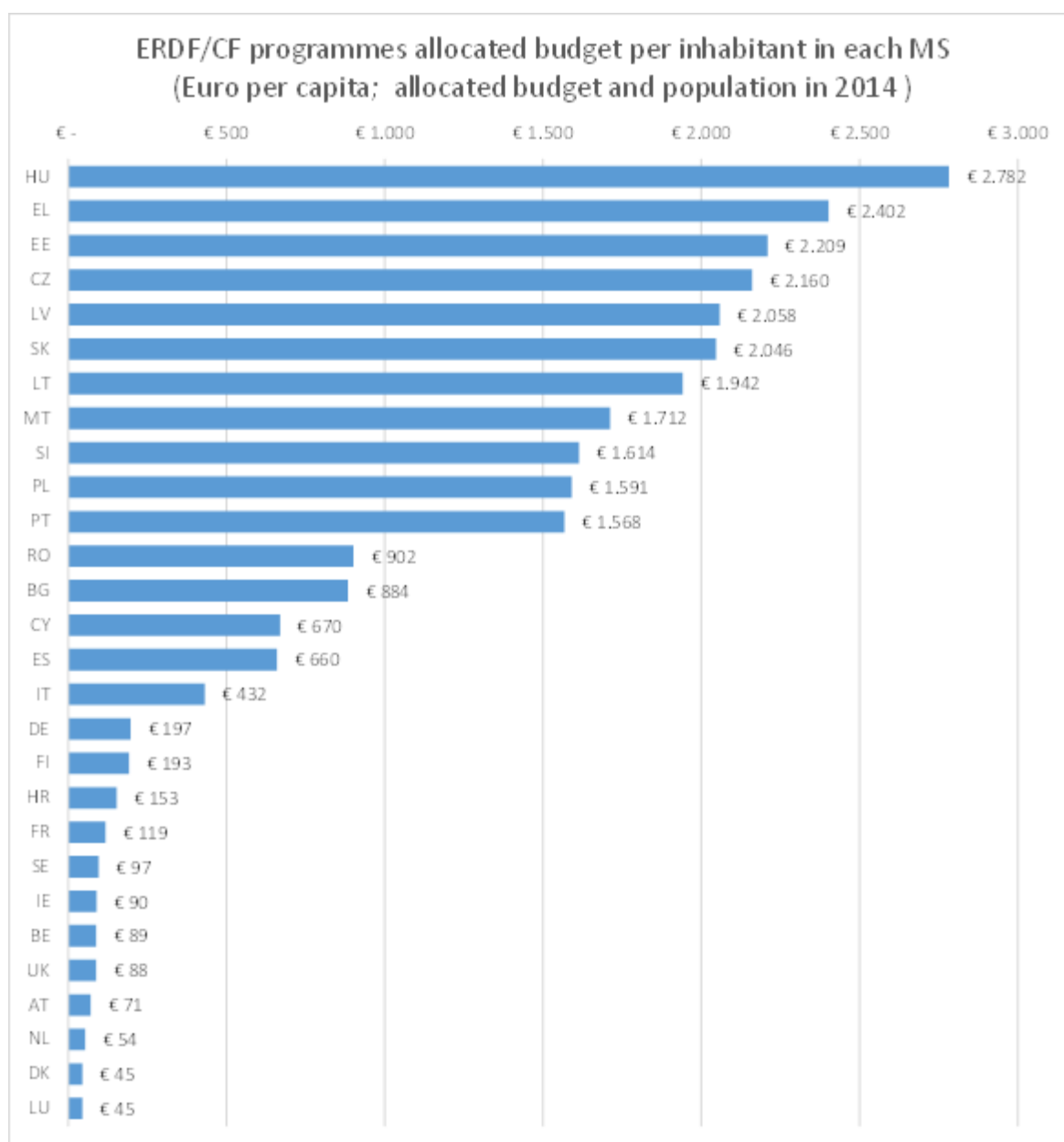
- The indicators of most of the programmes did not allow good results measurement. Indeed, several programme monitoring systems were *de facto* limited to output indicators, and sometimes only to indicators related to inputs or activities. When monitoring systems referred to result indicators, this concerned in fact indicators at input or activity level such as the “number of projects”, the “number of partners”, etc.;
- When they were included, result and impact indicators were not suited to adequately capture results / impacts, as the causal chain from output, to results, and impact was not clear.
 - As programmes were covering a wide range of sectors and areas, the performance assessment framework was not well suited to cover the full range of sectors and areas included in the programme.
 - Monitoring systems typically defined indicators at project level rather than programme-level.
 - The evaluation noted inconsistencies between outputs reported on project level and programme level.
 - Targets were rarely realistic: they often under-estimated good performance standards or lacked good baseline data. As a result, target values were sometimes exceeded by hundreds or thousands of times, which was then taken as false evidence of success.

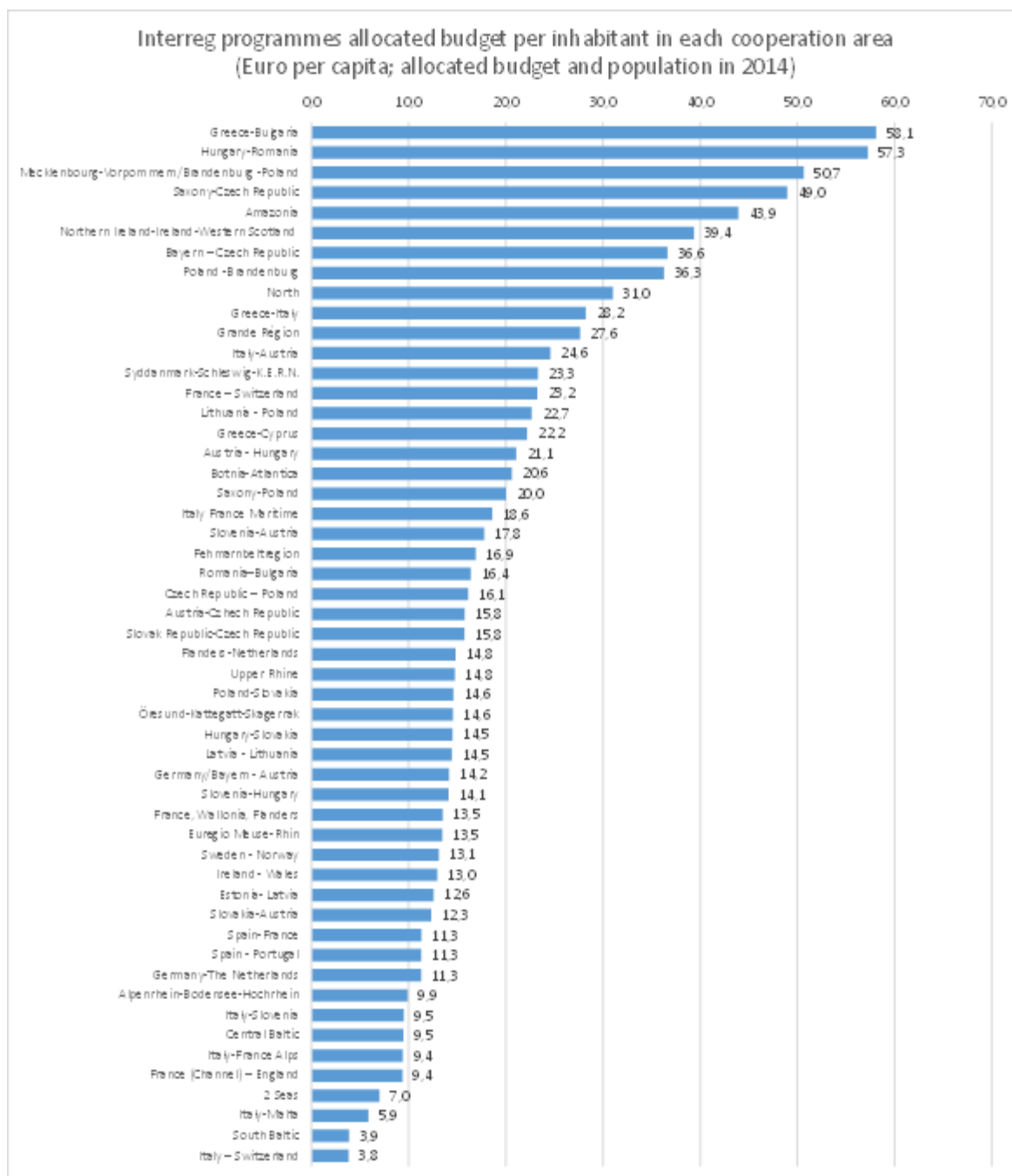
On the other hand, the evaluation also found programmes with monitoring systems of above average quality. These included for instance result indicators on business innovation or good linkages between project-level and programme-level indicators and explicit definitions of each indicator.

ETC programmes remained small in terms of relative budget size.

The first factor that should be taken into account is the relatively small size of the **budget** of ETC programmes.

The graphs below provide an overview of the 2014 per capita allocations for ERDF/CF programmes and Interreg programmes, respectively.





As appears clearly from the figures, notably in the new Member States, the amounts per capita devoted to Interreg were marginal compared to those allocated through other European funds. This is less the case in the older Member States, where Interreg funds are complementary to ERDF funds, as there are no cohesion funds at this level. But here also, the amounts per capita remained of limited size.

The impact of the programmes should be seen in the light of these budgets. Reaching an enhanced competitiveness of border regions might be too ambitious an objective given the budgets devoted to the programmes.

Coordination with other ESIF programmes remained limited.

Moreover the **coordination** between ETC programmes and mainstream programmes remained limited.

Such coordination regularly existed at design stage through the involvement of Managing Authorities of the mainstream ERDF programmes in the preparation of the Interreg programmes or by involving members of Steering Committees to screen for complementarities in mainstream programmes in their field of specialization.

However, at implementation stage national or regional programmes and Interreg programmes often ran in parallel, with little involvement from national or regional agencies. This finding was consistent across most of the case studies.

Moreover cross-programme collaboration within the Interreg family remained limited, despite the overlap between many geographical areas covered by Interreg programmes. The evaluation has identified very few cases of cross-programme collaboration within Strand A. It is interesting to note in this respect that 55% of programme managers stated that such overlap presented opportunities for complementarities and that care should be taken to avoid double-funding or unnecessary replication of activities. Complementarities with transnational programmes were also not well developed, despite being more advanced in the Baltic area, in particular for the South Baltic (50) and Central Baltic (48) cross-border programmes in connection with the Baltic Sea transnational programme (56). The North programme (14) case study also indicated connections with the Northern Periphery programme (58).

For these reasons, ETC programmes remained rather isolated without fully exploiting the potential complementarity between ETC projects and activities supported by regional/ national budget and by other structural funds programmes.

Dispersion of interventions did not favour some of the wider effects

Programmes opted in most cases for wide and open strategies, associated with a demand-driven approach. As a result, they funded often a wide range of projects, each with a rather limited scope. In this sense, programmes were not often embedded in broader strategies, aiming directly at large-scale effects.

Some programmes have achieved visible results at area level, for example the South Baltic (50), where complementarities with the Baltic Sea Region, with the existing macro-regional strategy and with other implemented programmes have been well integrated. But in most cases such results at area level were not really aimed for, and hence also not observed.

Knowledge sharing within individual Interreg programmes remained limited

The evaluation has shown that transfer of learning and knowledge within individual programmes, especially within a specific thematic priority, remained limited. In this sense, programmes have missed an opportunity to use capitalisation to enhance effects at a more macro level.

Within each ETC programme, learning has occurred across several levels, but mainly at the levels of individual cooperation and programme management. At project level

for instance, knowledge of specific cooperation themes or technologies, including methods of environmental protection and tools, was generated and shared between the partners. But beyond the first circle of actors directly involved in a project, very little knowledge sharing or transfer of practices, policy tools or learning took place.

All the case studies highlight the rather weak dissemination at horizontal level within the programme and the absence of mechanisms to ensure sharing of learning (in a sector or on a common topic). Most projects have been implemented in isolation. When sharing of learning occurred, knowledge exchange has been mostly realised at inter-personal level through mechanisms such as events, workshops and public relations. Links between project and programme levels exist at the level of project progress reports and individual exchanges, as illustrated below:

- In the case of France-Channel-England OP (18), transfers have been organised. But *"knowledge and capacity has mainly been transferred between researchers and the scientific community in the programme area. There was also a discernible path of knowledge transfer between researchers and operational partners in projects that were interested in helping public and private bodies to deal with particular environmental challenges. A further transfer of knowledge has taken place between projects' operational partners and the public and other target audiences. In a number of instances it is difficult to see where knowledge to address specific issues and build capacity has been transferred beyond a relatively tightly coupled pool of stakeholders"*.
- The case of Saxony-Czech Republic (40) also highlights the focus on individual learning rather than organisational learning, with learning benefits tending to be restricted to project partners without spill-overs to wider constituencies. For many projects visited during this evaluation, cooperation had been enhanced between, but also limited to, the individuals involved in the project over its duration.
- The same has been observed in the Hungary-Slovakia CBC OP (44): despite the fact that a great number of projects were pursuing similar objectives and developing similar approaches⁸⁷, no real connections were established between them.
- In the Northern Ireland OP the evaluation team found that the exploitation of opportunities for inter-project learning in the programme had been underdeveloped. In particular *"the large number of projects addressing innovation support for SMEs calls for capitalisation and exchanges of methods across projects in order to avoid reinventing the wheel, drawing lessons from experience, and sharing actions on a wider scale when relevant (e.g. between the territories of the cross-border groups of local authorities)"*.

There are however some interesting exceptions, albeit mainly implemented at project level. In the Romania/Bulgaria CBC OP, the scope for inter-project learning through the capitalisation of knowledge transfer and capacity-building initiatives and results appears to be relatively unexplored. One notable exception is the Danube WATER project which includes capitalisation of results as one of its objectives. The project had a focus on integrating water management and environmental technologies into policymaking and building consensus across stakeholder and sectoral perspectives, with particular emphasis on disaster prevention. There are other examples of environmental solutions developed in a cross-border area that have been transferred

⁸⁷ This was particularly striking in terms of the range of projects building up local capacities to participate in CBC programmes or for the nine projects relating to flood modelling.

to other areas with similar environmental conditions (e.g. in other Mediterranean areas, from Italy-Malta (35), or broadened to include more academic partners, such as the Nordic Mining School established between Finnish and Swedish universities under the North programme (14) which will be extended to other Nordic countries).

The existence of specific parallel programmes, namely Interact and Interreg IVC, aiming to foster exchanges of learning between ETC programmes and in the case of Interreg IV C with ERDF programmes, did not allow overcoming the problem of capitalisation within each Interreg programme. The contribution of the Interact programme has been positively appreciated by most of the programmes but mostly for enhancing the quality of programme implementation. Managing Authorities explained that Interact was very useful for supporting programme management, notably at:

- Programme definition stage, where it gave useful support to defining a logical frame for action and to developing a monitoring system;
- Programme implementation stage, where it provided guidance on many issues such as first level control, eligibility of expenditure, project cycle management, synergies within ETC programmes, involvement of SMEs, and communication and promotion.

Managing Authorities also stated that Interact generated value-added mainly through two types of activities:

- Knowledge exchanges and sharing of best practices (between project managers, Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats, communication officers) during seminars and workshops; and benchmarking and networking (ex: "Basecamp" activities) with other programmes;
- Information and tools produced and delivered through training activities (e.g. Interreg-Quality-Training), "users' manuals", the KEEP Database, the Interact website and also visits from Interact representatives.

Sustainable effects cannot be guaranteed

One of the limits of the ETC programme implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period is the limited attention devoted to sustainability.

Not many programmes included for instance potential for sustainability as part of their selection criteria, even if there are exceptions such as the "sustainability check" mechanism in Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein (12).

It is difficult to assess the extent to which actual results will be sustained and constitute a foundation on which cross-border cooperation and integration can be further built. Both the issues of financial and institutional sustainability are at stake in this respect raised.

Factors that are key to ensuring financial and institutional sustainability were not explicitly addressed:

- In some cases, sustainability requires a continuation of projects and depends on the access to funds to ensure such continuation of common services/use of infrastructures. This includes joint specialised services, shared management processes, and maintenance of infrastructures built. In this respect, MAs and project stakeholders interviewed in all of the case studies have consistently expressed doubts as to whether domestic public funding sources could take over from Interreg. The main reason they invoked for this is that using different funding streams in parallel is very difficult, owing to national differences in funding

conditions, timing, eligibility of actions, and so forth. In addition several interviewees stated that money from the national budget or from mainstream EU programs was not easy to mobilize for peripheral border areas. In this regard, financial resources provided by Interreg represent a key value added but requiring in the meantime a long term commitment for ensuring the sustainability of results.

- The conditions to promote a sustained use of outputs produced were not ensured, notably in the sense that Central Authorities were not systematically informed of what had been achieved by projects directly related to their own area of competences (for example in the field of management of natural resources).
 - a. For instance, in France-Channel-England (18) CBC OP the MA/JTS explained that the key to ensuring sustainability is political involvement and will on the part of influential institutional stakeholders. Sustainability also depends on integration of knowledge, practices and approaches into public policies in each territory with the aim of obtaining common governance arrangements in relation to key environmental (and other) issues. Clusters of projects in the 2007-2013 programme have facilitated cross-fertilization between projects, identifying knowledge and practices of high potential for integration into governance models for the CBC area.
 - b. In the South Baltic region the technical secretariat (JTS) has supported all projects in establishing local regional stakeholder groups with a view to facilitating the grounding of results in the regions and to ensuring the impact of project outcomes. Although this was not mandatory, it was the case in many projects. It seems that most projects in the South Baltic CBC Programme have managed to include, and sometimes also engage, local authorities and other stakeholders both as participants in the projects and as recipients of results.
- The sustainability of cooperation and of the links set up during the 2007-2013 Programmes cannot be ensured, with or without new funding. A risk of dilution of cooperation and of capacities to work together is evident, first because the cooperation developed has been largely based on individuals with a strong informal dimension and the consequent risk that staff turnover may lead to the loss of part of the capacities gained; and second, because of the still unstable and fragile institutional framework within which cooperation processes takes place. Furthermore, open borders within the EU cannot be taken as granted, as seen recently with the closure of certain internal EU borders.

However, the evaluation has shown that good cases of sustainability of Interreg projects results exist, mainly when tangible results from the projects are adopted in practice and when public authorities take ownership of them; and also when the private sector shows a clear interest. Examples of lasting results have been found during the evaluation through anecdotal evidence. This takes place in the following forms:

- Mainstreaming activities initially funded by Interreg into domestic programmes or into the activities of cross-border organisations is the most effective way of ensuring sustainability of CBC after the conclusion of the Interreg IV funding period. A phenomenon of repeated applications to successive generations of the same programme (also typically found in other Interreg programmes) was evident: this is an indication of the difficulty for organizations and project partnerships of securing funding through other sources. The ICE project developed several options for ensuring sustainability, including that of mainstreaming its action into the regular work of regional development agencies.

- Adoption of results by project partners, for example municipalities implementing solutions for instance in terms of rescue services across borders developed by the Öresund–Kattegat-Skagerrak (5) programme, or joint management strategies on avalanche prevention and crisis management situations adopted after the project for joint risk prevention in the Alps (France-Italy-Alps (6)).
- Investments funded by domestic public sources: national authorities engaging in investments defined by a cross-border analysis of railroad connections (Austria-Slovakia (34)); funding of the International University Constance by mainstream funds (Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein (12)).

5.4 Policy response under the 2014-2020 programming period

The new regulation framework for the 2014-2020 programming period has brought significant changes to the way to ETC is conducted. Those changes partly reflect some of the limits that were underlined above. In particular, the following improvements had already been incorporated:

- **A clarification of the aim of CBC.** The choice was made to maintain a broad view of cross-border issues: the new regulation⁸⁸ states that CBC “*aims to tackle common challenges identified jointly in the border regions*”; several typical challenges are then listed which include poor accessibility, declining local industries, and a lack of networks among local and regional administrations; but this list is not exhaustive, and the door has been kept open for a wide range of interventions.
- **Better integration of ETC into the general framework of the strategy 2020 and into national and regional strategies.** MS are expected to draw up a single document - a Partnership Agreement - presenting a comprehensive coherent strategy regarding all five ESI funds⁸⁹ and ensuring complementarity between the ETC programmes and the country-specific programmes within the investment for growth and jobs goal.
- **A higher concentration of funds.** At least 80% of the ERDF allocation to each cross-border cooperation and transnational programme will be focused on a maximum of four of the eleven thematic objectives fixed in in the CPR.
- **A focus on improving the institutional cooperation across borders.**
- **A reinforced programme for interregional cooperation.** The objective is to facilitate an exchange of experiences between regions on thematic objectives including experience concerning the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices in relation to the use of EGTCs.

Moreover the stronger accent put on defining a well-articulated intervention logic at the start and on strengthening the results orientation of the programme also reflect concerns that were raised through this evaluation.

⁸⁸ Regulation (EU) n° 1299/2013

⁸⁹ The five ESI funds are : ERDF, ESF, Cohesion funds, EMFF, EAFRD

6. Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the evaluation, based on the findings of Section 5.

EU Regulation⁹⁰ defined Interreg programmes funded under the 2007-2013 programming period as a complementary tool aimed at pursuing the three main priorities of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs:

- Improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities;
- Encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy; and
- Creating more and better jobs.

CBC and TNC were conceived to pursue specific objectives to contribute to the overarching goals, namely:

- CBC was intended to support economic and social integration in areas divided by national borders that face common problems requiring common solutions. It was designed to focus on *"strengthening the competitiveness of the border regions"*, and contribute to *"economic and social integration, especially where there are wide economic disparities on either side"*.
- Transnational cooperation was designed to increase cooperation at a macro-regional level where there is a need to increase economic and social integration and cohesion on matters of strategic importance (such as the physical interconnection of territories and intangible connections).

The Interreg programmes were the only funding instrument for addressing CBC issues.

Outputs and results

CBC programmes (€5.574bn "allocated" budget) funded over 6,800 projects in the sectors targeted by the EU Regulation of 2006⁹¹, with a particular focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, environment, transport, tourism and culture. More than half of these related to "quality of life" themes (tourism, culture, sport, health, safety). Around 1,600 supported economic development, and focused for instance on clustering, on establishing cooperation networks, and on knowledge and technology transfers. The 1,292 environmental projects addressed among other things issues related to the management of natural resources, natural threats, climate change, and biodiversity.

These projects have yielded outputs and results that were in line with the specific objectives of CBC and oriented towards the main priorities of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. More specifically, they have contributed to enlarging the knowledge-based economy in border regions (mainly in programmes in the EU 12 MS), for instance by increasing R&D capacities and transfers across border, as well as by stimulating innovation capacities in SMEs in border regions. They also contributed to stimulating the diversification of local economies through tourism and culture. In terms of environment, CBC projects were more geared towards "soft" knowledge and

⁹⁰ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

⁹¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

policy improvement through analysis, research, and the sharing of best practices. This led to a more integrated management and protection of the environment, even if legal and administrative barriers remained. A number of programmes supported hard infrastructures and systems to increase accessibility across border, leading to travel time reduction, better accessibility of peripheral territories and improved security. CBC projects also contributed to improved access to healthcare and better education facilities. They contributed less to objectives such as increasing access to cross-border markets and developing cross-border trade, or integrating labour markets.

TNC programmes (€1.766bn “allocated” budget) were also in line with the Lisbon Strategy. They were used in a wide range of sectors to support joint activities at a transnational scale. TNC programmes funded 1,134 projects, mainly in the field of environment and climate change. They also addressed economic development and accessibility, even if for the latter, which was one of the main priorities, the number of transnational initiatives was smaller (140 projects under the 13 TNC programmes). TNC projects were mainly geared to implementing joint or articulated management of natural resources and environmental protection and to reinforcing networks or partnerships linking SMEs and research or technological centres at transnational level.

Overall, the specificity of TNC programmes was less clear. The nature of the projects was comparable to those implemented under CBC programmes but with a wider territorial aim. The evaluation did not find many examples of projects addressing matters of strategic importance for cohesion at transnational level.

Overall, the interregional programme Interreg IV C (€0.306bn) has made possible large exchanges of experiences and of practices. These exchanges have generated learning effects and led to transfer of knowledge between the partners involved, especially within capitalisation projects. The Thematic Capitalisation Initiative has allowed to reach a new audience, to broaden external diffusion, and to improve visibility of useful knowledge. The extent to which it has resulted in an effective use of knowledge transfer is difficult to assess.

Many of the cross border and transnational projects would not have been possible without the existence of Interreg, which remains a unique instrument to support joint initiatives across borders. In this regard, financial resources provided by Interreg represent the most prominent example of EU added-value from Cohesion policy, however requiring in the meantime a long term commitment for ensuring the sustainability of results.

Wider effects

Beyond the above described outputs and results at project level, the programmes also contributed to wider effects, notably in terms of **alleviating specific barriers to cooperation** (mainly cultural and distance barriers), and of **better social integration**.

One of the key results of the Interreg programmes was indeed their contribution to enhanced cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders (such as research centres and universities, SMEs, public authorities in charge of environment). This encompassed formal and informal networks, institutionalised links and more ad hoc connections (such as partnerships for joint research, and sharing of practices).

Such enhanced cooperation in turn led to the creation or consolidation of a regional identity in the sense of the increased acknowledgment by stakeholders in a certain area of the value of cooperating across borders and an improved social capital

(including knowledge of the partners on the other side of the border and a better understanding of the potential for cooperation). It contributed also, but to a lesser extent, to a better visibility of the area as a coherent entity.

Interreg programmes also contributed to lifting specific barriers, especially physical distance, cultural and mental barriers or language barriers. Whilst some barriers (mainly administrative and legal barriers) continue to hamper further territorial cooperation and integration, the evaluation found that existing borders were less and less seen as a barrier. This concerned mainly cultural and distance barriers and was less the case for legal, administrative and economic barriers.

Finally, the programmes also contributed to developing the institutional organisation across borders in CBC areas.

The EU Regulation⁹² also ambitioned a contribution of Interreg programmes to **economic integration** and **strengthened competitiveness** of border regions. In this respect, the evaluation found that CBC projects have contributed to strengthening innovation capacities, to improving protection of natural resources and more effective risk prevention as well as to easing transport accessibility or access to public services. But these contributions remained at a rather local level without generating clear effects on the territory as a whole.

Similarly, whilst the evaluation did find that, to a small extent, technological barriers were reduced, it did not find evidence that economic or legal/institutional barriers were reduced. This being said, it is reasonable to consider that legal barriers (especially those related to health services, labour regulation, taxes, business development), and barriers linked to differences in administrative culture and national legal frameworks, were difficult to address for the programmes (as they also required decisions at national or regional level).

The situation is comparable in terms of the effects of TNC programmes. There are examples of better integration in terms of environmental protection strategies and policies, especially related to shared environmental assets (typically shared sea basins and mountainous spaces). The evaluation also found a few results in terms of better connections of transport and ITC networks. But those results remained limited compared to the challenges and ambitious goals of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

Factors influencing the effect of Interreg programmes

The above mentioned results should be seen in the light of the factors that influenced the Interreg programmes' capacity to generate effects.

First, the objectives formulated at the start by the EU regulation were very ambitious especially when taking into account the **financial weight** of the programmes. As described in the main report, the amounts per capita allocated to Interreg programmes, especially in new Members States, were marginal to the amounts per capita for other ESIF programmes. Expectations in terms of impact beyond the specific project level should take this factor into account.

⁹² Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

It is also important to note that the **EU regulations and guidelines**⁹³ did not specify in detail how European Territorial Cooperation was expected to contribute to the Lisbon Strategy. They left room for both pursuing cooperation as an end in itself and as a means to economic and social integration.

CBC programmes have in that perspective often been used as an instrument aiming primarily at developing cooperation and linkages, without necessarily envisaging a strong leverage of this cooperation to a wider economic integration. This is clear from both the objectives and the output indicators they defined, and from what Managing Authorities considered to be the main results of their programmes (often expressed in terms of enhanced cooperation). Often, stakeholders themselves also quite explicitly mentioned better cooperation as the main objective of the programmes. This approach did not contradict what EU texts prescribe. Indeed, as said above, many of these official texts highlight cooperation as an objective, without necessarily making it a means to an end.

The fact that the programmes yielded little results in terms of enhanced competitiveness and integration at the level of the territory can furthermore be linked to **specific policy choices**. Indeed, regions and actors could identify themselves the priority obstacles and opportunities to be addressed by Interreg programmes. Such a demand-driven approach was useful in terms of fostering tailored programmes that addressed specific well identified cross-border challenges and the main barriers and opportunities in this regard. But this approach also had some drawbacks. First the Regulations⁹⁴ were not so clear on the types of challenges that CBC and TNC needed to address. Within the concept of “common challenges”, CBC programmes have indeed grouped specific challenges relating to border areas with more generic challenges that equally apply outside border areas and do not form barriers to integration (such as drug prevention, diabetes treatment, energy efficiency, renewable resources, recycling, etc.). Similarly the notion of “matters of strategic importance” in TNC programmes was not always well understood. More broadly there was little common understanding between Managing Authorities on the exact meaning and value of working at transnational level, especially in territories faced with wide diversity and weak institutional governance. This led to programmes that were driven rather by common concerns. Second the bottom up approach did not favour the prioritization of objectives. The programmes were rarely embedded in a global strategy geared to the strengthening of the competitiveness of the border region and to economic integration. Again, this did not contradict the Regulation, but it meant that individual projects, whilst successful in their own right, remained isolated from other activities – thereby diminishing their leverage and potential for generating a critical mass for change.

Intervening at the level of the “**most functional region**” was also a complex issue for Interreg programmes. First, because administrative areas at NUTS3 level (“small regions for specific diagnoses” in the nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) are not all relevant for dealing with cross border challenges. Moreover, programmes often lacked an analysis of what would be the most “functional” region for cooperation in a certain sectors. This was compounded by the fact that programmes intervened in a

⁹³ COM(2005) 299, Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013

⁹⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

wide range of sectors: a geographical area may indeed be relevant for one sector and not for another one. Similarly, defining the most appropriate level is even more complex for TNC programmes, as the rationale for operating at this intermediary level (between EU, national, and regional level) was not always clear.

There was furthermore little **coordination** between Interreg and other ESIF programmes, nor was there much sharing of project results between regional stakeholders and central/regional authorities, the latter showing little interest in being involved. The potential leverage effect of Interreg programmes that such coordination could have favoured was therefore not fully realised.

Even though within each Interreg programme, **learning** has taken place across various levels (mainly in terms of individual cooperation and programme management) and Interreg IV C introduced the thematic capitalisation initiative (aiming to disseminate and transfer knowledge beyond the main actors involved) , little knowledge sharing or transfer of practices, policy tools or learning has taken place, beyond the first circle of actors directly involved in projects. Most projects have in this sense been implemented in isolation.

Finally, it is important to note that in the **new programming period 2014-2020** the result orientation embedded in the regulations and programming ensured higher concentration of funds, stronger emphasis on defining a well-articulated intervention logic at the outset and on strengthening the results orientation of the programmes.

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