



WP1: Synthesis report

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

Task 3 Interreg Programmes

September 2016

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**WP1: Synthesis report
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**Task 3
Interreg Programmes**

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List of abbreviations

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
CBC	Cross border Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European territorial cooperation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDFCF	Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation
MA	Managing Authority
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
R&D	Research and Development
RTD	Research and Technological Development
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TNC	Transnational cooperation



List of Interreg programmes and link to beneficiaries of ERDF and Cohesion Fund support

CCI	Name of Programme	Link to Beneficiaries	Number of projects
2007CB163PO001	OP Euregio Maas Rijn 2007-2013	http://www.interregemr.eu/site_fr1/downloads/cat.php?id=12	388
2007CB163PO002	OP Objective European Territorial Co-operation Austria - Czech Republic 2007-2013	http://www.at-cz.eu/at-cz/downloads/ETC-AT-CZ-List-of-Beneficiaries_140402.pdf	132
2007CB163PO003	OP Objective European Territorial Cooperation Slovakia-Austria 2007-2013	http://www.sk-at.eu/sk-at/en/3-4_list_of.php	87
2007CB163PO004	OP Ziel Europäische Territoriale Zusammenarbeit Deutschland/Bayern - Österreich 2007-2013	http://www.interreg-bayaut.net/interreg_iv/pool.html	166
2007CB163PO005	OP FEDER Cooperación Transfronteriza España-Portugal	http://www.poctep.eu/index.php?id_documento=95&modulo=publicacion&pagina=documentos.php&busqueda=&busquedaqral=&origen=&tipo=72&padre_anterior=0&categoria_anterior=0&padre=0&categoria=72	218
2007CB163PO006	OP FEDER Cooperación Transfronteriza España-Francia	https://www.poctefa.eu/filestmp/d137a719-4b16-43a0-901d-390cc10eaeaa/listado_con_todos_proyectos.pdf	152
2007CB163PO007	OP Cooperación Transnacional Madeira-Azores-Canarias	http://www.pct-mac.org/buscador/buscadorlistado.js	111
2007CB163PO008	OP Cooperación Transnacional Sudoeste Europeo	http://www.interreg-sudoe.eu/FRA/d/139/Les-Projets-SUDOE/Liste-beneficiaires	110
2007CB163PO009	OP Ziel 3-Programm zur grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit Freistaat Bayern-Tschechische Republik	http://www.stmwi.bayern.de/EFRE/Downloads/Interreg_IV/Verzeichnis_der_Bequeinstigten_2013.pdf	490
2007CB163PO010	OP Austria - Hungary 2007-2013	http://www.at-hu.net/at-hu/en/download/programme_documents.php	
2007CB163PO011	OP Współpracy Transgranicznej Polska (Woj. Lubuskie) -Brandenburgia 2007-2013	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO012	OP współpracy przygranicznej Polska-Słowacja	http://www.geo.geomatic.pl/PWT/public/layout/MainMap.aspx	62
2007CB163PO013	OP współpracy przygranicznej Południowy Bałtyk	<a "="" href="http://en.southbaltic.eu/db/index.php?p=5&id_db=4&save=1&field_1720%5B%5D=1&field_1720%5B%5D=2&field_1720%5B%5D=3&field_1720%5B%5D=4&field_1720%5B%5D=5&field_1720%5B%5D=6&field_1720%5B%5D=7&field_1720%5B%5D=8&field_1720%5B%5D=9&field_1441%5B%5D=1&field_1441%5B%5D=2&field_1510%5B%5D=1&field_1510%5B%5D=2&field_1510%5B%5D=3&field_1510%5B%5D=4&field_1510%5B%5D=5&field_1510%5B%5D=6&field_1672=">http://en.southbaltic.eu/db/index.php?p=5&id_db=4&save=1&field_1720%5B%5D=1&field_1720%5B%5D=2&field_1720%5B%5D=3&field_1720%5B%5D=4&field_1720%5B%5D=5&field_1720%5B%5D=6&field_1720%5B%5D=7&field_1720%5B%5D=8&field_1720%5B%5D=9&field_1441%5B%5D=1&field_1441%5B%5D=2&field_1510%5B%5D=1&field_1510%5B%5D=2&field_1510%5B%5D=3&field_1510%5B%5D=4&field_1510%5B%5D=5&field_1510%5B%5D=6&field_1672=	68
2007CB163PO014	OP Alpine Space 2007-2013 (Transnational Cooperation)	http://www.alpine-space.org/2007-2013/projects/projects/	59
2007CB163PO015	OP INTERACT 2007-2013 Good Governance of Territorial Cooperation Programmes	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO016	OP Sweden - Norway	http://projektbank.tillvaxtverket.se/projektbanken#page=eruf	227
2007CB163PO017	OP Ziel 3 / Cíl 3 zur Förderung der grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit Sachsen -	http://www.ziel3-cil3.eu/de/bequeinstigte/index.jsp	238



2007CB163PO018	Tschechien OP zur grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit Sachsen - Polen	http://www.sn-pl.eu/de/bequenstigte/index.jsp	146
2007CB163PO019	OP Ziel 3-Programm zur grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit MV/BB - Polen	http://www.interreg4a.info/index.php?id=16	189
2007CB163PO020	OP Transnational programme "Baltic Sea Region 2007 - 2013"	http://eu.baltic.net/Project_Databas_e.5308.html	90
2007CB163PO021	OP Romania-Bulgaria Cross- Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013	http://www.cbromaniabulgaria.eu/index.php?page=proiecte-lista	690
2007CB163PO022	OP ESPON 2013 Programme	http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Programme/ProgrammeRelatedDocuments/Beneficiaries/27-07-10_List_of_Beneficiaries.xls	99
2007CB163PO023	OP INTERREG IVA Programm Deutschland-Niederlande	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO024	OP Interreg IV Alpenrhein- Bodensee-Hochrhein	http://www.interreg.org/ViewContent.php?aktsubid=1&mainlink=1&mainnavid=354&subnavid=354&targetid=186&child=1	97
2007CB163PO025	OP Česká republika - Polsko	http://www.cz-pl.eu/prehled-doporucenych-projektu.html	273
2007CB163PO026	OP Interreg IV Öresund- Kattegatt-Skagerrak	http://projektbanken.interreg-oks.eu/se/Menu/Projektbank	208
2007CB163PO027	OP Northern Periphery	http://npp.apogee.gr/en/projects/news/	47
2007CB163PO028	OP Botnia-Atlantica	http://2007-2013.botnia-atlantica.eu/default.asp?ML=12513	72
2007CB163PO029	OP Transnational Cooperation ATLANTIC AREA 2007-2013	http://atlanticarea.ccdri-n.pt/presentation/beneficiaries	71
2007CB163PO030	OP cezhraničnej spolupráce Slovenská republika - Česká republika 2007 - 2013	http://www.sk-cz.eu/sk/uvodna-stranka/zverejnene-zoznamy/	321
2007CB163PO031	OP Lithuania - Poland 2007- 2013	http://www.lietuva-polska.eu/index.php?2435623219	62
2007CB163PO032	OP Nord INTERREG IVA	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO033	OP Italia-Francia frontiera marittima	http://www.maritimeit-fr.net/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=87	87
2007CB163PO034	OP Italia-Francia Alpi (ALCOTRA) - Riprogrammazione finanziaria ottobre 2011	http://www.interreg-alcotra.org/2007-2013/?pg=progetti	196
2007CB163PO035	OP Cooperazione Transfrontaliera Italia - Svizzera 2007-2013	http://www.interreg-italiasvizzera.it/news:186	163
2007CB163PO036	OP Italia-Slovenia 2007-2013	http://www.ita-slo.eu/mma_bin.php?id=2015021614150788	87
2007CB163PO037	PO Italia-Malta 2007 -2013	http://www.italiamalta.eu/it/beneficiari-al-30-aprile-2013.html	21
2007CB163PO038	OP des 2 mers	http://www.interreg4a-2mers.eu/clusters/clusters-list-of-beneficiaries/fr	86
2007CB163PO039	OP INTERREG IV A Rhin supérieur	http://www.interreg-rhin-sup.eu/index.php?cmpref=29567&lang=fr&module=media&action=Display	116
2007CB163PO040	OP Interreg IV A France (Manche) - Angleterre 2007- 2013	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO041	OP CTE France-Suisse	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO042	OP CTE Océan Indien	http://www.interreg-caraibes.fr/joomla251/files/Liste_des_beneficiaires_-_Programmation_Interreg_Caraibes_IV_2007-2013_-_2.pdf	170
2007CB163PO043	OP CTE Caraïbes	http://www.interreg-	49



		caraibes.fr/joomla251/files/Liste_des_beneficiaires - _Programmation Interreg Caraibes IV 2007-2013 - 2.pdf	
2007CB163PO044	OP CTE ENO - Nord Ouest Européen	http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php? act=projectsearch	114
2007CB163PO045	OP CTE MED - Méditerranée	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO046	OP INTERREG IV C	http://www.interreg4c.eu/fileadmin/ User_Upload/Excel/2014-12- 09_List_of_beneficiaries.xls	204
2007CB163PO047	OP INTERREG IV - Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and the West Coast of Scotland	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO048	OP URBACT	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO049	OP PEACE III - Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO050	OP ESTONIA – LATVIA PROGRAMME 2007-2013	http://www.estlat.eu/supported- projects/	67
2007CB163PO051	OP CTE Amazonie	http://www.europe- guyane.eu/index.php?option=com_c ontent&task=view&id=174&Itemid= 297	6
2007CB163PO052	OP INTERREG IV A Italia/Austria	http://www.interreg.net/it/progetti/p rogetti-approvati.asp	148
2007CB163PO053	OP Slovenia-Hungary 2007- 2013	http://www.si- hu.eu/projects_en/category/seznam _operacij_izbranih_v_okviru_2._javn ega_razpisa/	24
2007CB163PO054	OP Slovenia-Austria 2007- 2013	http://www.si- at.eu/projects_en/category/javni_po ziv/	18
2007CB163PO055	OP North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013	http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/pr ojects/	78
2007CB163PO056	OP INTERREG IV Syddanmark-Schleswig- K.E.R.N.	http://www.interreg4a.de/dwn18144 9	7
2007CB163PO057	OP INTERREG IV "Fehmarnbeltregion" (Sjælland-Ostholstein- Lübeck-Plön)	N/A	N/A
2007CB163PO058	OP Ελλάδα-Κύπρος 2007- 2013	http://www.greece- cyprus.eu/index.php?option=com_pr ojects&view=items&Itemid=3	61
2007CB163PO059	OP Πρόγραμμα Ευρωπαϊκής Εδαφικής Συνεργασίας Ελλάδα – Βουλγαρία	https://www.espa.gr/el/Documents/ katalogos_dikaiouxon_2014/140701 _EP_16_Ellada_Voulgaria.pdf	102
2007CB163PO060	OP Πρόγραμμα Ευρωπαϊκής Εδαφικής Συνεργασίας Ελλάδα – Ιταλία	http://www.espa.gr/el/Documents/k atalogos_dikaiouxon_2014/140701 _EP_15_Ellada_Italia.pdf	75
2007CB163PO061	OP Central Europe 2007-2013	http://www.central2013.eu/nc/proje cts-2007-2013/approved- projects/?tx_fundedprojects_pi1[dis play]=all	124
2007CB163PO062	OP Ireland Wales	http://www.irelandwales.ie/projects	41
2007CB163PO063	OP INTERREG IV France- Wallonie-Vlaanderen	http://www.interreg- fwvl.eu/fr/projet-liste.php	233
2007CB163PO064	OP transfrontalier Grande Région	http://www.interreg- 4agr.eu/fr/page.php?pageId=362	174
2007CB163PO065	OP Grensregio Vlaanderen - Nederland	http://www.grensregio.eu/projecten- kaart/	69
2007CB163PO066	OP Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013	http://projects.centralbaltic.eu/	122
2007CB163PO067	OP Hungary-Romania Cross- border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013	http://www.huro- cbc.eu/en/project_xls	451
2007CB163PO068	OP Hungary-Slovakia Cross- border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013	http://www.huskroua- cbc.net/en/awarded-projects	141
2007CB163PO069	OP South East Europe (SEE) Transnational Co-operation Programme 2007-2013	http://www.southeast- europe.net/en/search_result/?x=0&y =0&text=list+of+beneficiaries	111



2007CB163PO070	OP Latvia - Lithuania Cross border cooperation programme	N/A	129
2008CB163PO001	OP España-Fronteras Exteriores 2008	N/A	N/A
2013CB163PO001	OP Slovenia-Croatia IPA Cross-border programme	N/A	N/A
2013CB163PO002	OP Hungary-Croatia IPA Cross-border Co-operation programme	N/A	N/A

Note: The web links above are to websites of the respective Managing Authorities who, under the rules governing the 2007-2013 programmes, were required to publish the names of the beneficiaries of the funding allocated. The number of projects supported has been estimated on the basis of the information published on the website at the time when the data were downloaded. In the meantime the data concerned may have been updated. It may also be that the data have been moved to another part of the website, in which case the link may not work. If this is the case, those who wish to locate the data concerned will need to go to main OP website, as indicated by the beginning part of the link and search from there.



Preliminary note

The purpose of this report is to provide a short guide to the findings of the ex post evaluation of Cohesion policy programmes 2007-2013 undertaken by DG Regional and Urban Policy. It is based on information produced by Task 2 of WP1 of the ex post evaluation , on the specific findings from the evaluation carried out under WP11 and on the findings of the case study on Interreg Italy-Austria undertaken as part of the evaluation carried out under WP9. The WPs considered are the following:

WP0 – Data

WP1 – Synthesis

WP9 - Culture and tourism

WP11 – European Territorial Cooperation



Executive summary

Over the 2007-2013 period, 73 Interreg programmes were funded to support cooperation between regions across national borders. 3% of the total ERDF amount went to Interreg, almost EUR 8 billion. Most of the funding went to 55 Cross-Border Cooperation programmes (CBC), the rest being divided between Transnational Cooperation (TNC) and Interregional ones.

Both CBC and TNC programmes concentrated resources in four policy areas in particular: RDTI, environment, cultural and social infrastructure and transport. However, there were some differences in funding priority: TNC invested much more substantially in the environment than CBC as well as in ICT and capacity building, while CBC programmes also concentrated on tourism and culture.

The rate of implementation of Interreg programmes, as reflected in payments from the Commission relative to the funding available, was consistently below that of mainstream OPs over much of the period, but it increased from 2013 on. At the end of March 2016, it amounted to 91% of the available funding, suggesting that all the funding had been spent by the end of 2015 as required by the regulations.

Interreg programmes were in line with EU objectives and were based on the identification of cross-border barriers and challenges in the areas covered. However, the programmes were rarely embedded in broader strategies designed to strengthen the competitiveness of the regions involved or to increase economic integration. Overall, Interreg strategy showed a lack of prioritisation of policy objectives, which often translated into a lack of identification of those policy areas in which cross-border added-value is highest. However, there are some cases of programmes, especially among the longer-running CBC ones, which adopted a more focused approach by promoting strategic initiatives characterised by a critical size and the involvement of several partners

Over the programming period, CBC programmes funded over 6 800 projects, especially in respect of innovation and entrepreneurship, the environment, transport, tourism and culture. TNC programmes, funded 1 134 projects, mainly relating to the environment, climate change and accessibility. Many of these projects would not have taken place without Interreg funding, which can, in this regard, be considered a prominent example of the EU added-value of Cohesion policy.

Interreg programmes contributed, to some extent, to reducing geographical, cultural and economic barriers, to enhancing cross-border cooperation and improving the factors of growth, environmental protection, risk prevention, and accessibility in different areas. However, these contributions remained largely confined to the local level and did not generate clear effects in terms of increasing competitiveness or integration. Programmes also achieved 'implicit' goals in the form of increasing regional identity and strengthening political power and institutional governance in the areas covered.



1. Main features of European Territorial Cooperation implementation

1.1. Features of European Territorial Cooperation programmes

Support under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Objective going to what are widely known as Interreg programmes, is aimed at facilitating cooperation between regions across national borders. Its main aim is to help overcome the obstacle to economic and social development that such borders often represent.

Borders tend to form a natural barrier to economic integration not only because of language differences but also because of cultural and institutional ones. Their existence can adversely affect the development of regions located along them, impeding flows of trade and movements of people as well as the establishment of commercial relationships between firms. Borders can also prevent common problems that span borders – for instance, environmental ones – from being tackled in a common and effective way.

Accordingly, public intervention is often required to initiate and support the process of cooperation between authorities, firms and other organisations on either side of a national border, which does not necessarily happen spontaneously. The increased economic and social development of border regions, moreover, is of common benefit to everyone in the EU because of the increased income and spending that it is likely to be generated and the strengthening of social cohesion that it is likely to bring about.

The rationale for public intervention concerns both Cross Border and Transnational cooperation. While Cross Border Cooperation was intended to support economic and social integration in areas separated by national borders and facing common problems requiring common solutions. 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.

In the 2007-2013 period, 73 Interreg programmes were grouped into three strands:

- Cross-border cooperation (CBC), consisting of 55 programmes bringing together neighbouring regions in different countries, aimed at strengthening cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional action (Strand A);
- Transnational cooperation, consisting of 13 programmes to support cooperation between different countries in the same broad geographic area, such as those around the Baltic Sea, the aim being to strengthen transnational cooperation through action for integrated territorial development linked to EU priorities (Strand B);
- Inter-regional cooperation, consisting of one general programme to support cooperation between regions in the EU wherever they are located and three programmes to support networking and the exchange of information and experience (URBACT, INTERACT and ESPON) (Strand C).

The PEACE III programme, aimed at supporting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border area of Ireland, was also funded under the ETC Objective.

Almost EUR 8 billion, or 4% of the total amount of ERDF for the 2007-2013 period, went to Interreg programmes¹. These programmes provided support for joint action between local and/or regional authorities in different countries. Most of the funding (70% of the total allocated to Interreg) went to 55 Cross-Border Cooperation programmes (CBC), the rest being divided between Transnational cooperation (TNC) and Interregional ones. The average size of Interreg programmes was EUR 109 million, i.e. around 40% of the average size of Competitiveness and Employment OPs (EUR 253 million).

¹ 3% of the ERDF plus Cohesion Fund.

**Table 1 Number of programmes and ERDF amount, by type of ETC programmes**

Type of programmes	Number of OPs	ERDF decided April 2016 (EUR mn)
CBC	55	5 479
TNC	13	1 814
INTERREG IVC	1	321
ESPO	1	34
INTERACT	1	30
URBACT	1	53
PEACE III	1	225
Total	73	7 957

Note: The PEACE III programme, aimed at supporting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border area of Ireland, was also funded under the ETC Objective

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Inforegio database, April 2016

1.2. Division of funding between policy areas and changes over the period

Three policy areas, the environment, innovation and RTD, and cultural and social infrastructure, absorbed half of the total budget available (Table 2)². As compared with the mainstream ERDF, a larger share went to the environment, culture and social infrastructure, human capital and the labour market, as well as to capacity building and technical assistance, while a smaller share went to investment in roads and rail and in enterprises other than for RTD and innovation. The share going to RTD and innovation (16%) and to energy (4%) was similar to that of mainstream programmes.

The largest increase of funds over the period, in contrast to mainstream programmes where there was a reduction, was to the environment. There was also an increase over the period in funding of investment in roads, culture and social infrastructure and RTD and innovation. On the other hand, funding was reduced for ICT and, especially, other transport (i.e. other than roads and rail). Overall, however, the shifts which occurred were in most cases relatively small and the division of funding between policy areas was much the same at the end of the period as at the beginning.

At the end of 2015, EUR 53 million of the ERDF funds allocated to Interreg had been de-committed, in the sense of being taken away because of a failure to spend funding in time. This represents 0.7% of the total amount and involved 13 of the 73 programmes.

The evaluation of ETC-funded programmes carried out under WP11 was focussed on 67 of the 73 Interreg programmes. The evaluation covered the three strands of the Interreg OPs, specifically 53 cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes under Strand A, 13 transnational cooperation (TNC) programmes under Strand B and the interregional cooperation programme under Strand C.

A comparison of the policy areas prioritised between the Strand A and Strand B programmes shows that:

- Strand B programmes were more concentrated in a few policy areas (84% of the budget was concentrated on the 5 top priorities) than Strand A ones (73%);
- Top-ranking domains for both Strands were RDTI, the Environment and Transport, but Strand B invested much more in the Environment than Strand A (35% as against 19%);
- CBC programmes also concentrated on Tourism and Culture, while TNC programmes prioritised ICT and Capacity building.

² The 17 categories shown in the table are aggregations of the more detailed 87 categories into which expenditure was divided in the period for reporting purposes.



Investment in Interreg IVC was concentrated on RDTI and the Environment.

Table 2 Division of financial resources in Interreg programmes for 2007-2013 by category, initial (2007) and last (April 2016) and shift between categories

Category	EUR million					% Total	
	2007	2016	Added	Deducted	Shift	2007	2016
1.Innovation & RTD	1 258	1 292	152	-119	33	15.9	16.2
2.Entrepreneurship	195	199	18	-14	4	2.5	2.5
3.Other investments in enterprise	30	38	9	-1	8	0.4	0.5
4.ICT for citizens & business	506	458	36	-83	-48	6.4	5.8
5.Environment	1 514	1 609	223	-127	95	19.1	20.2
6.Energy	341	345	58	-55	3	4.3	4.3
7.Broadband	55	40	3	-18	-15	0.7	0.5
8.Road	402	489	112	-25	87	5.1	6.2
9.Rail	79	94	26	-10	15	1.0	1.2
10.Other Transport	616	490	37	-164	-127	7.8	6.2
11.Human Capital	232	211	16	-37	-21	2.9	2.7
12.Labour Market	219	180	9	-48	-39	2.8	2.3
13.Culture & social infrastructure	926	972	108	-62	46	11.7	12.2
14.Social Inclusion	88	77	6	-16	-11	1.1	1.0
15.Territorial dimension	485	513	70	-42	28	6.1	6.4
16.Capacity building	499	499	40	-40	0	6.3	6.3
17.Technical Assistance	467	451	17	-33	-16	5.9	5.7
Total	7 912	7 956	940	-895	44	100.0	100.0

Note: 'Added' is the sum of additions made to resources in OPs where there was a net increase in the funding going to the category. 'Deducted' is the sum of deductions made to resources in OPs where there was a net reduction in funding. 'Social inclusion' includes measures to assist disadvantaged groups and migrants. 'Territorial dimension' includes support for urban and rural regeneration and tourist services and measures to compensate for climate conditions.

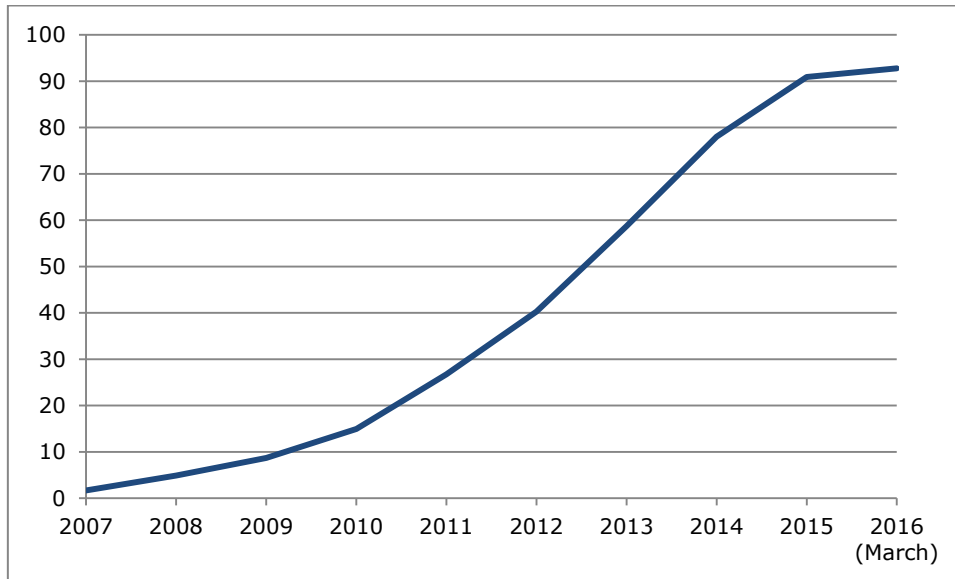
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, InfoREGIO database, April 2016

1.3. Policy implementation

The rate of implementation of programmes, as reflected in payments from the Commission in relation to the total amount of funding available, was consistently lower for Interreg than for mainstream ERDF OPs over much of the period. However, it increased markedly from 2013 on and at the end of March 2016, the rate was much the same as for mainstream OPs, at 91% of the funding available. Given lags between expenditure being incurred and payments being made to reimburse this and the fact that 5% of funding is held back until expenditure is approved, it is likely that all the funding available was spent by the end of 2015 as required by the regulations.



Figure 1 Time profile of payments from the ERDF to Interreg programmes for the 2007-2013 period (% of total funding available)



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Inforegio database, end-March 2016

1.3.1. The Strategy

Interreg programmes were in line with EU objectives and were based on the identification of cross-border barriers and challenges in the areas covered. However, CBC programmes were rarely embedded in broader strategies designed to strengthen the competitiveness of the border regions concerned or to increase economic integration. TNC programmes were *de facto* similar to CBC programmes and issues of potential strategic relevance to the transnational regions in question were often not clearly identified.

The overall analysis of the 53 CBC programmes indicated in many cases a lack of prioritisation of policy objectives, which were not stated with a result-oriented perspective. Such excessively broad objectives are mainly observed in the EU12 programmes, e.g. in Lithuania-Poland and Slovenia-Austria, and in some smaller-sized financial programmes, e.g. Estonia-Latvia and Botnia-Atlantica. Often, the lack of prioritisation translated into a lack of identification of those policy areas in which cross-border added-value is highest, and as a result programmes financed numerous projects in a wide range of different policy areas.

Only a few CBC programmes were found to have adopted a more strategic approach, identifying the potential added-value of cross-border cooperation. This is the case for some of the programmes with a longer history of cooperation which capitalised on the lessons learned from past programmes (e.g. France-Switzerland and Northern Ireland-Border region of Ireland-Western Scotland) or when programme strategies were based on sound analysis which allowed identification of the most relevant border challenges (e.g. Romania-Bulgaria OP).

Similarly, a large part of the 13 TNC programmes also defined objectives too broadly. The WP11 evaluation shows a link between the territorial context and the quality of the objectives set. In particular, programmes with stronger geographical coherence, in which common challenges are clearly identified, tended to have better-defined objectives. For example, the Baltic Sea OP focused on benefits from transnational cooperation in relation to the sea and the Alpine Space OP had well-defined objectives with regard to the environment and risk prevention issues.

In a few cases, CBC programmes adopted a more focused strategy with the objective of achieving a significant impact at regional level, by promoting strategic initiatives of a critical size with the involvement of several partners. Examples of such strategic



initiatives are evident in the Germany-Netherlands programme and the Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland programme (see Box). Some TNC programmes, i.e. those with a stronger geographical coherence, unlike the typical approach of the 2000-2006 period which focused on individual projects, also carried out larger and more integrated projects. For instance, the Baltic Sea OP established project clusters for energy, water, innovation and transport (e.g. the Cluster 'Sustainable' - multimodal and green transport corridors - was a platform encompassing the entire Baltic Sea region and connecting all modes of transport). In addition, the MED OP, after seminars with key actors in the sectors concerned, launched two targeted calls for strategic projects for improving energy efficiency, maritime safety and transport. However, most of the programmes followed a project-led approach, funding a series of *ad hoc* initiatives in a wide range of policy areas (see for example the Saxony-Czech Republic OP).

Strategic interventions in the Germany-The Netherland OP

The Germany-Netherlands programme is a good example of a strategic- and demand-driven approach. Project selection was based on regional demand rather than initial planning, and approved projects largely reflected the specific demand of regional actors. In addition, 11 'major structuring projects', conceived as projects with strongly anticipated effects across the whole programme area, were financed. Six of these projects were carried out in the broad area of R&D, innovation and entrepreneurship. The largest (Mechatronics for SMEs, EUR 18.4 million) involved a total of 257 companies and funded 106 development and innovation projects.

The WP11 evaluation identified the following reasons behind the broad set of objectives set in Interreg programmes: i) the ambiguity of the EU Regulations and guidelines, which were not clear enough in defining cooperation as a means of removing barriers, rather than being an end in itself; ii) the limited ownership of the programmes by national and regional authorities, which, according to the stakeholders interviewed, underestimated the strategic role of Interreg programmes, reflecting the lack of shared strategic vision on cross-border and transnational added-value (see box below).

France (Channel)-England case study

The case study shows the lack of coordination between the programme objectives and those of national/regional programmes. Representatives of the French environmental regional authorities were apparently unaware of any relationship between the projects funded by the CBC programme and French national environmental policy. On the UK side, the engagement of the Environment Agency was limited to one project.

The case study also shows the lack of synergies between the CBC OP and the Haute-Normandie ERDF programme, which were both strongly focussed on environmental issues, during any key stages of their life-cycles. At the programme design stage, programming documents did not refer to each other. During the implementation of the programmes, exchange of information was limited to administrative issues and there was no mechanism in place to ensure information exchange during the selection of projects in order of to avoid duplication.

1.3.2. The Delivery system

The evaluation of the delivery systems of the Interreg programmes by WP11, which focused on project selection, administrative procedures and the monitoring system, identified several deficiencies.

Overall, the selection procedures in most programmes were found to be adequate in terms of the selection criteria adopted, as they took the added-value of cooperation and the potential success factors of the projects into account (the quality of partners, the definition of goals, the measures implemented, the structure of governance, etc.). However, the procedures resulted in more emphasis being placed on the specific project quality than on the overall contribution to programme goals, so hampering the creation of lasting and sizable benefits for the area concerned. In addition, case studies highlighted the fact that selection procedures were often adversely affected by administrative procedures, which were considered by the MAs as too burdensome, especially in relation to the low level of funding of the Interreg programme as compared with mainstream ERDF OPs.



In the case of the monitoring systems, the main weakness identified related to the type of indicators established. The Interreg programmes mainly used output indicators with very limited effort made to collect data on results or impact. The Atlantic Area OP (Strand B) case study illustrates the difficulty that TNC programmes had in developing robust indicators able to capture the range of 'soft' achievements made. In particular, output indicators measuring the 'number of publications drafted' or the 'number of delegates attending events' or result indicators which refer to the 'number of programmes/policies influenced by experience gained during project implementation', give little indication of the achievements of the programme.

Nevertheless, the overall evaluation analysis of the Interreg programmes shows that the majority of the OPs developed monitoring systems with a strong emphasis on joint process indicators. For example, indicators used to assess outputs from RDTI and environmental projects referred to the development of networks, joint programmes, shared experiences and the number of partner involved (North; Germany-The Netherlands; Romania-Bulgaria; France-Channel-England).

2. The outcome of ETC programmes – main findings from the ex post evaluation (WP11)

2.1. General findings: outcome and results

Over the programming period CBC programmes funded over 6 800 projects in the policy areas targeted by the 2006 EU Regulation. Particular focus was placed on innovation and entrepreneurship, the environment, transport, and tourism and culture³. TNC programmes which supported joint activities at a transnational scale in a wide range of areas, funded 1 134 projects, mainly in relation to the environment, climate change and accessibility. The interregional Interreg IV C programme made extensive exchange of experience and practices possible.

The evaluation found that many projects would not have been implemented without ETC funding and that there was no available alternative source of finance. In this regard, Interreg programmes represent the most prominent example of EU added-value from Cohesion policy, though they require a long-term commitment to ensure the sustainability of results.

RDTI and entrepreneurship

Interreg programmes contributed to better linkages between regional innovation systems. For example, more structured interactions between private and public research institutions and companies were established through the creation of cross-border clusters and company networks (Germany-The Netherlands OP, Northern Ireland-Ireland-Western Scotland). Innovation capacity was increased by developing critical mass infrastructures (e.g. a tri-national research space for neuro-science, nutrition, nano-medicine, etc. under the Upper Rhine OP; the Iberian International Nanotechnology Laboratory under the Spain-Portugal OP, which is so far the only, fully international research organisation in Europe in nano-science and nanotechnology). In some cases, the development of innovation networks and the effort to transfer technologies to companies had positive results in the development of new products and processes (see Box).

³ The evaluation from WP11 classifies projects 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.



Innovation capacities in SMEs and development of new process: the Germany-The Netherlands OP and the North OP case studies

The case study on the Germany-The Netherlands OP shows that:

- more than 1 000 companies (mainly SMEs) have developed improved production processes as a result of CBC projects;
- more than 500 new or improved products or processes were developed in companies.

These improvements led to more than 3 500 jobs being created or sustained (exceeding the target of 1 780)⁴. The network GMA (*'Machinery and plant engineering without borders: Towards flexible manufacturing'*) was one of the projects that helped to increase the innovative capacity of some 500 businesses.

As regards the North OP, the benefits for over 80% of the companies involved were new contact networks followed by new collaborative partners, and, for 70%, the acquisition of new knowledge or skills. The programme led to the creation of new products and services as well as nearly 100 new enterprises.

The environment

The CBC OPs financed more than 1 292 environmental projects, especially on sustainable management of natural resources and water management, but on risk management, climate change, biodiversity, and renewable energy. Overall, projects were mainly aimed at increasing knowledge and improving policies through analysis, research, and the sharing of best practice, while TNC projects were mainly geared to implementing joint management of natural resources and environmental protection.

Several programmes contributed to the shared governance of natural resources, both by designing common methodologies and operational tools to favour integrated approaches to dealing with water resource issues (e.g. common guidance for port monitoring under the Greece-Italy OP; shared protocols and equipment for seabed monitoring in the Channel area under the France-Channel-England OP; development of tools for integrated management of coastal zones under the 2 Seas programmes), and by creating joint frameworks and strategies for managing particular environmental resources (e.g. the IBIS - Integrated Aquatic Resources Management Between Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland – project, with EU funding of EUR 5.2 million, supported research programmes aimed at the sustainable management of freshwater and natural marine resources and the biodiversity protection). However, in many cases legal and administrative barriers, as well as low levels of regional/national commitment and ownership, limited the effects in terms of improved shared governance.

In the case of water management, investment contributed to improving wastewater treatment, largely through the upgrading and modernisation of infrastructure, and to the integrated management of river basins. Examples include Poland-Slovakia, where an extended water supply network was installed, or the South-Baltic programme, where a model for modern water management through Water Users Partnerships (WUP) was tested and developed (see Box).

On the other hand, the added-value of cross-border interventions in respect of energy efficiency and renewable energy is less clear. Initiatives in these area were of a pilot nature with an awareness raising dimension.

South Baltic Cross-Border Cooperation Programme case study

The South Baltic programme covers 5 EU Member States (Poland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and Lithuania) and 24 NUTS III regions. The programme placed high priority on the joint management of the Baltic Sea environment and financed highly innovative environmental projects on green energy and energy efficiency.

⁴ According to the case study, comparison between targets and achievements must be done carefully as targets have been recognized as underestimated and achievements could have been overestimated to a certain extent.



The direct outcomes of the programme include the development of numerous new solutions to common environmental challenges in the area covered and the establishment of new, or extended, cooperation networks. In addition, projects helped to increase transnational awareness of environmental challenges and common identity. According to stakeholders, without the South Baltic EU project, many of these issues would not have been initiated or carried out.

The 'Household Participation in Waste Management' project is an example of how projects had both an impact on cooperation and a concrete environmental impact. By developing best practice and transferring knowledge across borders, the project stimulated new solutions and the transfer of knowledge in respect of sorting municipal waste and raised awareness of these issues in the region. Another example is the EUROSILAM project, through which new technologies were implemented in wastewater treatment as a result of cooperation with biogas producers.

Implementing joint management of natural resources and environmental protection was one of the main areas of intervention of TNC programmes, leading to the development of new management tools, specialised risk prevention infrastructure and the sharing of knowledge and good practice. Better protection and exploitation of maritime resources was clearly observed in the case study of the Baltic Sea OP, mainly due to the reinforcement of institutional capacity at transnational level (multi-level governance in Maritime Spatial Planning).

Transport and accessibility

CBC programmes financed projects supporting the development of both cross-border transport infrastructure and tools and systems aimed at facilitating mobility across borders and reducing travel time.

The main achievements relate to the construction or improvement of road connections across borders (e.g. 167 km of new and/or upgraded roads under the Hungary-Slovakia OP and 119 km of road links on the Polish-Slovak border), navigation and port infrastructure (e.g. modernisation of 7 pieces of navigation infrastructure under the Spain-Portugal OP); new cycle or pedestrian paths across borders (320 km of new footpaths and cycle trails under the Slovak Republic-Czech Republic OP; and the creation of cross-border walking and cycling paths under the Euregio Meuse-Rhin OP) and bridges (across the Hungary-Slovakian border river, the 235m Peace Bridge under PEACE III, and the cycling and pedestrian cross-border bridge under the Austria-Slovakia OP). In addition, several initiatives contributed to improving travel across borders, such as through joint systems and common tickets for cross-border public transport (Saxony-Poland), cross-border car sharing systems (France-Switzerland); and services for cross-border workers (South Denmark-Schleswig-KERN).

Reductions in travel time and improvements in security were evident in some OPs, such as the Northern Ireland-Border region Ireland-Western Scotland, where road improvements led to a 7% reduction in accidents and 33% reduction in journey time.

In the case of TNC programmes, reduced travel time and increased flows across borders were achieved through several programmes (e.g. by the North West Region, which contributed to improving 95 multi-modal and 57 uni-modal transport connections for passengers). In addition, programmes improved internal and external accessibility (e.g. investment under the Madeira-Azores-Canary OP led to an increase in people travelling between the three islands, as well as to Cape Verde, Senegal, Morocco and Mauritania, which has led some airlines to establish direct flights to these).

Culture and Tourism

More than half of the projects funded were aimed at improving the 'quality of life', including those in tourism, culture, sports, healthcare and safety, in line with 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'.



Case study Interreg Italy-Austria

The Italy-Austria OP was focused on cross-border cooperation and sustainability in tourism and culture. The strategy in relation to tourism was aimed at overcoming administrative borders in order to sustain joint management of tourist resources and strengthen partnership across the border. The strategy for culture provided support for tourism by creating a common identity in the area. Overall EUR 20.7 million was allocated to 42 projects.

The shortcomings of monitoring and evaluation system prevent a full picture of the overall effects of the projects from being drawn. However, some results are evident: i) increased cooperation across the border in both tourism and culture, resulting in the creation of permanent cooperation structures in both areas; ii) the creation of cross-border tourist destinations (e.g. the Alpe Adria Hiking Trail; the 'Munich-Venice' cycle trail); iii) the increase in the number of tourists at the destinations created; iv) the increase in transfer of know-how across the border and in institutional capacity.

Mini case studies: Transmuseum

The Transmuseum, with a budget of EUR 1.4 million, was one of the major projects financed by the OP in culture. The project was aimed at creating a cross-border network between museums and territorial institutions in charge of cultural and local development policies in the three project areas (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Land Carinthia and Land Salzburg).

The output of the project included 6 608 stocktaking and cataloguing cards being published online and the organisation of several training courses, seminars and educational activities in the three project areas. The results included the creation of a cross-border community of museums and territorial institutions as planned. In addition, the project helped increase the attractiveness of the museums, supporting their role in strengthening social cohesion and local development. The evaluation also found that project could not have generated the same added-value for the museums concerned without Interreg funding.

Mini case studies: Ciclovía Alpe Adria Radweg

The project consisted of the joint creation and promotion of a cross-border long distance cycle route between Salzburg in Austria and Grado in Italy. The financial allocation was EUR 1.4 million.

Despite significant delays, the project resulted in the completion of the 410 km trail, the creation of specific e-services for cyclists using the trail; the cross-border and the creation of a number of new businesses along the trail.

2.2. Wider effects

Beyond the outputs and results noted above, the Interreg programmes also had wider effects, notably in terms of strengthening cooperation across borders, reducing geographical, cultural and economic barriers and strengthening social integration.

The evaluation found that both CBC and TNC programmes helped to increase cooperation between universities, research centres, SMEs, public agencies and local authorities on the two sides of borders. For many programmes, a number of projects met all four cooperation criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing, and joint financing. The three case studies on innovation and RDT indicate that all output indicators relating to the development of cooperation exceeded their targets. Investment in capacity building played an important role in the development of cooperation. For instance, under the Hungary-Slovakia OP, the capacity building activities aimed at improving institutional links and improving cross-border project design, and management helped to create new partnerships and strengthened formal and informal networks at local level, especially in respect of flood prevention and disaster management, providing opportunities for cooperation beyond the CBC programme.

Interreg programmes also helped to reduce barriers to cooperation, especially physical distance (through new or improved transport links), cultural barriers (by fostering a better understanding of the neighbouring region's economic and social context), language barriers, and, to a lesser extent, technological barriers. On the other hand some barriers, mainly administrative and legal barriers (especially in respects of



health care services, employment regulation, taxes and business development) continue to hamper further territorial cooperation and integration,

Programmes also achieved 'implicit' goals, such as increasing regional identity, political power and institutional governance in the areas covered. The creation or consolidation of a regional identity was highlighted by experts, MAs and stakeholders alike as a primary result of CBC programmes. In the case of TNC programmes, interviews with experts and stakeholders indicated that the most important achievement was the creation of critical mass, which was particularly evident in respect of R&D.

Moreover, with regard to the ambitious objectives set by EU regulation to increase economic integration and strengthen competitiveness of border regions, the evaluation found that CBC projects have helped to increase the capacity to innovate and to improve the protection of natural resources and risk prevention as well as transport links and access to public services. But these results were at a relatively local level and did not generate clear effects on the regions as a whole. Similarly, TNC programmes promoted better integration in terms of environmental protection strategies, especially as regards common environmental assets (typically shared sea basins and mountainous spaces) and better transport connections and communication networks. However the results were limited in relation to the challenges and goals of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

2.3. Main limits of ETC programmes

Even though Interreg programmes helped to alleviate a number of barriers to cooperation and produce positive results in the main areas where territorial cooperation was supported, the scale of the effects observed remain limited and their sustainability uncertain. Moreover, the evidence gathered did not allow the evaluation to conclude that programmes led to a clear strengthening of the competitiveness of border regions or to closer economic integration and increased cohesion. The main reasons for this lies in both internal and external factors. The former can be summarised as follows:

- The synergy between Interreg and mainstream programmes was limited: Interreg tended to operate in isolation of national and regional policies, including mainstream Cohesion policy programmes. Although some procedures fostered synergy between different financial instruments at the design stage (e.g. the involvement of ERDF programme MAs in the preparation of the programmes and the screening by members of Steering Committees for possible complementarities with mainstream programmes in their area of specialisation), case studies show that at the implementation stage the programmes run parallel to each other.
- Dispersion of funding did not favour wider effects: as noted above, programmes opted in most cases for wide and open strategies, associated with a demand-driven approach. As a result, they often funded a wide range of projects, each with a relatively limited scope. In this sense, programmes were not often embedded in broader strategies aimed at large-scale effects.
- The transfers of knowledge within individual Interreg programme was limited: although the sharing and dissemination of knowledge was promoted by many projects, the learning benefits tended to be restricted to project partners with weak dissemination and an absence of mechanisms to ensure wider sharing of learning. In fact, most programmes followed a project-led approach in that they supported individual projects while giving little attention to synergies, exchange or complementarities between programmes.
- Sustainable effects are uncertain: one of the limitations of Interreg programmes is the limited attention devoted to sustainability, even though there are exceptions such as the 'sustainability check' mechanism in the Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein OP. MAs expressed strong doubts that domestic funds could take over to ensure the continuity of cross-border projects, mainly because national differences in funding conditions, timing, and eligibility of actions make the parallel



use of different funding streams difficult. 'Sustainability' was not incorporated in project design and selection criteria.

With regard to external factors that affected the capacity of Interreg programmes to generate wider effect, the evaluation found the following:

- ETC programmes remained small in terms of relative budget size: the objectives formulated at the beginning of the programming period by EU regulations, in terms of strengthening the competitiveness of border regions, were too ambitious especially given the financing involved. Expectations of effects beyond the project level should be seen in the light of budgets given to Interreg.
- The ultimate goal of Interreg in the EU regulations is ambiguous: the regulations and guidelines⁵ did not specify how the ETC Objective was expected to contribute to the Lisbon Strategy and they left room for both the pursuit of cooperation as an end in itself and as a means to economic and social integration. The objectives and the output indicators defined in the OPs, as well as the interviews with MAs and stakeholders, show that CBC programmes were often used as a means primarily of developing cooperation without necessarily envisaging this leading to closer economic integration.
- Specific policy choices impeded setting up programmes that were targeted at particular well-identified cross-border challenges: the regulations⁶ were not sufficiently clear on the types of challenge that CBC and TNC needed to tackle. Accordingly, general challenges, not related to border areas, were identified as 'common challenges' by CBC programmes. In addition, there was insufficient understanding among MAs of TNC programmes of the notion of 'matters of strategic importance' and of the meaning of working at the transnational level.

It is important to note that the new programming period 2014-2020 addresses some of the above limitations. In order to increase the effectiveness of Interreg, the new Regulation framework clarifies the role of ETC in EU ESI funds and policy, ensuring increased concentration of funding, introducing a sharper focus on improving institutional cooperation across borders and highlighting both the importance of defining a well-articulated intervention logic at the outset and of strengthening the results-orientation of the programmes.

⁵ COM(2005) 299, Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013.

⁶ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006.

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